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Protesters celebrate the impeachment of President Yoon on Saturday. GETTY IMAGES

ed against it. Three abstained whereas eight votes were nullified.

With the impeachment, Mr. Yoon has been suspended from office while South Korea's Constitutional Court deliberates on the vote. The court has 180 days to rule on Mr. Yoon's future.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 7
GAMBIT DECLINED
» PAGE 13

PM says Cong. subverted the spirit of Constitution

During Lok Sabha debate on 75 years of the Constitution, he accuses the Nehru-Gandhi family of 'subversion'; BJP-led government's amendments only strengthened spirit of the Statute, he says

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

The Constitution is the "basis of our unity", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in the Lok Sabha on Saturday, accusing the Congress and its past governments of attempting to subvert its spirit.

Speaking for over an hour and 45 minutes at the end of a two-day debate on the 75-year journey of the Indian Constitution, the Prime Minister emphasised that – unlike past Congress governments – any amendments made by his government and the previous NDA governments had been done to strengthen the spirit of the Constitution.

Mr. Modi said that former Congress Prime Ministers had repeatedly raised



Narendra Modi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the discussion on the 'glorious journey' of the Constitution. PTI

objections to reservations for marginal communities, while his government had extended it to the economically weaker sections (EWS), with "no objections" from any section of society. Significantly, a major plank of the Opposition during the recent Lok Sabha election was the accusation that the BJP-led go-

vernment was seeking to subvert the Constitution through a big majority, with plans to end reservations in jobs and educational institutions.

Launching a sharp attack on the Nehru-Gandhi family, Mr. Modi said that the first amendment to the Constitution, made to the fundamental right to ex-

'Your supreme leader preferred Manusmriti'

NEW DELHI
Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar believed that that there was "nothing Indian" about the Constitution of India and preferred the Hindu religious text *Manusmriti*. Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi said in the Lok Sabha. » PAGE 8

pression by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951, was the beginning of this "subversion" of the document. The Congress's first family, having "tasted blood", then repeatedly wounded the Constitution, Mr. Modi said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 7

S. Korea lawmakers impeach President for martial law bid

Agence France-Presse
SEOUL

South Korean lawmakers on Saturday impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his failed martial law bid, with the opposition declaring a "victory of the people".

The vote capped more than a week of intense political drama in the democratic South following Mr. Yoon's failed attempt to impose martial law on December 3. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of the capital Seoul in rival rallies for and against Mr. Yoon on Saturday.

In a televised address following the parliamentary vote, the impeached Mr. Yoon said he would "step aside" but did not apologise for his botched bid to impose martial law.

Out of 300 lawmakers, 204 voted to impeach the President on allegations of insurrection while 85 vot-

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Kerala govt. order flagged misuse of pensions way back in 2020

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Even as a recent Finance Department probe threw light on the rampant misuse of social security pensions, a January 2020 order indicates that the Kerala government was by then aware of the presence of government employees and service pensioners on the beneficiary list.

The January 23, 2020-order issued by the department makes it clear that the government has noticed that employees of government, semi-government, and public sector institutions and service pensioners were drawing these pensions. As per the guidelines, they are not eligible for these pensions which are meant as a support for the disadvantaged sections of society.

Row in Kerala as Centre seeks money for air rescue

CPI(M) says Centre has insulted Keralites by demanding cash for relief operations; BJP leader V. Muraleedharan says Centre will balance the books and not distress the people of Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A bitter stand-off between the Centre and Kerala is unfolding with a communication sent by the Ministry of Defence on October 22 urging the Kerala government to pay up the outstanding charges of ₹132.61 crore for air evacuation operations carried out by the Indian Air Force (IAF) as part of the disaster response between 2006 and September 2024, evoking sharp reactions from the Left and the Congress leaders.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) MP K. Radhakrishnan told reporters in New Delhi on Saturday that the Centre has insulted Keralites by demanding cash for the IAF's disaster relief operations when the



Teams of the Special Operations Group and the Indian Air Force carrying out rescue during the recent landslides in Wayanad. PTI

State was struggling to rehabilitate the disaster-hit people in Wayanad.

Revenue Minister K. Rajan viewed the letter as part of a move to push the State into a crisis for political reasons.

Later in the day, MPs from the State demonstrated outside the Parliament against the Centre's alleged reluctance to release aid for Wayanad.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, MP from Wayanad, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi should set aside partisan politics during national tragedies and reassert his role as the custodian of citizens' lives and property.

Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly V.D. Sathesan accused the Centre of mocking the people of Kerala by demand-

ing the State underwrite the cost of the humanitarian search and rescue operations undertaken by the IAF during the Wayanad landslides and floods.

However, BJP leader and former Union Minister V. Muraleedharan said the Centre would ensure the cost incurred by the IAF for relief and rescue operations during disasters was set off against federal aid. He said the Centre would balance the books and not distress the people of Kerala.

Official sources told *The Hindu* that the State had time and again written to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to meet the cost of these air-lift operations directly, as the Ministry had "committed to bearing these costs after the floods of 2018."

M.P. couple's 'note' urges Cong. to take care of family, mentions harassment by ED, BJP leaders

Press Trust of India
Bhopal

A note recovered after the deaths of a businessman and his wife on Friday in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district has led to a slugfest between the Congress and the ruling BJP.

In the note that surfaced on social media, the businessman urged Rahul Gandhi and other Congress leaders not to leave his children alone, and accused the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and BJP leaders of harassment.

The Congress has claimed that the businessman and his wife were party supporters, and the ED harassed them over their political leanings.

The Congress claims the businessman, his wife were party supporters, and the ED harassed them over their political leanings

On the mention of Mr. Gandhi and other party leaders in the note, party's State president Jitu Patwari said, "Congress is a party of the public. We will take care of them. Which is why I visited them yesterday." He alleged that the couple's death was nothing but state-sponsored murder, as the ED was being used to harass people so that they join the BJP.

In a post on X on Saturday, former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath claimed that the couple died because they were harassed by the BJP government and ED officials. "The deceased's only crime was that during our leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, his children had supported the yatra," he wrote.

Mr. Nath said the note mentions harassment by the ED and pressure to join the BJP. He said the whole

case was merely about wiping out an entire family than harassing a businessman for political reasons.

State BJP media in-charge Ashish Agrawal had on Friday condemned the Congress's allegations in over the deaths.

The ED's Bhopal zonal official had, in a release, said the agency carried out searches on December 5 at four premises in Sehore and Indore districts under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The search covered the residential premises of the key persons who were the beneficiaries of the proceeds of crime or have actively aided or abetted such persons in a bank fraud case, the ED said, claiming to have recovered incriminating documents. It added that it recorded the statements of some persons during the raid, and a bank balance of ₹3.5 lakh was frozen. Details of four properties of the key persons were also found during the searches, it said.

(Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health suicide prevention helpline 011-40769002.)

Press Trust of India
SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh BJP on Saturday demanded an apology from Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu for allegedly encouraging his associates to eat "jungli murga" (Grey Junglefowl), an endangered species, during a dinner in a remote area in Shimla.

Mr. Sukhu, however, said that he does not eat

Timings	
DELHI	
SUNDAY, DEC. 15	
RISE 07:07	SET 17:27
RISE 17:15	SET 07:03
MONDAY, DEC. 16	
RISE 07:07	SET 17:28
RISE 18:18	SET 08:07
TUESDAY, DEC. 17	
RISE 07:08	SET 17:28
RISE 19:24	SET 09:04

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	23	08
Safdarjang	23	08
Palam	21	06

Delhi Palam Today
21°C The dry weather to prevail. Mist and haze will occur in cold morning. Day will be pleasant with cool breeze. Night also will be cold.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
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4. Development work of Service Road for CMJAY, Sector-26, Pratap Nagar, Sanganer, Jaipur are invited from interested bidders from 16.12.2024 to 25.12.2024 up to 6:00 PM. Other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajarshthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state & <http://urban.rajasthan.gov.in/rhb> Department Website.

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Patnaik urges BJD leaders to fight for Odisha's tribals, oppose Polavaram project

Press Trust of India

BHUBANESWAR



There could be environmental damage, as a large area of flora and fauna will be submerged by the river's backwaters. FILE PHOTO

Naveen Patnaik (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik on Saturday urged party members to intensify their fight for justice on behalf of Odisha's tribal communities, who are likely to be severely impacted because of the Polavaram dam project in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Mr. Patnaik's call came after a delegation of party leaders met him to brief him on their recent visit to Delhi, where they raised concerns with the Centre regarding the project's potential impacts.

Official sources told *The Hindu* that the State had time and again written to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to meet the cost of these air-lift operations directly, as the Ministry had "committed to bearing these costs after the floods of 2018."

who submitted the demand letter to the Central Government. I advised them to continue fighting for the rights of the people. #BJDWidOdisha."

Delegation leader Debi Prasad Mishra said they apprised Mr. Patnaik regarding their interaction with Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil and senior officials from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, as well as the chairpersons of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and the Central Water Commission.

Former MP and prominent tribal leader Pradeep Majhi said, "The party will launch an agitation from January." He also highlighted the potential environmental damage, noting that a large area of flora and fauna in Malkangiri will be submerged by Godavari river's backwaters.

Naidu lauds TDP

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

TDP national president N. Chandrababu Naidu congratulated party leaders for enrolling 73 lakh people as members in 50 days since October 26, 2024.

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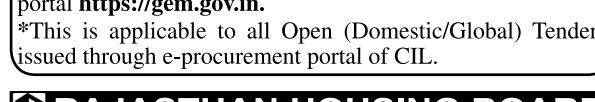
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IN BRIEF



Punjab women's commission summons SGPC chief Dhami

The Punjab State Commission for Women issued a notice to Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Harjinder Singh Dhami on Saturday for his alleged derogatory remarks against his predecessor, Bibi Jagir Kaur. Commission chairperson Raj Lali Gill has directed Mr. Dhami to appear before the panel in person and submit a written explanation by December 17. Mr. Gill took *suo motu* (on its own) notice of the matter involving alleged derogatory remarks targeting Ms. Kaur. PTI

Former Tamil Nadu Congress chief Elangovan no more

Erode (East) MLA and former Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) chief E.V.K.S. Elangovan died in Chennai on Saturday after a brief illness. He was 73. He is survived by his wife and a son. Mr. Elangovan, a former Union Minister of State, would have turned 74 next Saturday. He was admitted to the MIO Hospital, where he breathed his last, on November 13. Hailing from a prominent political family of T.N., Mr. Elangovan was the son of E.V.K. Sampath, one of the founder-members of the DMK who broke ranks with the Dravidian major in 1961.

Dadar Hanuman temple will be regularised, says Fadnavis

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI

BJP leaders on Saturday claimed that a demolition notice issued by the Railways to a temple outside Mumbai's Dadar station has been stayed, with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis saying it would be regularised as per rules.

The assertions by the ruling party leaders came a day after Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray slammed the BJP over the notice.

BJP legislator Mangal Prabhat Lodha said the Dadar Hanuman temple will be protected. Mr. Lodha visited the shrine near platform no. 12 at Dadar East, adjacent to the Central Railway Station and interacted with the temple trustees.

Mr. Lodha said he had spoken with Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and an order has been issued to halt the demolition.

Mr. Thackeray on Friday claimed that Railways had issued a 'fatwa' (edict) to bring down the 80-year-old Hanuman temple built by

porters. Taking a dig at the BJP's "ek hai to safe hai" slogan, he said even temples are not safe in the saffron party's regime.

Responding to a question about the temple, Mr. Fadnavis, who was at the 'Pune Book Festival 2024', said, "The process of classification of temples is underway. Ancient temples are preserved. The issue of Dadar Hanuman temple will be discussed with the railway administration and a solution will be found. We will regularise it as per the rules."

Wife of techie who ended his life files anticipatory bail plea

Press Trust of India

PRAYAGRAJ

Engineer Atul Subhash's estranged wife and her family members, whom he had accused of harassment, have filed anticipatory bail pleas in the Allahabad High Court.

Subhash, a 34-year-old engineer, ended his life in Bengaluru on Monday, allegedly due to harassment by his estranged wife and her family members. A case of abetment to suicide

has been filed against his wife and her relatives.

The anticipatory bail applications have been filed by Subhash's wife, her mother, brother and uncle.

The bail pleas came after Bengaluru City Police on Friday issued summons to his wife and asked her to appear before it within three days.

Those in distress may contact Sanjivini, Society for Mental Health, suicide prevention helpline 011-40769002.

BJP govt. working for women's empowerment: Rajasthan CM

The Hindu Bureau

JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Saturday said the "respectable status" of women in the State was a symbol of a strong society, even as his government had been working for women's empowerment since he assumed office a year ago.

Mr. Sharma said women had played an important role in bringing the BJP to power in the 2023 Assembly election. Mr. Sharma was address-

men's self-help groups (SHG) through the Mahila Nidhi Bank, besides transferring the revolving fund of ₹15,000 each to 10,000 SHGs.

Mr. Sharma said crimes against women had decreased under the BJP's regime as significant actions had been taken in accordance with the promises made in the ruling party's manifesto. "The Kalki patrolling units, 250 of which have started operating, are providing round-the-clock security to women," he said.

How the famed campus of Meghalaya's oldest university slid down the slippery slope

SPOTLIGHT

Rahul Karmakar

Lum Sohpetbneng, lording over the man-made Umiam lake about 20 kilometres short of Meghalaya's capital Shillong, is one of the most revered peaks for the matrilineal Khasi tribe. Sohpetbneng, meaning 'navel of heaven', is believed to have had a mythical umbilical cord connecting heaven and earth before human pride and sin severed the link. Every second Sunday of February, the Khasi community, adhering to the indigenous faith, trek 7 km to the peak, pledging to keep their unique traditions alive.

Everything else that bears the peak's name in Meghalaya is expected to be sacred. Occupying an uneven glade surrounded by pine trees, the Sohpetbneng Hostel is no longer ethereal. It used to be a coveted accommodation for some 500 postgraduate students of the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) at Umshing-Mawkyroh on the outskirts of Shillong. Today, the hostel blocks stand like haunted houses, the walls and roofs covered with moss and an outgrowth of plants. Chhilling, the adjoining hostel named after a mythological place believed to be the an-

cestral origin of the Mizo and Chin people, looks similar.

"The boarders of these two blocks were evacuated more than three years ago, after the buildings were marked unsafe. This sums up what's wrong with our university," says Ram Toi, adviser of the NEHU Students' Union (NEHUSU).

Students say the hostels fell into disrepair around the time Prabha Shankar Shukla took over from S.K. Srivastava as NEHU's Vice Chancellor, in July 2021. In the early 1990s, the university – the first Central institution in the Northeast and the oldest in Meghalaya – shifted to its present address from two prime locations in Shillong.

On November 5, 2024, the students temporarily locked the gates of the university to protest Shukla's alleged mismanagement. The crumbling infrastructure was not the only reason. The irregularities, they say, made NEHU slide from the list of India's top 100 universities, from 59th spot on the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in 2021 to 66 in 2022 and 80 in 2023, before dropping off the list in 2024.

"In the past, we produced brilliant students who are occupying top positions in government and corporate jobs. A decade ago, we had our best NIRF



College daze: Students on a hunger strike that was called off after 16 days in November, at the North Eastern Hill University in Shillong, Meghalaya. RITU RAJ KONWAR

ranking of 15," says Nirmalendu Saha, the Dean of Life Sciences. He has been asked to fill in for Shukla until a two-member inquiry committee constituted by the Education Ministry submits its report by December 13. Shortly after the hunger strike that was called off on the 16th day, Shukla and other officials in the line of fire were asked to go on leave during the probe by the panel headed by former University Grants Commission Chairperson D.P. Singh.

The students were not the first to revolt against Shukla, who, they alleged, hand-picked incompetent officials, including the Registrar, Colonel (retired) Omkar Singh; and Deputy Registrar (Academics) Amit Gupta. Weeks before the

students went on strike demanding the removal of the trio, the NEHU Teachers' Association (NEHUTA) wrote to the Prime Minister's Office underscoring the need to save the academic atmosphere in the university.

The NEHUTA also petitioned Nirupam Chakma, a member of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, saying in the letter: "He [Shukla] has attempted to completely change the harmonious tribal, ethnic, and other Indian character of NEHU into a monolith of a Hindu Brahmanical university."

Acting arbitrarily
The NEHUTA says the Vice Chancellor appointed Col. Singh about a year ago as the Controller of Examina-

tions by keeping out qualified and academically experienced candidates of ethnic origins from Meghalaya. It says Singh did not have any experience of working in a college or university and his "serious lack of understanding of the functioning of the university system" led to delays in the declaration of results of the CUET exams. After six months into his job, Singh was made the Registrar and he appointed himself the supervisor of the university's CUET centre.

"The Registrar started interfering in academic matters, and writing comments on the files of teachers and researchers despite not being qualified to do so," NEHUTA vice president Prasenjit Biswas says. He adds that Gupta was brought from a

private institution and made the Deputy Registrar (Academics) without any qualification to handle the responsibility. Both students and teachers claim that Shukla denied qualified tribal teachers their right to be appointed as Deans. They allege he appointed 87 teachers in 2023, mostly non-tribal and from outside Meghalaya. This led to court cases for procedural lapses and bias towards candidates from northern India.

He allegedly also did not fill up vacancies in some departments and vetoed NEHU's research collaborations with foreign universities such as Heidelberg, Kyoto, Bologna, and Indiana, and scotched a move to set up an offshore campus in Thailand's Chiang Mai. They say the V-C stayed away from the university often, resulting in denying promotions to 18 senior professors who retired without getting their dues, a NEHUTA dossier on the V-C stated.

The non-teaching staff,

too, have been unhappy with the V-C's style of functioning. The confrontation began with the appointment of Rohit Prasad as a technical officer from outside the State in 2022, without any advertisement, constitution of a screening committee, interview, or terms and conditions of employment. The appoint-

ment was cancelled in 2023 after a Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the students, teachers, and non-teaching staff protested the violation of the model cadre recruitment rules for non-teaching posts of Central universities.

A day before the students started their indefinite hunger strike on November 5, the NEHU Non-Teaching Staff Association went on an indefinite pen-down strike. "There has been an inordinate delay in the recruitment and promotion of the non-teaching staff. According to the UGC norms, the employment ratio of the teaching to non-teaching staff should be 1:1. Our strength is now 250, much less than the sanctioned posts that need to be filled up for academic excellence," the association's president W.R. Synrem says. The NEHU website claims the teaching faculty strength is more than 300.

Right and left
Congress MLA Ronnie V. Lyngdoh says the graph of NEHU, as with a few other higher education institutions in the Northeast, began nosediving after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power at the Centre. "There has been an attempt to place unqualified people in posts only because of their RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] and BJP backgrounds," he says.

The Meghalaya unit of the BJP, a constituent of the State's coalition government, threw its weight behind the agitating stakeholders of the university but dismissed allegations that the RSS and BJP were behind the ongoing turmoil.

"A conclusion cannot be drawn when the matter is under probe," senior BJP leader and the State's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister, Alexander Laloo Hek says.

The JAC did not delve into Shukla's ideological background, but said NEHU needs a V-C with empathy and a track record of leadership.

In a letter to the Principal Secretary of Higher Education in New Delhi on November 27, Shukla denied flouting guidelines to appoint administrative officials. He also accused a co-accused of hatching a plan in September to "create chaos on the campus". The NEHUTA trashed Shukla's letter as a web of lies.

Amid the ongoing churn,

the students, teachers, and non-teaching staff of NEHU reviving the university is tougher than the climb up the steep Sohpetbneng.

LINK TO FULL STORY

» <https://bit.ly/4fzsCdr>

RJD promises to launch monthly cash transfer scheme for Bihar women

Women will get a monthly assistance of ₹2,500 under the Mai-Behan Maan Yojana if party is voted to power next year, says Tejashwi Yadav; promises scheme within a month of govt. formation

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday announced that his party would launch a cash transfer scheme for women within a month of forming the government if it wins the Assembly election due next year.

In neighbouring Jharkhand, the Maiya Samman Yojana – a similar cash transfer scheme for women – is said to have helped the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led Hemant Soren government retain power. In Maharashtra, the recent victory of the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance was also aided by its Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, under which women got a monthly assistance of ₹1,500. Similarly, the Madhya Pradesh go-



A step ahead: RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav at a press conference in Darbhanga on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

der the Mai Bahin Maan Yojana."

Benefits entire family

The RJD leader said the foundation of the reconstruction of Bihar would be incomplete without the prosperity of women. "When women receive cash, they will invest more money in their family's well-being, such as nutritious food for the whole family, healthcare, and children's education. The positive effect of cash transfers is significant in terms of improved economic conditions for women, and benefits the entire family and community," he said.

Mr. Yadav said the cash transfer scheme would be designed with complementary support such as financial literacy training, which would further promote women empowerment and long-term economic independence.



Revanth Reddy

he said, adding that the actor's rally-like arrival caused fans to rush, resulting in the fatal stampede.

He also dismissed allegations of personal bias.

I respect law: actor

Meanwhile, Allu Arjun was released on Saturday morning from the jail.

After reaching home, the actor thanked his followers and others for their love and support and said he is a law-abiding citizen and respects the law.

"I'll cooperate with them and I'll do the needful. And very importantly, I would like to give my condolences once again to the family. It (death of a woman) is very very unfortunate," he told the media. (With inputs from PTD)

All are equal before law, says Telangana CM on actor's arrest

The Hindu Bureau

HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has defended actor Allu Arjun's arrest, saying that the "law applies equally to all citizens, irrespective of their status".

During a discussion, organised by a media organisation in New Delhi, on Friday, the CM spoke about the stampede during the premiere of *Pushpa 2* at Sandhya theatre that resulted in a woman's death.

Mr. Reddy clarified that police acted according to law and denied any political reasons for the arrest. "A movie star or a political star, our government doesn't care. We only care about who committed the crime. A woman died in the incident. Who is responsible for this," he asked.

Mr. Reddy said the cash transfer scheme would be designed with complementary support such as financial literacy training, which would further promote women empowerment and long-term economic independence.

men's self-help groups (SHG) through the Mahila Nidhi Bank, besides transferring the revolving fund of ₹15,000 each to 10,000 SHGs.

Mr. Sharma said crimes against women had decreased under the BJP's regime as significant actions had been taken in accordance with the promises made in the ruling party's manifesto. "The Kalki patrolling units, 250 of which have started operating, are providing round-the-clock security to women," he said.

ya Swayamsevak Sangh] and BJP backgrounds," he says.

The Meghalaya unit of the BJP, a constituent of the State's coalition government, threw its weight behind the agitating stakeholders of the university but dismissed allegations that the RSS and BJP were behind the ongoing turmoil. "A conclusion cannot be drawn when the matter is under probe," senior BJP leader and the State's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister, Alexander Laloo Hek says.

The JAC did not delve into Shukla's ideological background, but said NEHU needs a V-C with empathy and a track record of leadership. In a letter to the Principal Secretary of Higher Education in New Delhi on November 27, Shukla denied flouting guidelines to appoint administrative officials. He also accused a co-accused of hatching a plan in September to "create chaos on the campus". The NEHUTA trashed Shukla's letter as a web of lies.

Amid the ongoing churn, the students, teachers, and non-teaching staff of NEHU reviving the university is tougher than the climb up the steep Sohpetbneng.

LINK TO FULL STORY

» <https://bit.ly/4fzsCdr>



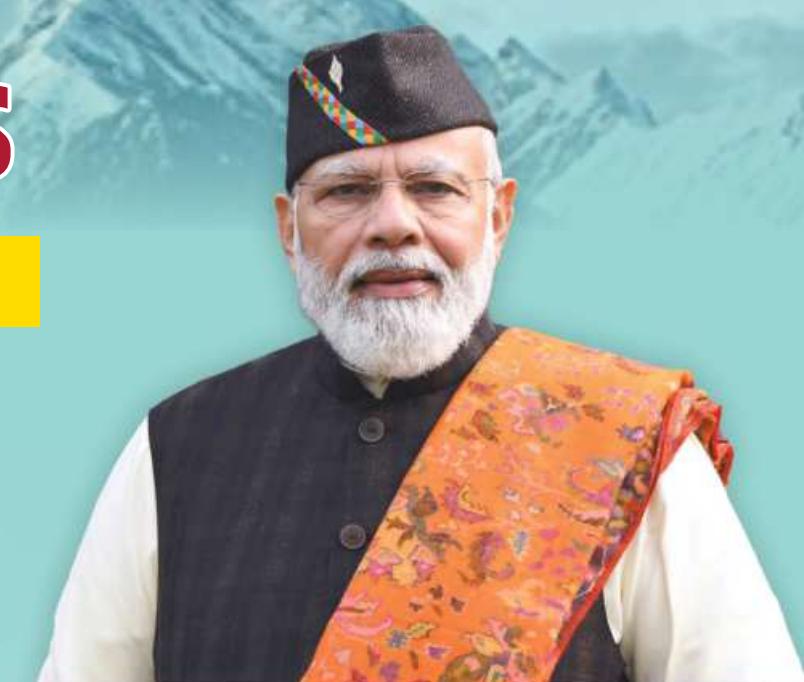
38th National Games

28 Jan - 14 Feb 2025



Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Uttarakhand is steadily advancing on the path of progress. It is a matter of pride for the state that we have been entrusted with hosting the 38th National Games. The sacred land of Devbhoomi will now also emerge as a hub of sports excellence. Just as Uttarakhand successfully hosted the G20 Summit, the National Games too will be an event of historical significance.

Pushkar Singh Dhami
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand



There are two main pillars for the creation of a developed India in the 21st century – pride in our heritage and making every possible effort for development. Today, Uttarakhand is strengthening both these pillars. This decade will be the decade of Uttarakhand.

Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

LAUNCH CEREMONY OF LOGO, ANTHEM, MASCOT, TORCH & JERSEY

on 15th December, 2024 (Sunday) | 05:00 PM onwards
VENUE : Himadri (Ice Rink), Maharana Pratap Sports College,
Raipur, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

... CHIEF GUEST ...

PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI
Chief Minister of Uttarakhand

RAKSHA NIHIL KHADSE
Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports
Government of India

... In the August Presence of ...

REKHA ARYA
Minister of Sports & Youth Welfare
Govt. of Uttarakhand

Dr. P.T. USHA
President
Indian Olympic Association

UMESH SHARMA 'KAU'
MLA, Raipur



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AFFLUENT BUSINESS WOMAN woman, 42yrs, Slim,tall,fit,athletic. Runs own firm. Looking for similar background (even younger) Groom. Contact 9342075206

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CHRISTIAN PARENTS seeks alliance for their born again ornament wearing Dentist daughter (27) (Kerala) BDS, MPH working in Australia in a Govt. org. Language / caste no bar. Contact : WhatsApp 9446 587270, 9447 927200

GROOM NEEDED Age 51 Good Facility Well Settled. Comfortable. Individual Life Partner Needed Ct: 99625 82006

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SC, BE, MBA, Divorced, Employed, Age 37yrs, One kid, Chennai. Invite Suitable Groom with good job, aged around 40yrs. Call: 9600151860

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DOCTOR GIRL 27YRS MBBS MD/PG ongoing/AIMS. From highly reputed sunni muslim family chittagong. All Indian sunni muslim call 982749577

SUNNI MUSLIM Urdu, 33yrs, 168cm, 55kg. Never Married, from Well Settled Family. Looking for PG Doctors Engineers from Well Settled Families. Preferably from South India, UK, Middle East. Ct: 9445516551

Hindu Agamadury Rajakulam 28 yrs MBBS seeks suitable doctor groom, pref. Chennai or any Districts. Subject no bar.Ct: 82208 79684 / 9447408740

DOCTOR GIRL 31/156 MBBS MD General Medicine, seeks Doctors suitable grooms 944743034, 9497168001

HINDU TAMIL BC Doctor 26/ 175 cm Fair, Clear Horoscope. Seeks Tall Handsome PG Doctors with Good Habits from Simple family. Contact with Full view photograph. Horoscope and biodata. Ph.T:700365364

BEAUTIFUL RICH DR Girl Veg 29 MD Gen Medicine Kettai Chennai seeks PG Dr Boy Veg only WhatsApp 9384063399

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

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

Wanted Bridegroom

USA 27 year old Doctor from Tamilnadu doing Neurology residency at New Jersey seeks Doctor groom

Whatsapp : 9677026459

HINDU, Adi Dravida, 24yrs/156cm, Fair, tall, S.tsettled in Chennai seeks Doctor Groom. WhatsApp: 9442 18149

Vanniar, Affluent Family (Divorce) aged 33 years, Dr. MS (O&G) seeks same profession bridegroom, sub cast to be. Call: 88941 34981

MUDALIAR 32/165 DM Cardiology Seeks, Mudaliar PG Doctors only Sub-sect No Bar Ct: 9876610580 77056

Doctor MD ANS Hindu, Nadar 29/70/170 seeks groom EQ details Contact: 9976610580 944551250.

ENGLISH

CSI 26/162CM BTech (NIT) MBA (IIT), MNC employed, only child of well settled Tamil-Malayali parents, seeks suitable groom. CT 9894683575, velloretwins@gmail.com

IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

Nair Girl, 27/161, Pooram, IAS Officer, Contact: 9020408981, 8914172800.

MALAYALAM

MUSLIM GIRL, 25/164, BA English at EFLU, MA English from UK awaiting results, now in India. Seeks alliance from educated and well settled grooms. 9562006500

MALAYALAM

THRISUR EZHAVA girl 30/ 157. M.Tech doing PHD.caste no bar 9497073049

PARENTS, PROFESSIONALS, Hindu, elite family, at UK for long with only daughter, beautiful, 21 years, 168 cm, pursuing postgraduation in Law at UK, seeking proposals with horoscope copy from elite professionals. nath_vj@yahoo.co.uk

SAIVAVELLA GIRL MBBS chithira thulaana/26/154 preparing PC seeks doctor/professional. 8547230711

TAMIL

LOOKING FOR Elite Bridegroom for 27 yr, smart girl (Nadar) MBA from NUS, Singapore, not particular about Horoscope. Broad Minded with Modern outlook. WhatsApp: 93421 04357

ADI DRavidAR Remarriage 37 / 164cm B/E working Chennai sees Suitable Profile CNB Geetham 9884858014

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

MUDALIAR: 25/ V.Fair, B.Tech, M.Tech (IIT), MNC, Project Manager, Chennai, 150.00PM.Well settled family, seeks groom abroad / Business - 8925019776

HINDU NADAR 32/yr/164cm, B.Tech star-Revathy work-IT seeks IT other Profil Groom 994410712/ 9514952555

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

RC NADAR, 26yrs, MBBS, MD, elite family, seeks Suitable Groom Contact: 9380791999/ 9841329471

CHRISTIAN, NADAR, 33 yrs, Divorced, MBBS, MD, at Tirunelveli. Income 30 lakhs. Ph. 7354631111

CHRISTIAN, RC, 30 yrs, B.E. Software Engineer at Chennai. Income 25 lakhs. Ph. 8138900530

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

CHRISTIAN-RC SOZIHA Vellarai, Doctor, 27 yrs, Pursuing PG, Chennai. Seeks PQM Groom. Call 9804150909

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

HINDU 591133 MBBS MD/BD Pulmonologist, 161cm Aswini, Mesam. Mail: sendhu94@gmail.com seeks Doctor, IPS, IAS

HINDU, MUKKALATHOR, 23 yrs, B.Sc, Business at Madurai.Income 1crore. Ph. 8138901294

HINDU, MUDALIYAR, 28 yrs, MA, Teacher at Chennai, Income 6 Lakhs ph. 9072777822

HINDU KONGU Chettiyar 33 yrs, 163 cms, Medium complexion, B.Sc BE, CBE, Looking for educated groom settled in Chennai after 1987. Ct: 9790981019

29Y/5FT URDU MUSLIM girl B.Tech, MSc(MB) working at MNC from educated affluent family.寻求 well educated and settled boy from India/ abroad. Ph: 97810 52325

34/ B.E.MBA, MNC unmarried girl, emp., educated family seeks Chennai employed B.E. Engr SMU 9840920774

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

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HINDU, MUDALIYAR, 28 yrs, MA, Teacher at Chennai, Income 6 Lakhs ph. 9072777822

HINDU CASTE no bar, 22 Yrs, B.A, Business at bangalore, income 1 crore. Ph. 8138901294

CHRISTIAN CSI, Divorce, age 42, seeking working Professional. God fearing Christian Groom from educated family. Mob: 9839865678

VELLALAR/PILLAI 29 MBA (IIM) AGM MNC Chennai 27L PA Seeks DOCTOR Officer Govt PSU IM IT NIT Groom. CNB. 9944113213

SEEKING QUALIFIED Groom in Chennai for 42/152cm Divorcee No Issues, Msc.Ph, working Pvt Comp: 7094562548

Yler Vadamar Bharatwajam Uthiradam Nov 92 B Com, MS, CPA working in Europe looking for a boy well settled from good family. 9941008316

GROOM WANTED 26yrs, B.Tech, Elite business family in Chennai. Caste No Bar Ct: 9710093399/ 9710091999

VIP BUSINESS FAMILY South India's Leading Business Family seeking a groom for their daughter completed studies abroad

GROOM PREFERENCE Born Before 1992 from an leading Brahmin family Based in India

megawedding2021@gmail.com

BRIDEGROOM WANTED

Hindu, Vellarai 28-years 167cm Meenam, Fair, Slim, Ph.D., Lecturer, Rs.9 LPA from Elite Family seeks Suitable, Qualified, Cultured, Good Personality Groom upto 30-years.

Contact:

Dr. T. V. Govindan, Professor of Surgery (Grand Father of the Bride)

98403 75075 98424 25255

GROOM WANTED

MUDALIAR, 24 yrs, 165 cms, B.Arch, Lives in Chennai, Father is a Businessman, Upper middle class family.

Looking for a like minded match from the same community.

Contact: 9080629216

WELLAR/LAVALI 30 BE (30) Chennai, Only Daughter (25) Fair & Good Looking, MBBS, (MD) DVL, Rich Affluent, well-Educated family seeks suitable Good Looking Doctor Groom with clean habits from Hindu Nadar. ct: 94447 59246 ct: 94449 68235

BRIDEGROOM WANTED for a well-to-do hindu family bride age 42, first marriage, degree-MSW, want from (FC, BC, MBC), working within India, CT: 9080359664.

HINDU NADAR Chennai Divorcee of 37 yrs in Government job seeks working bridegroom below 41yrs. 944315644

CASTE NO Bar, 25yrs, BE, MBA, Elite business family, seeks Suitable Groom Contact: 9710093399/ 9710091999

NAIDU 43/150, Uthirattai, Ph.D. Professor, First Marriage, Sub-sect no bar, seeks suitable Groom.CPh: 735816806

HINDU SC, 27 yrs, B.E, MBA, Business Analyst at Chennai. Income 25 lakhs. Ph. 8138900305

VELLALAR/PILLAI 30 BE (30) Chennai, Only Daughter (25) Fair & Good Looking, MBBS, (MD) DVL, Rich Affluent, well-Educated family seeks suitable Good Looking Doctor Groom with clean habits from Hindu Nadar. ct: 94447 59246 ct: 94449 68235

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IAS / ALLIED SERVICES

Nair Girl, 27/161, Pooram, IAS Officer, Contact: 9020408981, 8914172800.

MALAYALAM

MUSLIM GIR

From Page One**'Cong. subverted the spirit of Constitution'**

The Prime Minister cited several examples of this: the imposition of the Emergency by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi; the passage of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights Under Divorce) Act under the Rajiv Gandhi government, reversing a Supreme Court verdict on post-divorce maintenance for Muslim women; and the setting up of the National Advisory Council under the UPA government which he said asserted the power of then-Congress president Sonia Gandhi over then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

He claimed that the Congress was fond of the "word *jumla*", especially the slogan "*Garibi Hatao* (remove poverty)", which had brought them to power though the situation of the poor remained the same.

"The next generation is also into the same game," he said. Without naming Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, he said that an "arrogant" person had torn up the decision of the Cabinet when the Manmohan Singh-led UPA government was in power.

Mr. Modi emphasised that leaders like him who came from ordinary families could never have reached where they did but for the strength of the Constitution.

His government, Mr. Modi said, had repealed Article 370 to unify the country and bring Jammu and Kashmir under the ambit of the Indian Constitution more fully, brought in GST to roll out a "one nation, one tax" regime, along with digital architecture... health insurance for the poor, as well as free food grains.

The Prime Minister said that India has resolved to become a developed country by 2047 and its unity is the biggest requirement to achieve this goal. "Our Constitution is the basis of our unity," he said.

Mr. Modi ended his speech by asking parliamentarians to take 11 *sankalps* (resolutions). These include a resolve to honour the Constitution and not weaponise it politically, a swipe at the Opposition campaign. Other resolutions included development for all citizens, the facilitation of women-led development, and working towards "*Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat*".

South Korea lawmakers impeach President

Chief Justice Moon Hyung-bae vowed to hold "a swift and fair trial". If the court backs his removal, Mr. Yoon will become the second president in South Korean history to be successfully impeached.

Two hundred votes were needed for the impeachment to pass, and opposition lawmakers needed to convince at least eight parliamentarians from Mr. Yoon's conservative People Power Party (PPP) to switch sides.

"Today's impeachment is the great victory of the people," opposition Democratic Party floor leader Park Chan-dae said.

PPP lawmaker Kim Sang-wook told broadcaster JTBC that Mr. Yoon had "completely betrayed the values of conservatism".

"That is why we, as ruling party lawmakers, have decided to remove him ourselves," he said.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo – now the nation's interim leader – said in an address to the nation that he "deeply acknowledges the heavy responsibility for the current situation" and "sincerely apologises to the people".

"What is most important right now is that there must not be even the slightest gap in the administration of state affairs," said Han, who convened a National Security Council late Saturday evening.

A Seoul police official told AFP at least 2,00,000 people had massed outside parliament in support of removing the President.

Bastar village tunes in to TV for first time

Puvarti, a Maoist violence-affected village in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, received TV sets under a govt. initiative; children, women, and the elderly watched programmes for hours, says Collector

Shubhomoy Sikdar

RAIPUR

Puvarti, a Maoist violence-affected village in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, tuned in to a TV broadcast for the first time in its history.

Though television broadcasts began in India in 1959 and OTT platforms are now a common sight in most urban households, for Puvarti, a community event to watch a host of programmes on *Doordarshan* was its first introduction to the humble television set.

The Chhattisgarh government, in a statement, called the event a transformative milestone for the Bastar region that comprises seven districts, including



New horizon: Children at Puvarti gather to watch television for the first time in the village. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sukma. The initiative was launched under the State government's Niyan Nellalar Yojana to promote development and extend benefits of welfare schemes to remotest villages. The main objective was to ensure

Haryana police use tear gas, water cannons on farmers

Protesters suspend their third attempt to resume foot march to New Delhi after over a dozen of them sustained injuries; they tried to enter Haryana through the Shambhu-Ambala boundary

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

The Haryana police on Saturday used tear gas and water cannons to disperse farmers and farm-labourers after they attempted to enter the State at the Shambhu-Ambala boundary with Punjab as part of their *Delhi Chalo* foot march in support of their demands.

They suspended their march for the day after around a dozen of the 101 farmers suffered injuries following tear gas shelling. The group of farmers and farm labourers began their march from Shambhu toward Ambala in Haryana.

As the farmers' group attempted to make their way by pushing and throwing away the multi-layer barricades, the Haryana police resorted to tear gas shelling.

The injured were taken to a nearby hospital in ambulances stationed at the protest site.

Groups of farmers under the banner of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political), the two umbrella bodies that are spearheading farmer's agitation in Punjab, have



Stopped at the boundary: Security personnel use water cannons to disperse farmers agitating at the Shambhu boundary in Patiala. A total of 101 farmers resumed their march to Delhi on Saturday. PTI

been, since February 13, camping at Shambhu-Ambala and Khanauri-Jind, the boundaries between Haryana and Punjab, after being stopped from entering Haryana.

They had been attempting to march to New Delhi to press for their demands. A legal guarantee for purchasing their crops at a minimum support price and a farm-loan waiver are among their key demands.

KMM coordinator Sarwan Singh Pandher said

more than a dozen demonstrating farmers had sustained injuries, after which the march was suspended. He alleged that the police used water mixed with chemicals through cannons to target farmers. Rajat Gulia, the Deputy Superintendent of Police of Ambala cantonment, dismissed the allegation.

'Govt. used force'
"The government used force on the group of 101 farmers, who were marching

peacefully. Even the Opposition parties are not raising our concern in the ongoing session of Parliament. On December 16, we will hold tractor-march outside Punjab across the country. And on December 18 we will block railway tracks in Punjab," Mr. Pandher said.

This was the third attempt by the farmers after their attempts to restart the foot march to New Delhi on December 6 and December 8.

The Hindu Bureau

LUCKNOW

The local administration in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal on Saturday conducted an anti-encroachment drive and investigated electricity theft in the Shahi Jama Masjid locality and adjoining areas.

While officials said multiple instances of power theft were discovered in homes and religious sites during searches, fear gripped residents who worry about high-handedness and victimisation by authorities.

"These drives are creating fear in us. Large contingent of police personnel are visiting the area every day," said Sarfaraz Ahmed, a local.

The administration also found a temple that had allegedly been encroached upon.

"Continuous actions in Sambhal are aimed at polarising society. The attempt is to selectively single out the Muslim community. Our leader Akhilesh [Yadav] ji is continuously pointing out that the BJP is trying to create friction in society through surveys, selective so-called anti-encroachment drives and police actions, to communalise the society for 2027 Assembly polls," Samajwadi Party spokesperson Ameeque Jamei said.

Cong. should 'justify' its leadership role in INDIA bloc: Omar Abdullah

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday targeted the ruling National Conference for "failing to deliver despite the massive mandate of voters" in recent Assembly election.

Speaking at the general council meeting of her party in Srinagar, Ms. Mufti said, "When we had just 16 or 28 MLAs with us, we implemented our agenda even as the BJP was ruling at the Centre. The NC has 50 MLAs and three Members of Parliament, even then it's not able to deliver. It lacks courage," Ms. Mufti said.

The meeting passed a joint resolution that called for reinvigorating its struggle for peace with dignity for the State of J&K.



INDIA bloc's existence can't just be about six months before Parliament elections. Our existence has to be something more than that
OMAR ABDULLAH
J&K Chief Minister

claim to, they are natural sort of leaders of an Opposition movement," he said in his first interview after becoming Chief Minister in October.

Yet there is a sense of disquiet among some of the allies because they feel the Congress is "not doing enough to justify it or to earn it or to keep it (the position of leading the INDIA bloc)". "That's something the Congress might wish to consider," he said.

Mr. Abdullah stressed

the need for sustained interactions beyond the electoral cycle, noting that the alliance's current approach appeared sporadic and ineffective.

"Our existence can't just be about six months before Parliament elections. Our existence has to be something more than that. The last time we met was when the Lok Sabha results had only just come out," he said.

Mr. Abdullah's comments suggest underlying

Acid attack survivor gets full relief after 5-year delay

Moyurie Som
KOLKATA

Rupjat Yeasmin, a 23-year-old acid attack survivor, will finally receive the full compensation of ₹15 lakh she is entitled to from the West Bengal government's legal services body, over five years after it was initially recommended, and a decade after she suffered the horrific attack.

The State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) has directed that Ms. Yeasmin be given ₹12 lakh by December 21 this year, in addition to the ₹3 lakh already received, through the enhanced compensation recommended by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in 2019.

Ms. Yeasmin was a minor at the time of the incident, according to Shaheen Malik, founder and director of Brave Souls Foundation and an acid attack survivor herself who helped with her rehabilitation.

"Her elder sister's brother-in-law used to harass her with marriage proposals. Yeasmin and her parents did not agree to the demands," she said. "Then one night in 2014, around 2 a.m. when she was asleep, the man's father threw acid on her."

Ms. Malik added that the survivor's nose and one ear were badly burnt, and she had to undergo many surgeries.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board had adopted a resolution in its meeting held on December 23, 2019, that Ms. Yeasmin be given a total compensation of ₹15 lakhs.

However, this was neither communicated to Ms. Yeasmin nor provided to her in all these years," advocate Dibyayan Banerji said. A writ petition was filed on her behalf in the High Court.

The SLSA took cognisance of the representation and, after several hearings, said she would be given full compensation.

Protests return to Kolkata streets over R.G. Kar case

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Protest rallies and demonstrations demanding justice for the doctor raped and murdered at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital returned to Kolkata on Saturday, a day after a court granted bail to two accused in the case.

Junior doctors, under the banner of the West Bengal Junior Doctors Front (WBJDF), took out a rally from Karunamayee to CGO Complex in Salt Lake area, where the office of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is located.

The parents of the trainee doctor joined the rally and blamed the CBI for the bail granted to former principal of the hospital Sandip Ghosh and ex-officer in-charge of the Tala police station Abhijit Mondal.

"If the CBI did not have evidence against the accused, why did it arrest them in the first case? Why are they playing with sentiments," asked Debasish Halder, one of the key members of WBJDF.

The Court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Sealdah, on Friday granted



No compromise: Members of Abhaya Manch stage a protest in Kolkata on Saturday, alleging lax investigation by the CBI. PTI

bail to both the accused who were arrested on charges of tampering with the evidence in the case.

Not only the junior doctors, but also the supporters of the SUCI (Communist), Congress and SFI, the students' wing of the CPI (M), took out rallies across the city.

PM Modi is a 'distorian' par excellence, says Congress

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday termed the 11 resolutions articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Lok Sabha speech as "hollow" and called him a "distorian" par excellence who "puts WhatsApp University to shame."

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra likened his speech in the Lok Sabha to a "double period of mathematics" from school that "bored us." She slammed Mr. Modi's 11 resolutions as "hollow" and said if there is zero tolerance towards corruption then why doesn't the BJP agree to a discussion on the Adani issue.

Congress general secretary in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, said: "Today in the Lok Sabha, he [Mr. Modi] showed that he is also a distorionist par excellence. Some people lie in their self-interest, but our self-styled non-biological PM does so because it is in his very nature. He puts WhatsApp University to shame," he said.

BJP wants to run the country by *Manusmriti*, says Rahul

Drawing parallels to the Eklavya story, Rahul claims govt. policies are 'chopping off' the thumbs of youth, tillers, backward classes, poor people; he promises justice for kin of Hathras rape victim

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Making a point: Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi speaks during the Lok Sabha debate on the Constitution on Saturday. ANI

you are ridiculing Savarkar, you are abusing Savarkar, you are defaming Savarkar," Mr. Gandhi said.

Participating in a debate on the "Glorious journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India", Mr. Gandhi framed the current political battle as one in which the Congress and its allies were protectors of the Constitution while the BJP wanted to run the country according to *Manusmriti*.

"It is nice that all of you are so-called defending the Constitution. But I want to ask you, do you stand by your leader's words? But when you speak about defending the Constitution,

He said the government was "chopping off" the thumb of the youth, tillers, backward class people, and the poor.

The Opposition leader also said that he had met the family of a 19-year-old woman who was gang-raped and killed in Hathras, and learnt that the accused perpetrators of the crime were roaming free while the victim's family members were scared to step out of their homes.

"Where is this written in the Constitution that the family of the person raped be confined to a house? This would be written in

your [BJP] book, not in the Constitution," he said.

"I want to say in this House, the people who believe in Ambedkar's Constitution – the INDIA bloc – we will collectively ensure that the family is relocated if you fail to do so," Mr. Gandhi announced.

He spoke of his meeting with the victims of the recent communal violence in Sambhal and accused the BJP of resorting to the politics of division and hatred.

"Wherever you go, you incite religious discord and spread hatred. Where is it written in the Constitution that one religion must fight another?" he asked, pointing to the BJP benches.

The Opposition leader concluded his speech by quoting B.R. Ambedkar's words on how political equality without social and economic equality eventually destroyed political equality as well.

"It is clear that political equality has ended and there is no social and economic equality either," Mr. Gandhi said.

Cong. never gave its due to Ambedkar, should apologise to 'lessen its sins', says Rijiju

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



plemented it, he said.

Mr. Rijiju said that while there had been 75 Constitutional amendments during Congress rule, during BJP governments, only 25 were done. "You must have forgotten how many times you have used Article 356," he quipped pointing to the Congress members in the House.

Participating in the debate in the Lok Sabha on the 'Discussion on the glorious journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India', Mr. Rijiju questioned the Congress's claims that minorities were not safe in the country.

Mr. Rijiju said that while

India has given equal voting rights to all, some claim that minorities had no rights in the country.

"Article 15 of the Constitution has given every Indian equal rights and opportunities. Whether the Congress or our government, all have worked in their own ways," he said noting that India was one country which gave voting rights to all before many others such as the U.S.

Mr. Rijiju, who is also the Minority Affairs Minis-

ter, said that Dr. Ambedkar was first kept out of the Cabinet, but later he along with Syama Prasad Mookerjee was included at Mahatma Gandhi's insistence.

He also alleged that the Congress "made" Dr. Ambedkar lose the 1952 Lok Sabha election.

Citing a document, the Union Minister said that while Dr. Ambedkar wanted reservation indefinitely till equality was achieved, Jawaharlal Nehru advocated for it to be in place for 10 years. "Nehru was always for Muslims, Ambedkar said," the Minister added.

While the Mandal Commission report came in 1980, the Congress government did not touch it till the V.P. Singh government supported by the BJP im-

plemented it, he said.

Participating in the debate, DMK member A. Raja said while Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had said in the House that there were many leaders who contributed to the making of the Constitution, but have not been given their due, can he name one instance when the RSS or the Hindu Mahasabha contributed to it.

He said Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar invented the two-nation theory, which Dr. Ambedkar opposed, but the Centre had put Dr. Ambedkar and Savarkar on the same pedestal.

He said that while his party does have grievances with the Congress, it is sitting with it to uphold the Constitution.

Ahead of Winter Session, Maharashtra prepares for Cabinet expansion

Abhinay Deshpande
MUMBAI

The expansion of the Devendra Fadnavis Cabinet in Maharashtra is likely to take place on Sunday, with new Ministers from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena, and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) set to take the oath of office at a function in Nagpur, official sources said.

The Cabinet expansion comes as the ruling coalition looks to finalise its power-sharing formula ahead of the Winter Session of the State legislature, which begins in Nagpur on December 16.

According to sources, over 30 MLAs are expected to be sworn in as Ministers during the ceremony. The Maharashtra Council of Ministers can accommodate up to 43 members, including Mr. Fadnavis, and his

Over 30 MLAs are expected to be sworn in as Ministers during a function scheduled to be held in Nagpur today

two deputies, Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar, who assumed office on December 5.

In the lead-up to the expansion, top leaders of the coalition held multiple rounds of deliberations to finalise ministerial allocations. BJP State president Chandrashekhar Bawankule met Mr. Shinde and Mr. Pawar on Friday to iron out details, while Mr. Pawar held separate consultations with NCP leaders at his residence.

Sources indicate that the BJP is expected to secure 20 Cabinet positions, while the Shiv Sena could get 11 or 12 and the NCP

nine or 10. However, differences persist, with the Shiv Sena reportedly pressing for the Home portfolio for Mr. Shinde, a demand Mr. Fadnavis is said to have resisted.

"Mr. Fadnavis is very particular that a few MLAs from the Shiv Sena should not be part of his Cabinet for various reasons, a message that he had conveyed to Mr. Shinde," a senior BJP leader told *The Hindu*.

Despite the electoral success, the coalition's formation faced initial hurdles. Mr. Shinde, initially reluctant to take up the Deputy Chief Minister's post, agreed to join the Cabinet after extensive discussions among allies and his legislators. Since then, the Shiv Sena has sought a prominent Cabinet role for Mr. Shinde and other leaders, signalling the complexities of managing a three-party alliance.

BJP trying for one-party system: J&K leaders

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR



The proposal is against the spirit of the idea of India and its federal structure, which gives protection to the country's huge diversities

M.Y. TARIGAMI
CPI(M) leader

Opposing the proposal for simultaneous polls, several Jammu and Kashmir leaders said on Saturday that it was actually aimed at creating a "one nation, one party" situation.

Former J&K Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti accused the BJP of "destroying the Constitution of India" while addressing a party function.

"India is a federal country. There is a federal structure here. One nation, one election is undermining this federal structure. They want to take us back to dic-

tatorship," she said.

National Conference leader Hasnain Masoodi, a former MP, said that the proposal seemed to pave the way for a nation with a

huge diversities. These diversities are the real face and real strength of India, which thwarted all attempts to disintegrate the country," Mr. Masoodi said at a press conference.

He pointed out that the issues raised during the Lok Sabha and State elections were completely different.

"The proposal will cause cracks in the federal and democratic system and strengthen the dictatorship," the CPI(M) leader said.

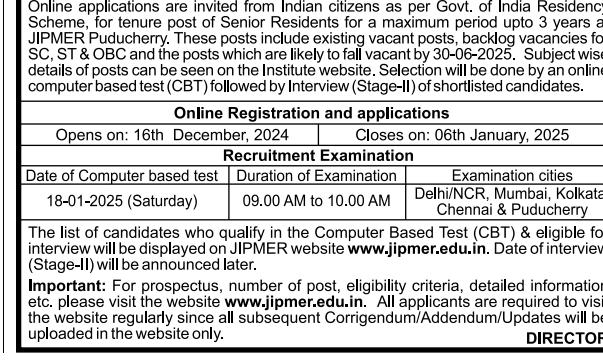
Are we not a part of this nation, asks Manipur MP Arthur

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

At the discussion on the Constitution's 75 years continued in the Lok Sabha on Saturday, Outer Manipur MP Alfred Kanngam Arthur cited the Oting killings of 2021 in Nagaland and the ongoing conflict in Manipur to raise questions about the government's commitment to the Constitution. The first-time MP from Uttar Pradesh's Nagina, Chandrashekhar Azad asked whether certain sections of society in India were as free as the Constitution envisioned them to be.

"Where was the Constitution on the day of the Oting massacre," asked Mr. Arthur. "Are we not a part of this nation? Why is it that till today, my PM, someone who this nation believes in, why is it that till date he is not answerable to the people of Manipur?" he said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Azad hailed the Constitution and its framers, saying that whatever progress the most marginalised sections had made was because of the Constitution. However, he asked: "The Constitution prescribes freedom of religion. Where is this freedom for Dalits, Muslims, Jains, Christians, Buddhists?"



TENDER NOTICE	
(A Govt. of Kerala Undertaking) Sankaramangalam, Kollam 691583 Phone: 0476-2651215 to 217 e-mail: md@kmmml.com	
For more details please visit E-Tendering Portal, https://etenders.kerala.gov.in or www.kmmml.com	
No.	Tender ID
1.	2024_KMMML_714354_1
2.	2024_KMMML_712329_1
3.	2024_KMMML_710965_1
4.	2024_KMMML_711421_1
5.	2024_KMMML_711507_1
6.	2024_KMMML_713469_1
7.	2024_KMMML_714282_1
8.	2024_KMMML_713321_1
9.	2024_KMMML_714747_1
10.	2024_KMMML_715692_1
11.	2024_KMMML_715441_2
12.	2024_KMMML_716117_1

Chavara 13.12.2024
Sd/- Managing Director for The Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd.

ODISHA CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION LTD.						
(A Govt. of Odisha Undertaking)						
Central workshop, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar-751010 (Odisha)						
Tel:0674-2580107 E-mail: gmocclws@gmail.com (GSTIN-21AAAC02571K22M)						
"e"- Procurement Notice No. 40/OCCL/2024-25 (on-line)						
Type of work : Supply of Single Reduction Worm Reducer for Kanupur Irrigation Project (130T Rope Drum Hoist)						
Total No. of work : 01 (One)						
Period of Supply : 120 (One Hundred Twenty) days						
Procurement Officer		Bid Identification No.	EMD through on-line transfer system	Cost of Tender document (Including GST) through on-line transfer system	Availability of tender (On-line)	Submission of Bid (On-line)
General Manager (Mech.), OCC Ltd., Central Workshop, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar		OCCL-MECH/CW/S/15/2024-25	Rs.1,40,000/- (Non-refundable)	16.12.2024	10.00 AM to 30.12.2024	5.00 PM

Date of opening of the Technical Bid: 31.12.2024 at 11.30 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the Govt. web-site (www.tendersodisha.gov.in)
Amendment/corrigendum/cancellation, if any shall be posted on-line only

Sd/- GENERAL MANAGER (MECH.)
OIPR-34163/11/0035/2425

CAD-1906

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, SOUTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR. Phone: 0680-2281582, e-mail: ccescbam@gmail.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) [e-Procurement]

Bid Identification No. CCE, S.C (R&B)-BAM-13/2024-25 No. 4172 // Dated: 11.12.2024

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

2) Nature of work : Road Works

IN BRIEF



NIA files chargesheet against accused in Katra attack case

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday filed a chargesheet against an accused in the Katra attack, which left eight pilgrims dead on June 9 this year. An NIA spokesperson said, the accused, Hakam Khan, alias Hakim Din, was charged under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. "The accused confessed to being part of the conspiracy behind the attack, which was executed by three terrorists with his support. Besides providing them food and stay arrangements, he had helped the terrorists in identifying the attack spot," the NIA said. It added that the attack was aimed at "unleashing terror" among the public and pilgrims.

BJP veteran Advani admitted to hospital, condition stable

Senior Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Lal Krishna Advani was admitted to Apollo Hospital in New Delhi on Friday, due to deteriorating health. According to hospital sources, the leader's condition is stable. This is the fourth time the veteran politician has been hospitalised this year. The leader is under observation and is currently stable, said hospital sources. He has been admitted under Dr. Vinit Suri, a senior consultant in the neurology department. The hospital, however, did not disclose any information on the reason for his hospitalisation.

CBI summons senior IAS officer in bribery case

Bishnupada Sethi, senior Odisha-cadre IAS officer and secretary of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department, has been summoned by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with bribery case. Mr. Sethi also heads ST and SC Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare Department. The summon was served days after Chanchal Kumar Mukherjee, group general manager of the Bridge and Roof Corporation of India (BRCI), was arrested following his alleged demand of ₹10 lakh for awarding work orders, clearing bills, and obtaining undue advantage. Mr. Sethi's official driver was also questioned by the CBI.

AIIMS and Wipro to establish AI Health Innovations Hub

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Wipro GE Healthcare Pvt. Ltd., to establish an AI Health Innovations Hub at the Centre. The new hub will focus on the development of products and solutions that enhance healthcare delivery and outcomes through more precise diagnosis, innovative treatment protocols, and real-time patient data tracking. A joint working committee from both organisations, the technological partner Wipro GE Healthcare and clinical partner AIIMS will oversee the collaboration, which will include clinical research and academic engagement.

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

INBRIEF



ASSOCHAM secretary general Deepak Sood steps down

Deepak Sood, secretary general of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) is moving on to pursue other interests, the industry body said on Saturday. "Mr. Sood made important contributions to rebuilding a healthy balance sheet, delivering quality and a better national footprint for the chamber in recent years. The past presidents and I thank and wish him the best for the next phase," ASSOCHAM president Sanjay Nayar said.

Aurobindo Pharma arm's biosimilar gets EMA panel nod

Aurobindo Pharma's subsidiary CuraTeQ Biologics has received nod for Zefyti, its biosimilar of filgrastim, from the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The CHMP has adopted a positive opinion for Zefyti (BP13) recommending the granting of a marketing authorisation. Zefyti will be available as 30 MU/0.5 mL and 48 MU/0.5 mL and is intended for the treatment of neutropenia.

LIC pares stake in NMDC from 7.6% to 5.59% in 14 months

The Life Insurance Corporation of India, as an investment function, reduced its shareholding in State-owned iron ore miner NMDC from 7.61% to 5.59% in a little over 14 months. The net decrease of 2.01% in the holding happened from September 26, 2023, to December 12, 2024, through open market sale at an average cost of ₹209.61 per share, LIC said in a filing. In terms of number of shares, LIC's holding in NMDC has come from over 22.31 crore to over 16.40 crore.

Drones transforming farming, market to touch \$631 mn by 2030'

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI

After tractors and farm equipment, drones are now transforming the way farming is undertaken in India by offering solutions to several challenges faced by farmers today.

With a fleet of about 7,000 drones deployed in this sector, the Indian agricultural drone market, currently valued at \$145.4 million, is expected to reach \$631.4 million by 2030, growing at CAGR of 28.1%, said Agnishwar Jayaprakash, founder and CEO of Garuda Aerospace, a key player in this segment.



He said the factors fueling this growth include labour shortage for spraying pesticides and applying fertilizers, precision and efficiency by drones in such activities at far lower cost, government support

in promoting drone adoption via subsidies, loans, and training programmes and increased awareness.

'Explosive' growth

"The Indian agricultural drone market is poised for explosive growth. Drones are set to become an indispensable tool for Indian farmers, ensuring a more efficient, sustainable, and profitable agriculture in the future," he said.

"With over 10 lakh flight hours, 2,500 drones sold, and six DGCA approvals, Garuda Aerospace leads the nation in drone utilisation, particularly in agriculture. We have captured

a substantial market share of 25-30% in physical drones and 45-50% in drone services with our Drone as a Service (DAAS) model," he said.

"Our focus on indigenisation, affordable drone solutions, securing government subsidies, and partnerships with global giants like Lockheed Martin and Thales has helped. We are positioned as a key player in shaping the future of drone technology in India and beyond," he added.

It is believed that drone adoption in Indian agriculture will reach 80% from about 1% now within the next 5-7 years.

German lens maker Zeiss eyes double-digit growth in India vision-care business

N. Anand

CHENNAI

German lens maker Zeiss India is hopeful of posting double-digit growth in its vision care business during the current fiscal, said a top executive.

"For the past five years, we have been posting double-digit growth. We are confident of posting double digit growth this fiscal too," Zeiss India Vision Care business head for India and neighbouring markets Rohan Paul said in an interaction.

Mr. Paul was in the city to open the Zeiss first Vision Centre in Chennai/Tamil Nadu and 12 nationwide. Most of the Vision



Zeiss India, partnering Image Optical Company, opened a Vision Care Centre in Chennai.

Centres were located in the south. The company is planning to open more Vision Centres in the metros and tier-II cities. However, Mr. Paul was not willing to disclose further details.

The company is planning to open more Vision Centres in the metros and tier-II cities

In Chennai, Zeiss in collaboration with Image Optical Company has opened the first Vision Care Centre in Chennai Phoenix Mall. The Vision Centre is owned and operated by Image Optical while diagnostics tools are supplied by Zeiss.

"We don't own any stores in India. We also have one Vision Centre operating in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka," according to Mr. Paul.

AGI Greenpac opens office in Dubai

N. Ravikumar

HYDERABAD

Packaging products company AGI Greenpac expanded its global footprint with inauguration of its regional office in Dubai recently to position itself better to serve customers in West Asia and capitalise on the region's growing demand for high-quality packaging solutions.

The glass packaging sector in West Asia is projected to reach \$12.44 billion by 2029, growing at a CAGR of 5.41%. Food and beverage sectors are largest consumers followed by pharma and personal care, creating an ideal environment for AGI Greenpac's high-quality, durable glass packaging and security caps and closure products, the company said.

MFN clause freeze won't hit investments in India: Switzerland

Country's suspension of the 'Most Favoured Nation' tag for India won't impact the India-EFTA trade deal: India says tax treaty to be reworked

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

Switzerland's decision to suspend the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment for India under the two countries' 30-years old double-taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA) from January 1 will neither affect the free trade deal recently reached between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) nations nor affect Swiss investments into India, the country's officials told *The Hindu*.

While Indian officials said they will go into the details of the Swiss move, they indicated that double taxation treaty with the EFTA-bloc nation is going to be renegotiated in light of the EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) agreed upon this year.

In a statement dated December 11, Swiss authorities had announced that the MFN clause under the DTAA was being suspended, as India's apex court had held that it does not get automatically triggered until it is notified by the government under the Income Tax Act of 1961. Indian companies operating in Switzerland currently benefit from a reduced tax rate of 5% on dividends and other incomes, but will be liable to pay 10% tax



Randhir Jaiswal

from the coming year.

The TEPA signed with the four-nation EFTA bloc is a unique free trade agreement, as it includes a binding commitment of \$100 billion investment and the creation of one million direct jobs in India by companies from those four countries over the next 15 years.

Asked if the MFN clause suspension could dent the TEPA pact hopes, a Swiss embassy official in New Delhi said there is no direct impact on the EFTA-India TEPA. "In particular, this week's decision does not negatively affect investment from Switzerland to India," the official said.

The question of the interpretation by Switzerland and India of the most-favoured-nation clause concerns the residual tax rate applicable to dividends based on the double taxation agreement paid by a company of one contracting state to a resident of the other contracting state. However, the change

in this residual rate has no impact on the validity of the double taxation agreement as such, or on any other treaties under international law concluded between Switzerland (independently or under the EFTA framework) and India," the official emphasised to *The Hindu*.

India's External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the double taxation treaty with Switzerland is to be renegotiated because of the TEPA deal with EFTA nations.

The suspension of the MFN clause by Switzerland was triggered by an October 2023 ruling against its validity by the Supreme Court on 11 petitions that were combined with a plea by Swiss major Nestle SA.

"This suspension basically adapts the Swiss interpretation of the most favoured nation clause to the one taken by India and confirmed by its Supreme Court," explained a Swiss trade expert.

While Switzerland had, in 2021, granted the 5% residual tax rate for Indian firms retroactively with effect from July 2018, the Indian competent authority, on the other hand, did not grant reciprocity in applying the MFN clause towards Switzerland, and this decision was upheld by the apex court last year, he pointed out.

M&M severs business ties with Lokesh Machines over U.S. sanctions

N. Ravi Kumar

HYDERABAD

Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) has decided to discontinue sourcing of auto components from Lokesh Machines in the wake of the supplier figuring in the United States Department of the Treasury's OFAC sanctions list.

"We have received communication from one of our customers regarding discontinuance of transactions owing to the fact that while there are ongoing efforts towards delisting from United States Department of the Treasury's OFAC sanctions list, the timeline for this process is not suitable for the customer," machine tools and small arms maker Lokesh Machines said on Saturday.

The move of M&M is expected to impact around 8% of total revenue, compared with the previous financial year. The company is, however, determined to add other customers to compensate for the loss of business resulting from the development and remains optimistic about achieving this goal particularly given its recent defence foray, the Hyderabad-based firm said in a filing.

Machine tools and auto components and defence divisions are two business segments of the company. As part of the auto components business, it manufactures cylinder blocks, cylinder heads, connecting rods and forgings. The company operates through five manufacturing units in Hyderabad and 1 in Pune.

Following the October 30 sanctions list, in which its name figured with a clutch of other entities from India, Lokesh Machines said it was in the process of reaching out to the OFAC, after becoming aware through media reports, to gather more information and provide clarifications, including that it has been exporting machines to Russia since 2011.

"Our machines are being sourced by distributors who stock these or further sell. None of our distributors are featured on any sanctions list."

The news articles stated we have been sanctioned for supplying Russia with technology and equipment that could be used for military operations. It must be noted that we are not aware of any machines being used or dealt with any sanctioned entities or individuals," the company had said in a filing.



In India, Lokesh Machines manufactures and supply small arms to the Armed Forces. ANI

Extra long staple cotton imports rebound

M. Soundariya Preetha

COIMBATORE

India's imports of Supima cotton, exported by the U.S., is rising following the withdrawal of import duty on extra long staple (ELS) cotton earlier this year.

India had imposed an 11% import duty on cotton in the 2021-2022 Budget.

Marc Lewkowitz, president and CEO, Supima, told *The Hindu* this crop year (August to July), Indian imports had crossed one lakh bales. Export of Supima (a marketing brand of the U.S.-grown Pima cotton) by the U.S. to India had grown 'dramatically' in the last few weeks.

India needs imports as it has a shortage of ELS cotton. India buys 60,000 to two lakh bales of Supima cotton annually, he said.

Farmers cultivating the Pima cotton in the U.S. are able to just break even or not able to meet the production costs at the current price levels, and the prices are likely to go up so that the area under cultivation does not decrease.

"We are working with brands and retailers to give stability to value across the supply chain," he said.

As per William Bettendorf, director of Cotton USA Supply Chain, South Asia, Cotton Council International, India imported 1.2 million bales of U.S. cotton in 2019. In the last three to four years, share of the U.S. in India's cotton imports had come down since there were supplies from Australia, Brazil, and the west African countries.

RING IN THE FESTIVITIES WITH THE HINDU Youngworld NEW YEAR

SPECIAL ISSUE DATED 27TH DECEMBER 2024

2025

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SCIENCE

Solid phase alloying can turn metal scrap into high-value alloys

The Hindu Bureau

Metal scrap can be directly transformed and upgraded into high-performance, high-value alloys without the need for conventional melting processes, according to a new study published this week in the journal *Nature Communications*. The study demonstrates that scrap aluminum from industrial waste streams can produce high-performance metal alloys.

The upcycled aluminum performs on par with identi-

tical materials produced from primary aluminum, indicating that this approach can provide a low-cost pathway to bringing more high-quality recycled metal products to the marketplace. By converting waste into high-performance aluminum products, the new method, called solid phase alloying, not only enhances material properties but also contributes to environmental sustainability.

The innovative solid-phase alloying process

converts aluminum scrap blended with copper, zinc, and magnesium into a precisely designed high-strength aluminum alloy product in a matter of minutes, compared to the days required to produce the same product utilizing conventional melting, casting, and extrusion. The research team used a PNNL-patented technique called Shear Assisted Processing and Extrusion, or SHAPE, to achieve their results. However, the researchers noted that the

findings should be reproducible with other solid-phase manufacturing processes.

Longer lifespan

Within the SHAPE process, a high-speed rotating die creates friction and heat that disperses the chunky starting ingredients into a uniform alloy with the same characteristics as a newly manufactured aluminum wrought product.

The solid phase approach eliminates the need for energy-intensive bulk

melting, which combined with the low-cost feedstocks originating from scrap, has the potential to sharply reduce the cost of manufacturing these materials. For consumers, this means recycled aluminum products will have a longer lifespan and better performance at a lower cost, whether they are part of a vehicle, a construction material, or a household appliance.

According to the researchers, the solid phase alloying process could be

used to create custom metal wire alloys for various 3D printing technologies. "Solid phase alloying is theoretically applicable to any metal combination that you can imagine, and the fact that manufacturing occurs wholly in the solid state means you can begin to consider totally new alloys that we've not been able to make before," Cindy Powell, a researcher at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, U.S. and a coauthor of the study said in a release.

SNAPSHOTS



Why deep sleep is helpful for long-term memory

It has been known for nearly 20 years that slow, synchronous electrical waves in the brain during deep sleep support the formation of memories. Why that is so was previously unknown. While we sleep, our brains replay the events of the day, moving information from the location of short-term memory, the hippocampus, to the long-term memory located in the neocortex. According to a study, the slow waves make the neocortex, the location of long-term memory, especially receptive to information.



Exposure to air pollution linked to blood clots in veins

A large longitudinal study of over 6,600 U.S. adults who lived in or near one of six major metropolitan areas found that exposure to long-term air pollution was linked with increased risks for blood clots that can occur in deep veins, which, if untreated, can block blood flow and cause serious complications, even death. About 248 adults (3.7%) developed blood clots in deep veins. Participants with greater overall exposure to tiny air pollution particles had a 39% increased associated risk for blood clots in deep veins.



Detecting premalignant pancreatic lesions with MRI

Precursor lesions of pancreatic cancer are very difficult to characterise with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). But now, in a new study, researchers have shown, for the first time, that a particular form of MRI called Diffusion Tensor Imaging (DTI) is capable of robustly detecting premalignant lesions in the pancreas. Their study could open the way to early clinical diagnosis in people at risk, and to treatment assessment of pancreatic cancer.



Question Corner

Limiting factor

Do giraffes really struggle with slopes?

A new study analysing the movements of 33 GPS-collared giraffes across five reserves in South Africa has found that giraffes avoid steep terrain and are unable to navigate slopes with a gradient of more than 20 degrees, most likely due to the energy required and the risk of falling. Researchers found that giraffes will tolerate terrain of up to 12 degrees, but only if it leads to favourable vegetation. The findings highlight a mismatch between the ideal, flat habitats of giraffes and the areas they're being conserved.

In. Using the newly discovered 20-degree gradient threshold, the researchers were able to calculate the proportion of habitats in key African countries where giraffes are currently found that are inaccessible to the animals. They found that of all the countries that were mapped, one in three had more unusable areas in protected areas than outside of protected areas. Giraffes are currently found in 21 African countries but despite their wide distribution, populations have been declining.

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

Writing by hand is better for learning, memory

**D. Balasubramanian**

Time was when we elders wrote our letters and other correspondence using pen and paper and sent them across through the post office. Today, other than sending greeting cards by post, we have even started using digital devices such as smartphones and digital computers, typing out the alphabet and numbers for sending applications, messages, and responses. Even today, when we are in the e-age, primary and secondary school children while learning to write lessons, do homework, answer tests, and write essays by

hand, and once done, use their smartphones to talk to friends and use WhatsApp.

An article by Charlotte Hu, in the *Scientific American* citing some research publications says that writing by hand activates a wide range of interconnected brain regions responsible for learning and memory. Let me cite the findings of some of these publications. Studies in education research by a group of technologists from Trondheim, Norway, in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* point out that handwriting but not tyewriting leads to widespread brain connectivity. In other words, handwriting affects the brain in more positive ways than typing the same material on a keyboard. First, hand-

**Gains:** Writing by hand facilitates better memory. GETTY IMAGES

writing training not only improves spelling accuracy but also facilitates better memory and recall.

They studied a group of schoolchildren, attached electronic sensors to their heads, and monitored the brain activity while the students were writing by hand, and when they were

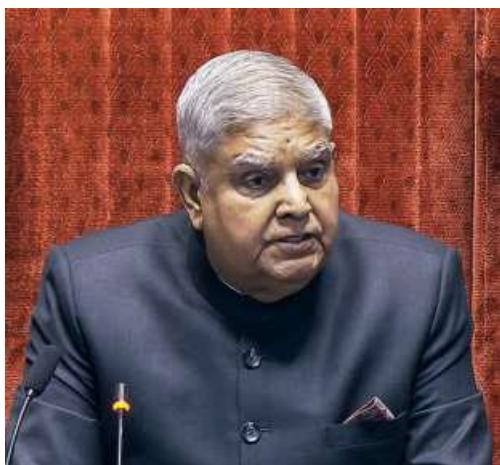
using a computer. Such an electroencephalographic study revealed that writing or drawing by hand causes more activity and involves larger areas of the brain, as opposed to typing on a keyboard. Writing was thus seen to 'light up' more brain regions than typing. When the students were al-

most commercially available computers.

In most schools across India, the medium of instruction in most schools is the local language for students from primary all the way up to the tenth class, and English is taught as an additional language from the secondary school level. However, the children already use mobile phones which have English alphabets in them. Some Indian languages have unique letters and alphabets that the English alphabets do not.

Likewise, some Hindi/Arabic words used in Hindi and Punjabi are not typable on a keyboard. And when we in India use mobile phones or computers to write something, we find it hard since these devices have only English alphabets.





In session: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar conducts the House proceedings on November 25. ANI

Can the Vice President be impeached?

Why did the Opposition submit a notice to move a no-confidence motion against Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar?

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

On December 10, the Opposition submitted a notice to move a no-confidence or impeachment resolution against Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. The notice accuses him of engaging in "partisan" conduct and being an "impassioned spokesperson" of the government's policies at public fora. A similar motion had been considered by the Opposition during the Budget session in August but was ultimately shelved as the session drew to a close.

What is the procedure for impeaching the Vice President?

As the second-highest constitutional authority (after the President), the Vice-President draws his or her powers from Article 63 of the Constitution. Article 64 further confers upon the post the power to serve as the "ex-officio Chairman of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha)." Thus, the Vice-President discharges the duties of both the Vice-President and Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. The resolution can only be considered for discussion once the constitutionally mandated 14-day notice period has elapsed.

The process for the removal of both the Vice President and Rajya Sabha chairperson has been laid down under Article 67. The provision stipulates that the Vice-President will hold office for a term of five years from "the date on which he enters upon his office". However, he or she may leave mid-term by submitting a resignation letter to the President.

Additionally, Article 67(b) provides for the removal of the Vice-President if a majority of Rajya Sabha members pass a resolution to that effect, which must then be "agreed to" by the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

However, the provision specifies that no such resolution can be moved unless at least a 14-day notice has been given. "The resolution can only be considered for discussion once the constitutionally mandated 14-day notice period has elapsed. It must then be approved by a simple majority in both Houses for passage and implementation," P.D.T. Achary, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, told *The Hindu*.

Will the no-confidence motion be taken up? It is unlikely that the no-confidence motion will be taken up for discussion in the House since the Winter Session of Parliament is scheduled to conclude on December 20, which is less than 14 days away.

For instance, in 2020 then Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu dismissed a no-confidence motion against Deputy Chairman Harivansh on the ground that it required a 14-day notice. Even if the motion is taken up in the House, it is unlikely to yield any result since the Opposition lacks the requisite numbers for its passage. Ultimately, this move appears to be more of a symbolic protest against Mr. Dhankhar's purported partisan conduct.

"Since it is a constitutional resolution, it does not lapse when the session is prorogued. It can be taken up in the next session of Parliament, or even in a special session convened specifically for that purpose," Mr. Achary clarified.

Can the Vice President preside over the motion in the Upper House?

Notably, even if the motion is taken up in the House and the Opposition's grievances are discussed, it would be difficult for Mr. Dhankhar to preside over those proceedings in the Rajya Sabha. Mr. Achary pointed out that Article 92 of the Constitution explicitly bars the Chairman or Deputy Chairman from presiding over proceedings while a resolution for their removal is under consideration. However, the provision permits the Chairperson to speak and participate in the proceedings although he or she is barred from voting "on such resolution or any other matter" during it.

These provisions however come into effect only if the motion is accepted by Deputy Chairperson Harivansh Narayan Singh.

What lies ahead for Syria after Assad's exit?

How was the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham led by ex-al Qaeda leader, Abu Muhammed al-Jolani, able to defeat the Syrian armed forces? Why did the priorities of Syria's greatest allies, Russia and Iran, change in recent years? What has been the role of Turkey in the fall of the Syrian President?

Stanly Johny

The story so far:

Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria for 24 years, has fallen. He and his family have taken refuge in Russia. Syria now has a transitional government, headed by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an Islamist militant group that was controlling the northwestern province of Idlib. Many Syrians are celebrating the collapse of Mr. Assad's dictatorial regime, but remain anxious about what is to come. Turkey, as the main backer of the HTS, sees an opportunity to expand its influence in West Asia, while Iran and Russia, the main backers of the Assad regime, have taken a setback. Israel, in the meantime, is exploiting the vacuum in Syria to grab more territories.

Why did the Assad regime fall?

Mr. Assad held on to power for 13 years after the civil war broke out in 2011, only for his regime to collapse in 12 days. By 2017, the Assad regime had taken over most of its lost territories, with help from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. But he hadn't defeated the militants. The strongest of them was the HTS, which was formerly called Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda arm in Syria. Abu Muhammed al-Jolani, today the 'emir' of the HTS, was an al-Qaeda leader. The HTS-controlled Idlib emerged as a rebel stronghold. Jolani established a mini-administration in Idlib – the Syrian Salvation Government. He had been planning a large-scale offensive against the regime forces for months, if not years.

On the other side, a host of domestic, regional and international factors weakened Mr. Assad's position. Syria's economy is in a very bad shape. Its GDP shrank by 87% in the past 13 years, from \$68 billion in 2011 to just \$9 billion in 2023. Western sanctions stifled an already deteriorated economy further. The poorly paid

Syria has immense geopolitical significance. It hosts Russia's Mediterranean naval base, its only naval base outside the former Soviet territory

soldiers of the Assad regime lacked motivation to preserve it. Syrian armed forces were also weakened by repeated Israeli air strikes, which picked up pace over the past year, after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack. Mr. Assad was heavily reliant on his external allies for security. However, their priorities also changed in recent years. Russia's focus is now on the Ukraine war. Iran is involved in a hot and cold war with Israel. Hezbollah lost most of its leaders and thousands of fighters in its year-long war with Israel. The militants knew Mr. Assad was weak.

They launched an offensive on November 27 in the western outskirts of Aleppo, probably aimed at cutting the underbelly of his decaying regime. What happened next was a rapid collapse of the regime itself.

Who is in charge now?

Syria today has roughly four militant coalitions. The first one is the HTS, led by Jolani. The HTS says it has broken its ties with al-Qaeda, and promises to respect Syria's ethnic and religious diversity. But its rank and file comprise transnational jihadists, who travelled to Syria from across the world, to fight "jihad" against the Assad regime. The HTS's main ally is the Syrian National Army (SNA), another northern militia. The core of the SNA is the Free Syrian Army, a Turkish proxy that was formed with defected Syrian soldiers and officers. The HTS and the SNA launched the November 27 offensive together.

The second group is the Southern Front, a loose coalition of dozens of militias in Syria's south (Daara and Quneitra). Some of them were backed by Jordan, which shares a border with southern Syria. When the HTS-SNA combine advanced towards regime-held cities from the north, the southern militias started an offensive from the south. And they reached Damascus first, on December 8. The third main group is the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The core of the SDF is the People's Protection Units (YPG), the armed wing of Syrian Kurdistan. The SDF enjoys relative autonomy in the Syrian Kurdish region. The SDF was armed by the U.S. in the past in its fight against the Islamic State. The fourth group is the Alawite militias in the coastal region. Alawites are Mr. Assad's sect, who enjoyed power for over five decades in the country. The HTS, a Sunni Islamist group, had in the past targeted Alawites, who make up roughly 15% of Syria's population. The HTS has asked the Alawite community to cut ties with the fallen regime. Of these four, the HTS is the most powerful force now. The transition government in Damascus is a replica of the HTS Salvation government in Idlib.

Why does geopolitics matter?

Syria has immense geopolitical significance. It hosts Russia's Mediterranean naval base in Tartus, its only naval base outside the former

Soviet territory. Russia also has built an air base in Syria. For Russia to project force, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and then to the Atlantic, it is essential to retain access to the Tartus base. It could also be one of the reasons Russia made a military intervention in Syria in 2015, to protect the Assad regime. Now that the regime has collapsed, Russia's focus would be on protecting its bases. For Iran, a sworn enemy of America and Israel, Syria was its only state ally in West Asia. Syria was also a key conduit between Iran and Hezbollah, the Lebanese militia. The fall of the Assad regime could disrupt Iran's supply networks in the region, which could invariably weaken the country's deterrence.

Turkey, on the other side, appears to be stronger. For years, it had tried to pull down the Assad regime. When the Russian intervention made it immediately impossible, Turkey shifted its focus towards playing a long game with its proxies. Now that Mr. Assad is gone and the HTS-SNA coalition is in Damascus, Recep Tayyip Erdogan seems to have outwitted Vladimir Putin, and extended his influence from Ankara to the borders of Iraq, Jordan and Israel.

Will the militants build a new Syria?

Many think the fall of a dictatorial regime would lead to a new dawn. For now, Syria's militants have made the right noises – about respecting the country's diversity and rebuilding its dilapidated institutions and welcoming back refugees. But Syria still remains a complex case – with or without Mr. Assad. Before Hafez al-Assad, Bashar's father, captured power in 1971, Syria had seen multiple coups and counter-coups. It was Hafez and his Baath party that stabilised the country and built its modern institutions. Today, the challenge the militants face is to rebuild the country once again, by demobilising the militias. But the HTS neither has ideological clarity for an inclusive Syria nor the resources to demobilise other militias. The HTS is a Salafi-jihadist outfit, which wants to remake secular Syria and retain its tight grip over state institutions. If the HTS's rule in Idlib is an example, the group is not any less dictatorial than Mr. Assad. The southern militias, backed by Jordan, would want to get their due share of power. And in the east, the SDF, the Kurdish militia, wants to keep their hard-earned autonomy. But Turkey sees the SDF as a terrorist outfit, and Turkish-backed militias have already started attacking the SDF.

In Afghanistan, throughout the 1980s, the U.S. and Pakistan-backed Mujahideen fought together against the communist regime as well as the Soviet troops. But after the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of the communist rule, Afghanistan fell into deeper chaos. In Libya, NATO made a military intervention in 2011 to "liberate" the country from Mohammed Gaddafi. After Gaddafi's regime, one of the most stable governments in Africa, was toppled and he was killed, the country fell into a bloody civil war – which is still going on. Iraq never recovered from the scars of America's regime change war of 2003. None of these examples are encouraging for Syria.



Sudden ouster: A shoe rests on top of a bust of Hafez al-Assad, as militants inspect the damage at a site in Damascus, Syria, on December 14. REUTERS

How can gene therapy cure haemophilia A?

What is replacement theory and how effective is it as a form of treatment for haemophiliacs? What is Roctavian? How is using a lentivirus as the vector in gene therapy different from using an adenovirus? Are medicines for treating haemophilia affordable and accessible?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

Medical researchers at the Christian Medical College, Vellore have reported successfully applying gene-therapy to treat severe haemophilia A, a rare, hereditary condition that results from a faulty gene which triggers severe, spontaneous and fatal bleeding episodes.

What is the usual treatment?

The primary approach to treating haemophilia is called replacement therapy. As the disease is a condition resulting from low levels of clotting factor – necessary to prevent bleeding – replacement therapy involves slowly dripping, or injecting into a vein, concentrates of clotting factor VIII (for haemophilia A) or clotting factor IX (for haemophilia B). Clotting-factor concentrates can be derived and manufactured from human blood, which must be properly tested and screened to prevent the spread of diseases, such as hepatitis. It is also possible to

A March 2024 study estimates the per-patient cost of treating a haemophiliac in India to be \$3,00,000 over a 10-year period

use clotting-factor concentrates that aren't made from human blood reducing, the albeit very small risk, of contracting diseases from injecting blood. These are called recombinant clotting factors and can be easily stored, mixed, and used at home. Haemophiliacs can regularly inoculate themselves with replacement therapy to prevent bleeding, and is meant to protect against unexpected bleeding episodes. Among the challenges with clotting factors is that the body's own antibodies can destroy the clotting factor before it has a chance to work and defeats the whole idea of replacement therapy. Other forms of treatment include desmopressin (DDAVP), a man-made hormone used to treat people who have mild haemophilia A. DDAVP isn't used to treat haemophilia B or severe haemophilia A. This hormone increases the level of clotting factor in the blood.

What is gene therapy in haemophilia?

Among the emerging approaches to fix diseases such as haemophilia, which is due to a defective gene on the X chromosome, is gene therapy. Here copies of a 'corrected' gene are introduced into the cells of a patient, the idea being that this would result – in the case of haemophilia – normal expression of the necessary clotting factor. So far there is only one U.S. Food And Drug Administration-approved gene therapy for haemophilia. Called Roctavian, it is an adeno-associated virus vector-based gene therapy and approved only in 2023 for treating adults with severe haemophilia A, and that too only for those without pre-existing antibodies to adeno-associated virus. Roctavian consists of a viral vector carrying the necessary gene for clotting Factor VIII. The gene is expressed in the liver to increase blood levels of FVIII and reduce the risk of uncontrolled bleeding. The effectiveness of the treatment was established based on results from 112 patients followed up for at least three years after Roctavian treatment. Following the infusion, the mean,



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annualised bleeding rate decreased from 5.4 bleeds per year at baseline to 2.6 bleeds per year. The majority of patients who received Roctavian also got corticosteroids to suppress the immune system for the gene therapy to be effective and safe. Treatment response to Roctavian may decrease over time.

How was the Vellore trial different?

The main difference in this approach is the use of a lentivirus as the vector, instead of an adenovirus. Because adenovirus infections are fairly common in people, the chances of having antibodies are fairly high and this could actually be counter-productive to those using treatments such as Roctavian. Lentivirus infections being less common, it is expected that fewer people will have antibodies to them, making them more effective in treatment. Further the Indian approach relies on gene transfer into adult stem cells with the lentiviral vector that integrates with the body's cells instead of in vivo transfer to a hepatocyte, or a liver cell, through a non-integrating AAV vector. The advantage of this approach is expected to be a reliable, life-long production of the clotting factor in necessary quantities without side-effects. Though tested in only five patients in Vellore, none of them reported bleeding episodes over an average follow-up period of 14 months.

Is haemophilia treatment affordable?

A March 2024 research study in the journal *Heliyon*, estimates the per-patient cost of treating a haemophiliac in India to be \$3,00,000 over a 10-year period. Based on various estimates, there may be about 1,00,000 haemophiliacs with type A and type B conditions, with the former being more common. This is the reason why treatments can be expensive. Roctavian is also not cheap and costs nearly \$2 million. Whether the gene-therapy product tested in the India will be affordable remains to be seen, though that is the hope. "It is too early to talk about costs but in principle it will need to be something that will make sense in the Indian healthcare system," Dr. Alok Srivastava, Head, Haematology Research Unit, St John's Research Institute, Bangalore, told *The Hindu*. He led the trial at Vellore.

PROFILES

President's gambit declined

Yoon Suk Yeol

The impeached leader of South Korea was able to manage a successful transition from state prosecutor to national politician, but could not learn the give-and-take of democratic politics, nor give up thinking like a prosecutor

G. Sampath

A round half past ten on the night of December 3, Yoon Suk Yeol, South Korea's President and leader of the conservative People Power Party (PPP), appeared on national television to declare "emergency martial law". The decree meant that all political meetings, rallies, and strikes would be banned and media would come under military censorship. Local media reported that law enforcement and intelligence agencies got instructions to round up Opposition lawmakers and seal the National Assembly. Mr. Yoon, 63, justified the move by claiming that the Opposition, the liberal Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) was engaged in "anti-state activities" and collaborating with "North Korean communists".

But the news was received by ordinary Koreans with shock, for they believed they had put the days of military rule firmly behind them. It is a testament to how deeply the democratic ethos had taken root in the country that the martial law lasted barely six hours. During this dramatic interlude, Lee Jae-myung, the leader of the DPK, rallied his party members, asking them to rush to the National Assembly building. He also began a live stream from his mobile, getting the general public directly involved as his party scrambled to save the country from a looming dictatorship.

The live stream helped. Soldiers despatched to secure the National Assembly were held up by thousands of protesters blocking their way and demanding immediate restoration of democratic government. The delay and the consequent confusion enabled 190 of the 300 members of the National Assembly to sneak into the premises, with some even climbing in through the windows. In a special session, all the 190, including members of Mr. Yoon's PPP, voted against the martial law. As per the Korean constitution, if the legislative majority strikes down martial law, the President must comply. Left with no alternative, Mr. Yoon withdrew his proclamation by 4.30 a.m. on Wednesday.

The Opposition brought an

impeachment motion against him on December 7, but it was thwarted by a mass boycott by all the PPP lawmakers. The PPP has 108 members in the 300-member National Assembly, and a two-thirds majority vote (200) is required for an impeachment. The Opposition put the impeachment to vote again on December 14, and this time, 204 voted in favour. As a result, Mr. Yoon's presidential duties have been suspended, and Prime Minister Han Duck-soo will serve as acting President.

Review by court

Korea's Constitutional court will now review the Assembly's impeachment decision and has 180 days to deliver its verdict. If it strikes down the impeachment, Mr. Yoon will return to office. If it upholds it, Mr. Yoon will be permanently removed from office and elections must be held within 60 days. Simultaneously, Mr. Yoon also faces an investigation into whether his martial law decree amounts to insurrection, a crime that carries a death penalty.

As per the Constitution, martial law can only be invoked in extreme circumstances, "to cope with a military necessity or to maintain the public safety and order by mobilisation of the military forces in time of war, armed conflict or similar national emergency." These conditions were not in evidence when Mr. Yoon made his move. Given that members of his own party spoke out against his decree, Mr. Yoon seemed to have misread the fiercely democratic culture of his people, for whom the very idea of 'martial law' evokes traumatic events from the past, such as the 1980 Gwangju Uprising and the massacre of pro-democracy activists.

In fact, the public mood became evident almost instantly on social media, which was replete with 'trending' posts that questioned Mr. Yoon's mental fitness, with users suggesting he might require psychiatric evaluation for "delusional disorder" and "paranoia". So, what explains Mr. Yoon's extraordinary act of overreach, one that has not only derailed his political career but has the potential to land him in jail or worse?

Korean politics in recent times has



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

Under Mr. Yoon's presidency, the political cleavage between the two sides found expression in state prosecutors vigorously pursuing bribery and breach of trust investigations against Mr. Lee, who has denied these charges, terming them politically motivated. Mr. Yoon also rebuffed Mr. Lee's attempts for a direct meeting to figure out a working relationship.

Mr. Lee, having lost the Presidential race to Mr. Yoon, bounced back with a seat in the National Assembly where he has emerged as the dominant figure in the Opposition. He has used the DPK's Parliamentary majority to repeatedly block Mr. Yoon's Budgets and impeach several of his key administrative officials – a tactic Mr. Yoon has described as "legislative dictatorship".

Lame duck President

Mr. Yoon did not enjoy a Parliamentary majority when he became President in 2022. He had a chance to get it in the general elections in April this year but failed, as the DPK won a landslide. South Korean Presidents are limited to one five-year term, and Mr. Yoon was facing the dubious prospect of serving out his entire term as a lame duck President – without a majority, or even a working relationship, in the National Assembly. For most of this year, Mr. Yoon has complained bitterly about a non-cooperative National Assembly controlled by the Opposition, whom he has called "monsters" and a "den of criminals". It would appear that mounting frustration over "legislative dictatorship" was weighing heavily on Mr. Yoon's mind, and perhaps triggered the impulse for a tit-for-tat – executive dictatorship, in the form of martial law.

In South Korean history, prosecutors have generally served as useful weapons for authoritarian leaders – they are typically not viewed as friendly to democracy. Mr. Yoon has demonstrated why. He was able to manage a successful transition from state prosecutor to national politician, but could not learn the give-and-take of democratic politics, nor give up thinking like a prosecutor.

THE GIST

South Korean politics in recent times has been marked by extreme polarisation, with political incumbents often using their tenures to seek vengeance on their rivals. For Mr. Yoon, frustration with his prime rival, Mr. Lee, had been building up for a long time.

Under Mr. Yoon's presidency, state prosecutors vigorously pursued bribery and breach of trust investigations against Mr. Lee, who has denied these charges, terming them politically motivated. Mr. Yoon also rebuffed Mr. Lee's attempts for a direct meeting to figure out a working relationship.

Mr. Lee has used South Korea's parliamentary majority to repeatedly block Mr. Yoon's Budgets and impeach several of his key administrative officials – a tactic Mr. Yoon has described as 'legislative dictatorship'

been marked by extreme polarisation, with political incumbents often using their tenures to seek vengeance on their rivals. For Mr. Yoon, frustration with his prime rival, Mr. Lee, had been building up for a long time.

Unlike Mr. Lee, Mr. Yoon never held elected office until he became President. Again, unlike Mr. Lee, whose parents were sanitation workers, Mr. Yoon comes from a privileged background. He studied law at an elite university before embarking on a stellar career as a prosecutor, sending two former Presidents to jail for abuse of power. In March 2021, Mr. Yoon resigned as the prosecutor general. In June, he announced his candidacy for the 2022 Presidential

race. And by March 2022, he defeated Mr. Lee by the closest margin in Korean history (48.56% to 47.83% of the vote) to become President. His campaign, and political posturing, especially on issues related to gender parity, have prompted comparisons with Donald Trump.

In stark contrast to Mr. Yoon's political trajectory of privilege to conservative politician, Mr. Lee began as a factory worker, and worked as a labour lawyer, following the path of rights-based politics to the centre-left of the DPK. Not surprisingly, the personality clash and political rivalry between Mr. Yoon, a conservative, and Mr. Lee, a liberal, also had an ideological edge.

'Popular' suspect

Luigi Mangione

The 26-year-old Ivy League graduate, who allegedly shot the CEO of a medical insurance company in the U.S., has found support among many, while it shows the public's eroding trust in institutions

Adithya Narayan

Not long after an election that polarised the nation, civil society in the U.S. stands divided yet again over a man: 26-year-old Luigi Mangione, who allegedly shot UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson outside a hotel in Manhattan on December 4.

Mangione was picked up from a McDonald's outlet in Pennsylvania, on December 9 when a member of the restaurant staff spotted and identified him.

From ridiculing the employee and McDonalds to lionising Mangione as an "anti-capitalist" hero and describing his act as "vigilante justice", social media was awash with reactions that glorified the killing of the father of two.

So much so that Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro felt compelled to spell out the morality: "He is no hero. The real hero in this story is the person who called 911 at McDonald's." "We do not kill people in cold blood to resolve policy differences," Mr. Shapiro said.

That it took a Governor's statement for people to see through a crime that happened in broad daylight is a telling sign. Regardless, observers and columnists attribute the sympathy pouring in for Mangione to the hatred re-



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

served by the public for insurance companies.

Recovered from the crime scene were bullet casings that had the words 'Deny', 'Defend' and 'Depose' written on them – a play on the phrase 'Delay, Deny, Defend', tactics used by insurance firms to refuse claims. Also found in his possession was a handwritten manifesto that criticised corporate greed. "Frankly these parasites simply had it coming," the note stated. UnitedHealthcare, however, has said Mangione was not its customer.

As police try and figure out if Mangione, who had a back problem and did correction procedure, acted out of self-interest or handed out "vigilante justice", public support has swelled. His X account grew by 4,00,000 followers since the shooting, \$31,000 was raised on GiveSendGo and "#FreeLuigi" and "hot assassin" tags spread on social media.

In Mangione, people

found a "folk hero" who stood up for them against an industry that has long become a target of public ire. With a market valuation of \$560 billion, UnitedHealth ranks 19th on Forbes' list of the world's biggest companies. However, look past the insurance firm to see that the individuals involved are mired in a strange paradox.

According to a *Reuters* report, Thompson had a modest working-class upbringing in rural Iowa. He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Iowa in 1997. He is a certified public accountant and worked for six years at the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) before joining the United Group in 2004, according to *Forbes*.

This is in stark contrast to the privileged upbringing of Mangione, someone believed to have carried out an "anti-capitalist" attack. Born into a prominent real-estate family in

Baltimore, Mangione received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Ivy League University of Pennsylvania. He also served as head counsellor at a pre-college programme at Stanford. He worked as a software engineer at TrueCar, an online marketplace based in California.

Six months ago, he fell off the public radar with his mother filing a missing complaint in November.

Investigators are scouring his social media accounts for further clues and a concrete motive. Save for a goodreads account where he posted a review commending the "prescient" nature of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski's *Industrial Society and its Future*, Mangione's political standing can be described as heterodox at best.

The fact that Mangione's motive and ideology have not been deciphered so far is worrisome for it then leaves only one plausible explanation. Much like the 2021 Capitol attack, it shows the public's eroding trust in institutions. A fallout of that is the common man disregarding civic sense and becoming emboldened to take the law into his own hands. Mangione, who spoke about a "symbolic takedown" in his manifesto, then becomes a hero for those disenchanted with the system.

The new boss at Mint Street

Sanjay Malhotra

RBI's 26th Governor took charge this week in the midst of a growing clamour for monetary policy makers to ignore high inflation and cut interest rates

Vikas Dhoot

December 9 began as a routine day for North Block mandarins, with questions pertaining to the Finance Ministry to be answered in the Lok Sabha. But for avid observers of the economy and financial markets, the big question of the day was neither starred nor unstarred. It revolved around the Governorship of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The incumbent Shaktikanta Das, in his sixth year at the RBI, had just delivered a monetary policy that disappointed a government rooting for an interest rate cut, particularly after GDP growth slipped to just 5.4% between July and September.

Mr. Das, whose tenure was to expire on December 10, said the growth-inflation balance was off but asserted persistently high inflation also hurt consumption and growth.

By Monday, reporters who had been running stories about another extension for him, had changed course in the absence of any official communiqué, floating names of senior bureaucrats who may replace Mr. Das. None had an inkling that name would turn out to be Union Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra.

They were not the only ones surprised – even Mr.

Malhotra is learnt to have been informed just hours before his appointment was made public. The Rajasthan cadre, 1990-batch IAS officer is not the usual Finance Ministry insider picked for the top role at Mint Street. Like his predecessor, most such appointees had handled departments such as Economic Affairs, or held the Finance Secretary's role, like the late R.N. Malhotra, who was the 17th RBI Governor.

Mr. Malhotra, who has spent almost all his life in North India, is a computer engineering graduate from IIT Kanpur, with a Master's degree in Public Policy from Princeton University. His new role brings him to the heart of India's financial markets Mumbai for at least three years.

"Not a whole lot is known about Mr. Malhotra's views on current economic issues, so he is a relatively unknown figure from that perspective," economists at Nomura Securities said. Others

echoed the sentiment, chiming in with stuff like 'we don't know how he feels about growth and inflation but if the government has chosen him at this juncture, he could oblige them with a quicker and bigger rate cut cycle'.

Soft-spoken, inquisitive
A cricket and coffee aficionado, Mr. Malhotra is one of the most affable and soft-spoken, yet no-nonsense officials in service, known not just for his crystal-clear responses to questions, but also for his inquisitiveness. In media interactions, after one's queries are done and dusted and if time permits, he would extend the chat over a cup of Coffee Board brew to glean some ground-level feedback on issues and perceptions doing the rounds.

On his Day One in office, Governor Malhotra revealed no bias towards either growth or inflation, saying he does not like to start playing his shots from

the first ball of a match. But he promised to "put the best foot forward in public interest" once he gets a clear sense of the pitch, with an eye on the four policy pillars that mattered for people – growth, stability, certainty and trust, he noted.

Mr. Malhotra may be a mystery for Mint Street watchers, but having served as the Department of Financial Services Secretary, he has been on the central bank's board, and is an authority of sorts on banking and financial sector reforms. Moreover, his Revenue role probably affords him a unique vantage point of the economy's growth and consumption impulses, having overseen not just direct tax flows from corporates and households, but also the trends in goods and services trade that only granular details of GST, Customs and Excise trends can reveal. It is then not for nothing that the Centre's revenue math (that hinges on growth assumptions) he has worked on in recent Budgets, has generally been spot on.

Mr. Malhotra knows a lot more about the economic terrain than many realise, and in his new innings, where constant communication plays an important role, the world is about to find that out – with or without rate cuts.



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

the father of two. Mangione was picked up from a McDonald's outlet in Pennsylvania, on December 9 when a member of the restaurant staff spotted and identified him.

From ridiculing the employee and McDonalds to lionising Mangione as an "anti-capitalist" hero and describing his act as "vigilante justice", social media was awash with reactions that glorified the killing of the father of two.

So much so that Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro felt compelled to spell out the morality: "He is no hero. The real hero in this story is the person who called 911 at McDonald's." "We do not kill people in cold blood to resolve policy differences," Mr. Shapiro said.

That it took a Governor's statement for people to see through a crime that happened in broad daylight is a telling sign. Regardless, observers and columnists attribute the sympathy pouring in for Mangione to the hatred re-

WASHINGTON

Time has come for U.S. to act on Dhaka: Congressman Thanedar



Raising the issue of attacks on minority Hindus in Bangladesh, Indian-American Congressman Shri Thanedar has said that the time has come for the U.S. Congress to act. "The time has now come... every possible tool in our hands needs to be used to ensure that such atrocities in Bangladesh stop right away," he said. PTI

BRASÍLIA

Brazil ex-Defence Minister arrested as part of coup plot probe: police



Brazilian authorities on Saturday arrested Braga Netto, a former Defence Minister and close ally of ex-President Jair Bolsonaro, as part of an investigation into an alleged coup plot, a police source said. Brazil's Federal Police said it had detained "people who would be obstructing" the investigation. AFP

WASHINGTON

Trump calls for end to 'spring forward, fall back' clock changes



President-elect Donald Trump said on Friday he would work to end the "inconvenient" custom of moving clocks forward one hour every spring, which he said was imposing a financial burden on the U.S. "The Republican Party will use its best efforts to eliminate Daylight Saving Time," Mr. Trump posted on Truth Social. AFP

WASHINGTON

Pelosi undergoes hip replacement surgery in Germany after a fall



Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had hip replacement surgery on Saturday at a U.S. military hospital in Germany after falling while at an event in Luxembourg with other members of Congress. Ms. Pelosi, 84, "is well on the mend," said Ian Krager, a spokesperson for the California Democrat, in a statement. AP

Georgia chooses far-right loyalist as its new President

Mikheil Kavelashvili, known for his vehement anti-West diatribes, is the leader for a five-year term; Opposition denounces the poll as 'illegitimate'; sitting President Zurabishvili refuses to step down

Agence France-Presse

TBILISI

Georgia's ruling party on Saturday installed a far-right loyalist as President in a controversial election process, amid a deepening constitutional crisis and weeks of mass pro-EU protests.

The Black Sea nation has been in turmoil since the governing Georgian Dream party claimed victory in contested October parliamentary elections. Its decision last month to delay European Union membership talks ignited a fresh wave of mass rallies.

An electoral college, controlled by the ruling Georgian Dream party and boycotted by the Opposition, elected Mikheil Kavelashvili with 224 votes as the country's next figurehead leader for a five-year term, central election commission chair Giorgi Kalanishvili said.

The Opposition has denounced Saturday's election as "illegitimate" and said the sitting President,



Crisis deepens: An electoral college controlled by the Georgian Dream party elected Mikheil Kavelashvili with 224 votes. REUTERS

Salome Zurabishvili remains the country's sole legitimate leader.

Pro-Western Zurabishvili – who is at loggerheads with Georgian Dream – has refused to step down and is demanding new parliamentary elections, paving the way for a constitutional showdown.

On Saturday morning, protesters began gathering outside the Parliament building – which was cordoned off by police – ahead of a rally scheduled for the evening.

A former diplomat, Ms. Zurabishvili is a hugely

popular figure among protesters, who view her as a beacon of Georgia's European aspirations.

Ahead of Saturday's vote, Ms. Zurabishvili called it "a parody. It will be an event entirely devoid of legitimacy, unconstitutional and illegitimate," she told a press conference.

Opposition groups accuse Georgian Dream of rigging the October 26 parliamentary vote, backsiding on democracy and moving Tbilisi closer to Russia – all at the expense of the Caucasus nation's constitutionally mandated

bid to join the EU.

Mr. Kavelashvili, 53 – the sole candidate for the largely ceremonial Presidential post – is known for his vehement anti-West diatribes and opposition to LGBTQ rights.

Georgian Dream scrapped direct Presidential elections in 2017.

With Ms. Zurabishvili refusing to leave office, Opposition lawmakers boycotting Parliament, and protests showing no signs of abating, the legitimacy of Mr. Kavelashvili's election has been undermined from the outset.

On Friday, Amnesty International said protesters had faced "brutal dispersal tactics, arbitrary detention and torture". There have also been raids on the offices of Opposition parties and arrests of their leaders.

Washington has imposed fresh sanctions on Georgian officials, barring entry for around 20 people accused of "undermining democracy in Georgia", including ministers and parliamentarians.

UN envoy warns against Syria collapse at crisis talks

Agence France-Presse

AQABA

A UN envoy on Saturday urged foreign powers to work to avoid a collapse of vital Syrian institutions following the downfall of leader Bashar al-Assad, as diplomats gathered in Jordan for a conference on the crisis.

Geir Pedersen, the UN's special envoy for Syria, also backed a "credible and inclusive" political process to form the next government as he met U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"We need to make sure that state institutions do not collapse, and that we get in humanitarian assistance as quickly as possible," Mr. Pedersen said.

Syria war monitor reports Israeli hits on military sites

Agence France-Presse

BEIRUT



A fighter of the ruling Syrian body inspects the damage at a military site after an Israeli strike in Damascus on Saturday. REUTERS

mountain", according to the Britain-based Observatory.

The Observatory said several rounds of bombardment targeted "military sites of the former regime forces, as part of destroying what is left of the future Syrian Army's capabilities".

Since Mr. Assad's fall, Israel has launched hundreds of strikes against Syrian military sites, targeting everything from chemical weapons stores to air defences. Israel also seized a UN-patrolled buffer zone on the Syrian Golan Heights just hours after the rebels took Damascus.

Seven killed in Israeli strike on Gaza school +

Reuters

CAIRO

At least seven Palestinians were killed and 12 wounded after an Israeli strike on a former school that was sheltering displaced people

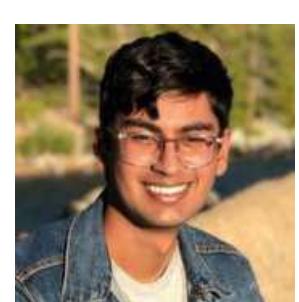
in Gaza City, the civil emergency service said on Saturday.

The Israeli military is looking into the report, a spokesperson said.

Earlier on Saturday, the Israeli military said it had

targeted Hamas militants who were operating within a school compound in Gaza City and that it had taken measures to reduce harm to civilians.

The dead include a woman and her baby, accord-



Suchir Balaji

Commission links Hasina to enforced disappearances

Kalol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

In a new turn of events, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearance set up by the interim government of Bangladesh filed a report on Saturday stating that it found the "involvement of Ex-PM Sheikh Hasina" in enforced disappearances of individuals during her tenure.

Presenting the report at a special event in the residence of the Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus, the commission said that it would bring out another interim report in March and would require another year to complete the scrutiny of all the complaints received so far.

Apart from Ms. Hasina and Mr. Siddique, the commission also found the involvement of former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre and sacked Major General Ziaul Ahsan, senior police officers Monirul Islam and Md. Harun-Or-Rashid with "several incidents of enforced disappearance". Submitting the report, the commission's chairman said it had detected a "systematic design" to avoid detection of the cases of enforced disappearances.

The commission was set up under the leadership of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury on August 27. (Those in distress and seeking assistance may call TelMANAS: 1-800-891-4416 / 14416 for confidential support)

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THE HINDU

WAIT ENDS

Hendricks' century powers SA to series win over Pakistan



South Africa won a bilateral T20 series for the first time in more than two years when it chased down Pakistan's 206 at Centurion. Opener Reeza Hendricks scored his maiden T20 century, 117 off 63 balls.

The scores: Pakistan 206/5 in 20 overs (Ayub 98 n.o.) lost to South Africa 210/3 in 19.3 overs (Hendricks 117). **Toss:** Pakistan.

HIGHS & LOWS

New Zealand wastes good start, finishes first day at 315/9



New Zealand squandered a good start, slumping from 172 for two to 231 for seven before rallying to 315 for nine at stumps on Saturday on day one of the third Test against England in Hamilton.

The scores: New Zealand 315/9 in 82 overs (Latham 63) vs England.

Toss: England.

DONATION

Neeraj's T-shirt inducted into WA's heritage collection



Neeraj Chopra is among the 23 athletes whose competition artefacts have been inducted into the World Athletics Heritage Collection, currently on display in the online 3D platform of the Museum of World Athletics (MOWA). Neeraj has donated the competition t-shirt he wore at the Paris Olympic Games this year.

TIGHT FINISHES

Titans gets the better of Giants; Dabang wins against Steelers



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Telugu Titans rode on Pawan Sehrawat's 12 points to roar back from nine points down at one stage, to get the better of Gujarat Giants 36-32 in the PKL in Pune on Saturday. Titans went one step closer to achieving qualification for the playoffs. Dabang Delhi beat Haryana Steelers 44-37 in the other match of the day.

Rain reigns on the opening day at the Gabba, steady start for Aussies

Openers Khawaja and McSweeney keep the India pacers at bay after Rohit elects to field; bad weather allows only 13.2 overs of play; more interruptions expected over the next few days; Jadeja, Akash replace Ashwin, Rana in Indian line-up

INDIA IN AUS**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**

BRISBANE

It was a Saturday of rains here at the Gabba. And it came in all types: drizzle, feathery, downpour and pitter-patter. The weather's liquid sense of wicked humour was on full view as the wet spell would pause for a while and just as the umbrellas were folded, the clouds would burst forth again.

This was tease and torment at its worst and it was more than enough to largely smother the third Test's opening day's play. A mere 13.2 overs were bowled, and that too was split by a rain break. Stepping in level at 1-1 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, Australia scored 28 for no loss with openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney at the crease.

The morning dawned with yellow streaks and dark clouds. Rohit Sharma sought his clues from the brooding skies and on winning the toss, elected to field. India effected two changes with Ravindra Ja-



Soggy affair: Rain had a huge say on the proceedings. AP

deja and Akash Deep replacing R. Ashwin and Harshit Rana. Soon it was time for Jasprit Bumrah to steam in as Khawaja was all eyes and a waiting bat.

Contrasting styles

From the other end, Mohammed Siraj bowled a touch short and wide and Khawaja pulled with panache. McSweeney, though, preferred to dig in. When Bumrah strayed

down the leg, Khawaja was ready with his flick. The crowd was settling in, applauding runs, boozing Siraj and just as the day seemed to be warming up, the rains moved in. Australia 19 for zero, Rohit watching the skies, having a banana and soon the sun was out.

Virat Kohli had an animated chat with his teammates, Rohit and the rest listened, and on resumption, Siraj seemed to be

bowing a tighter line. Akash too probed on and around off-stump and McSweeney dallied once on the drive and then retreated into his shell. But the weather turned whimsical, a downpour ensued, the players ran to the dressing room and an early lunch was taken.

The fans in the open parts of the stands dished out a muted Mexican wave and then huddled under

SCOREBOARD**AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS**

Usman Khawaja (batting) 19 (47b, 3x4), Nathan McSweeney (batting) 4 (33b). Extras (lb-5): 5; Total (for no loss in 13.2 overs): 28.

INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 6-3-8-0, Siraj 4-2-13-0, Akash 3.2-2-2-0.

Toss: India.

the roof. Commentators scouted for their caffeine fix. Legends like Sunil Gavaskar, Allan Border and Ian Botham exchanged notes. Most had one eye on the skies and the other on the ground. For the fans, especially the Indians clad in blue, it was all about peering at the pavilion, trying to figure out if their sporting heroes were still there.

At 4.06 p.m., local time, umpires Richard Illingworth and Richard Kettleborough stepped out and met the curator and groundstaff on the sidelines. And at 4.14 p.m., play was called off for the remainder of the day. The second day will commence half an hour earlier at 9.50 a.m. (5.20 a.m. IST) but there is forecast for rains over the next few days.

Garden City gets ready to host WPL mini auction

N. Sudarshan

BENGALURU

A total of 120 names will go under the hammer to fill all of 19 slots at the Women's Premier League mini auction at the ITC Gardenia here on Sunday.

Among the 29 overseas players, England captain Heather Knight, West Indies all-rounder Deandra Dottin and South Africa's Lizelle Lee have chosen the highest reserve price of ₹50 lakh. Other notable names include England's Lauren Bell and Maia Bouchier, Australia's Darci Brown and Lauren Cheatle, and South Africa's Nadine de Klerk - all in the ₹30 lakh bracket.

In the list of 91 Indians, there is expected to be keen interest for the likes of Sneh Rana (₹30 lakh), Poomala Yadav (30), Shubha Satheesh (30), Mansi Joshi (30) and Tejal Hasabnis (30). Recent performers in domestic cricket like 16-year-old G. Kamalini, Raghvi Bist, Jagravi Pawar and Nandini Kashyap may attract attention.

Delhi's Anshu Nagar, a 13-year-old left-arm seamer who caused a flutter in the women's Delhi Premier League three months ago, is also in the mix.

For the third edition which is set to be held in early 2025, franchises will



Cricket carnival: 120 players will go under the hammer on Sunday.

FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Samaira Dharnidharka and Theertha Satish from the United Arab Emirates, and Scotland's Sarah Bryce can fill this slot for teams.

It will be particularly interesting to see how the Giants rebuild their bowling pack after having released Sneh Rana, Lea Tahuhu, Kathryn Bryce and Cheatle. Mumbai may look at some middle-order reinforcements to assist Harmanpreet Kaur and Nat Sciver-Brunt.

Defending champion Royal Challengers Bengaluru, the only side with no overseas vacancy, and Capitals appear more or less settled while UP Warriorz will hope for a quality replacement for Bell and a couple of solid Indian batters.

Auction starts at 3 p.m.

Women in Blue seek a reboot against West Indies

Shayan Acharya

NAVI MUMBAI

The last few days have been excruciating for India's women's cricket team. After suffering an embarrassing ODI series defeat against Australia earlier this week, the team had to travel for more than seven thousand kilometres - from Perth to Navi Mumbai - and gear up for a T20I home series against the West Indies, beginning at the DY Patil Stadium on Sunday.

A jet-lagged India captain Harmanpreet Kaur admitted on the eve of the series opener that it's difficult to prepare with such a short turnaround time. However, she evaded questions on the scheduling.

Having lost all the three games against Australia, Harmanpreet's captaincy has been under scanner and as the team aims to bounce back, it needs to fix the weak links.

Smriti Mandhana scored four centuries in a calendar year in women's ODIs, even though the overall batting department has failed to step up in crunch situations. "It's really tough when you are going through this patch.



Time running out? Harmanpreet would hope to be at her best. PTI

While coming back from Australia, we had good talks on the flight and we discussed how to start afresh against the West Indies," Harmanpreet said.

India has won each of its last eight T20Is against the West Indies in the shortest format since November 2019, but now, the batters need to take more responsibility, in the absence of Shafali Verma, who was dropped despite scoring 531 runs in 20 T20Is this year. The captain, with two fifties in her last two T20I innings, needs to anchor the middle-order.

While Harmanpreet was confident that her team would bounce back in familiar conditions, it won't be easy as the West Indies

has won nine of its 13 T20Is this year. Deandra Dottin's return will boost the visiting team's confidence.

The teams (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Nandini Kashyap, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Deepi Sharma, Sajeewa Sajana, Raghvi Bist, Renuka Thakur, Priya Mishra, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Minnu Mani and Radha Yadav.

West Indies: Hayley Matthews (Capt.), Shemaine Campbell (Vice-capt.), Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajnabi, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack and Rashada Williams.

Match starts at 7:00 p.m. IST.

Gukesh could go down as a GOAT of the game: Ashley

CHESS**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

SINGAPORE

Maurice Ashley was one of the most familiar faces at the World Chess Championship.

The first move was made in each game after these words from him, as he stood between Ding Liren and D. Gukesh: "Let the game begin."

The American Grandmaster has been a commentator and presenter for major chess events for over three decades, but that isn't his biggest achievement.

In 1999, he became the first African-American person to become a Grandmaster.

Some 25 years later, of the 2000-odd Grandmasters in the world, only four are of African heritage.

Ashley is proud that he is the first African-American Grandmaster but is disappointed that not many have followed in his footsteps.

He would like to have the kind of influence on his community - and he is working hard towards his goal by supporting children - what Viswanathan



Ashley. P.K. AJITH KUMAR



Gukesh will be an inspiration for millions around the world

Anand has had on Indian chess.

Ashley comes from a sporting family. His sister Alicia is a former World boxing champion and brother Devon is a former World kick-boxing champion.

"But I never was tempted to be a boxer," said Ashley in an interview with *The Hindu* at World Resorts Sentosa. "I fell in love with playing chess and have been enjoying talking about the game."

His first big assignment as a commentator was the 1995 World championship

match between Anand and Garry Kasparov. That match was played at the World Trade Centre. "And the first game was played on September 11," he said.

"That was a big match, as has been this one, despite the criticism from some about the number of draws and the Ding's blunder in the final game."

He said it was an absolutely thrilling match. "A blunder may have ended it, but that is chess," said the Jamaica-born Grandmaster. "It is the pressure, the intensity of the moment, having to live up to the expectations of millions of fans that could get to you."

Legacy

He believes Gukesh is going to create a legacy not just for India but for the world. "Even beyond chess, in fact, as you are getting such a young World champion," added Ashley.

"He will be an inspiration for millions around the world."

Ashley believes Gukesh has the potential to be a much stronger player. "He is still growing, he still has years before he reaches his peak," said Ashley. "I think he could go down as a GOAT of the game".



Gukesh-Ding match, a hugely followed event

P.K. Ajith Kumar

SINGAPORE

The biggest tipping point for chess was the 1972 World championship between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky. It was the match that actually put chess in focus on a global level for the first time.

Since the Cold War was at its peak, a contest between the United States and the former Soviet Union was going to be big news. As was the presence of Fischer, a genius to whom modern chess owes a lot;

he brought money to the game, and made it popular beyond the erstwhile USSR.

Turning point
The latest World championship, which concluded at World Resorts Sentosa on Thursday, could be another turning point for

the mind game. The live streams - on multiple websites and YouTube channels - were watched by millions. Apart from FIDE's official channel, the match was aired live, among others, by chess24 and ChessBase India.

Raking up the numbers
Thursday's final game attracted a total of 38 lakh views on the ChessBase channel. On chess24 it was 14 lakh and on FIDE 6.4 lakh.

Besides the live streams, there were also recap videos of each match, by top players like World No.1 Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura, which were popular.

The recap of the final game on Carlsen's newly launched Take Take Take app has been viewed 6.4 lakh times so far.

IN BRIEF



India enters final with an easy win over Japan

Defending champion India asserted its dominance with a 3-1 victory over Japan to secure a place in the final of the Women's Junior Asia Cup hockey tournament in Muscat on Saturday. India Mumtaz Khan (4th), Sakshi Rana (5th), Deepika (13th, *in pic.*) were on target in the first quarter, while Niko Maruyama scored a consolation goal for Japan in the 23rd minute.

India men finish fifth, women seventh in World team squash

India men defeated Hong Kong 2-0 to finish fifth while the women's team downed France 2-1 to be placed seventh at the World squash team championships in Hong Kong on Saturday. This is the best finish ever for the men's team and the best finish since 2012 for the women's team at the tournament.

The results: Men (fifth place play-off): India bt Hong Kong 2-0 (Abhay Singh bt Tsz Kwan Lau 12-10, 11-7, 11-4; Velavan Senthilkumar bt Henry Leung 12-10, 8-11, 5-11, 11-1, 11-8). Women (seventh place play-off): India bt France 2-1 (Akanksha Salunkhe bt Marie Stephan 12-10, 11-9, 11-0; Nirupama Dubey lost to Enora Villard 11-0, 11-3, 11-5; Anjali Semwal bt Lauren Baltayan (Fra) 6-11, 11-8, 5-11, 14-12, 11-7).

Rock Bank claims the feature event

BENGALURU: Prasanna Kumar trained Rock Bank (G. Vivek up) won the Managing Committee Trophy (1,800m), the feature event of the races held here on Saturday (Dec 14). The winner is owned by Mr. K. Kaliyaperumal, Mr. Ashok Ranpis & Mr. Meka Yugandhar.

1. LONGCHAMP PLATE (1,200M): ICE OF FIRE (Sandesh) 1, Mutual Trust (Akshay K) 2, Agrador (Antony) 3 and Star Serendine (Suraj) 4. 5-1/4, 6-1/4 and 1-1/2. Im 13.94s. Rs. 25 (w), II, 11 and 14 (p), SHP: 31, THP: 30, FP: 52, Q: 30, Trinella: 173/101, Exacta: 200/70. Favourite: Mutual Trust. Owner: Mr. P. Arun Kumar. Trainer: Pradeep Annaiah.

2. VALLEY OF FLOWERS PLATE (1,600M): PROMISEOFTHEFUTURE (Suraj) 1, Continues (A. Ramu) 2, Torobravo (B.R. Kumar) 3 and Sea Blush (Srinath) 4. 6, 4-1/4 and 7-1/2. Im 38.69s. Rs. 20 (w), 12, 13 and 18 (p), SHP: 37, THP: 38, FP: 56, Q: 51, Trinella: 309/176, Exacta: 631/288. Favourite: Promiseofthefuture. Owner: Ms. Ameeta Mehra. Trainer: Irfan Ghatala.

3. AMAZING GRACE STAKES (1,200M): EMERALDO (Darshan) 1, Chiraga (Vinod Shinde) 2, Princess Jasmine (K. Suhas) 3 and Bourbon Bay (Rajan) 4. 3-1/4 and 1. Im 16.03s. Rs. 39 (w), 14, 10 and 19 (p), SHP: 35, THP: 56, FP: 107, Q: 41, Trinella: 499/196, Exacta: 1,059/236. Favourite: Chirag. Owner: Mr. Arun Kumar. K.N. Trainer: Pradeep Annaiah.

4. S.V. SUBRAMANIAM MEMORIAL TROPHY (1,400M): KING OF WAR (G. Vivek) 1, Sekhmet (Antony) 2, Bruce Almighty (Akshay K) 3 and Aircraft (Arshad) 4. 3-1/4, 5-3/4 and 1-1/2. Im 26.03s. Rs. 18 (w), 12, 17 and 15 (p), SHP: 48, THP: 52, FP: 138, Q: 80, Trinella: 182/73, Exacta: 392/232. Favourite: King of War.

Owner: Mrs. Shruhiba L. Gowda. Trainer: V. Lokanath.

5. MANAGING COMMITTEE TROPHY (1,800M): ROCK BANK (G. Vivek) 1, Mescalite (Akshay K) 2, Dr Ash (Suraj) 3 and Count Basie (Srinath) 4. 2, 5-1/2 and 3. Im 53.29s. Rs. 20 (w), 13 and 12 (p), SHP: 26, THP: 29, FP: 42, Q: 26, Trinella: 107/75, Exacta: 122/36. Favourite: Rock Bank. Owners: Mr. K. Kaliyaperumal, Mr. Ashok Ranpis & Mr. Meka Yugandhar. Trainer: Prasanna Kumar.

6. CHATRAPATHI PLATE (1,800M): TEHANI (Akshay K) 1, August (Sandesh) 2, Auspicious Queen (Angad) 3 and Splendid (G. Vivek) 4. 1, 4 and 2-1/2. Im 52.01s. Rs. 23 (w), 16 and 12 (p), SHP: 29, THP: 32, FP: 39, Q: 19, Trinella: 142/134, Exacta: 173/47. Favourite: August. Owners: Viloo Poonawalla Racing & Breeding Pvt Ltd rep. by Dr. Cyrus S. Poonawalla & Mr. Adar C. Poonawalla, Mr. Mukul A. Sonawala, M/s. DT Racing & Breeding LLP rep. by Mr. D.R. Thacker & Mr. S.R. Sanas. Trainer: S. Attallah.

7. HAVERI PLATE (1,400M): BRAVE MAJESTY (Akshay K) 1, Agera (Darshan) 2, Asagiri (Suraj) 3 and Augusto (Arvind K) 4. Not run. Silver Swift: 1-1/4, 1-1/4 and 6. Im 26.81s. Rs. 25 (w), 13, 26 and 13 (p), SHP: 74, THP: 53, FP: 29, Q: 27, Trinella: 589/170, Exacta: 825/5,885. Favourite: Asagiri.

Owner: Dr. M.A.M. Sarwamy Chettiar of Chettinad Charitable Trust. Trainer: S. Ganapathy.

Jackpot: Rs. 1,547 (198 tkts); Runner-up: 191 (687 tkts); Treble: 1: 219 (45 tkts); (ii): 267 (60 tkts).

More time allotted for Olympian shooters to get ready

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The shooters who competed in the Paris Olympics have been given some more time by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to get ready for the season ahead. Thus, the National championship being held in Delhi and Bhopal will not be mandatory for them.

However, it will be mandatory for the Olympic shooters to participate in the selection trials to be conducted next January / February and thereafter, to be eligible for the national team.

With the first World Cups in rifle, pistol and shotgun scheduled in Buenos Aires and Lima in April, NRAI would consider scores shot from the third Olympic trials, specifically for the Olympians of

Paris.

For rifle and pistol, the selection will be on the basis of the average of four of the last five scores within a period of 180 days.

The NRAI has also announced that it will have the top three shooters for the 'A' team, and the next three for the 'B' team. It will have the prerogative to field any team of its choice in international competition, presumably to prepare a bunch of shooters for the Continental and World Championships.

The national federation also expects the shooters to be clear about being eligible for the senior or junior events in advance. Once the choice is made, the shooters may have to stick to it for the season.

There will be bonus points for placings in the finals, of different value, for the different international

and national competitions which will be added to the qualification scores of that event.

Shooters who are in the top-10 of the national rankings will alone be eligible to compete internationally in the designated competitions, even at their own cost, including the non-Olympic events.

The NRAI has given itself a degree of flexibility in making combinations for mixed events, from among the top two male and female shooters, wherever two teams can be fielded.

For shotgun selection, bonus points will be added to the qualification scores only for the top three positions. The shotgun shooters will have to compete in one mandatory trial or event, apart from having three other scores, of which two would be considered for selection.

Manipur upends defending champion Services

SANTOSH TROPHY

Sports Bureau
HYDERABAD

Manipur shocked defending champion Services 1-0 in the inaugural match of the Santosh Trophy national football championship at the Deccan Arena (Aziznagar) here on Saturday.

In other matches, West Bengal recorded a 3-1 win against Jammu & Kashmir, which is playing in the final round for the first time since 2015-16, while host Telangana salvaged a one-all draw against Rajasthan.

In the biggest upset of the day, last year's semi-finalist Manipur won a closely-fought contest with the match-winner coming through Shunjanthan Ragui in the 96th minute with



Intense battle: Manipur and Services players vie for possession.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

a perfectly-placed header that looped into the top corner following Zahir's cross.

For the home team, it was a decent start to its campaign to rally from a deficit with Amit Godara giving Rajasthan the lead in the 53rd minute.

In the dying minutes,

Second season of ice hockey league in Leh

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The second edition of the Royal Enfield Ice Hockey League will be held from January 2 to 9, 2025, in Ladakh. The unveiling of the trophy and jerseys for the league took place here on Saturday.

In total, ten men's teams and five women's teams will come together in Leh to take part in the week-long league.

As part of Saturday's event, a panel discussion on the topic 'Enabling the Olympic dream: From the Himalayas to the world' took place. The guests included Winter Olympian Shiva Keshavan, P.T. Kunzang (vice-president of Ice Hockey Association of Ladakh), Noor Jahan (general-secretary, Ladakh Women's Ice Hockey Foundation), Darryl Eas-

Southee equals Gayle's tally of sixes in Test cricket

Press Trust of India
HAMPTON

New Zealand's Tim Southee on Saturday equalled West Indies great Chris Gayle's tally of sixes in Test cricket to move to joint-fourth spot in the all-time list, with his 98th hit over the fence in Hamilton. Southee reached the milestone against England. Ben Stokes leads the all-time list with 133 sixes in 110 Tests so far, followed by Brendon McCullum with 107 sixes in 101 Tests. At third spot is Adam Gilchrist (100 sixes in 96 Tests).

LIVE TELECAST

WPL Auction: Star Sports 1 Hindi & JioCinema, 2.30 p.m. onwards
SMAT: (final), JioCinema, 4.30 p.m.
India Women vs West Indies Women: 1st T20I, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 7 p.m.
PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m.
Australia vs India: 3rd Test, day 3, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 5.20 a.m. (Monday)

Sport

Mumbai holds all the aces ahead of the final against Madhya Pradesh

The Rahane-led batting line-up is firing on all cylinders and will be a force to reckon with in the summit clash; MP will hope its talisman Patidar can produce a magical innings when it matters the most

MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

It will take a herculean effort from Madhya Pradesh to stop Mumbai in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Sunday.

Barring a loss to Kerala in the group stage, Mumbai has been an unstoppable force. No target is out of reach, as the batting line-up consisting of Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Shivam Dube and Suryansh Shegde can all pack a mighty punch.

Opener Rahane, in particular, has been a standout success. The highest run-scorer of the tournament, Rahane has taken the game away in the PowerPlay with electric strokplay. Shegde, meanwhile, has emerged as a

fine finisher, going at a tournament-high strike-rate of 256.7.

New ball bowlers Mohit Avasthi and Shardul Thakur have come good with 13 wickets each.

Madhya Pradesh depends heavily on Rajat Patidar to produce a magical knock. The Royal Challengers Bengaluru batter has four fifties in nine matches, including an unbeaten 29-ball 66 against Delhi in the semifinal here.

Patidar relies on Harpreet Singh for company in the middle-order. A stable presence, Harpreet provides the ideal foil for the attacking Patidar.

Venkatesh Iyer has moved down the order in this tournament and could be called into action early in the event of a collapse.

MP's left-arm spinner Kumar Kartikeya is the second-highest wicket-taker of the tournament, even if his efficiency has dipped in the knockout stages.



Aggressive bunch: Madhya Pradesh will have to make sure that the likes of Rahane and Shreyas don't run away with the game. K. MURALI KUMAR

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Late Jota goal salvages a draw for Liverpool

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters
LIVERPOOL

Liverpool's Diogo Jota bagged a last-gasp equaliser to salvage a breathless 2-2 Premier League draw for the 10-man Reds at Anfield on Saturday, with Arne Slot's men twice roaring back from a goal down.

Liverpool remains top of the table on 36 points and with a game in hand after the postponement of last weekend's match at Everton.

Robertson was shown a red card for a lunging tackle on Harry Wilson that denied an obvious goal-scoring opportunity.

Arsenal spurned several chances as it was held to a 0-0 draw at home by a defensively resilient Everton.

The hosts dominated possession but lacked its typical intensity and was often left frustrated by goalkeeper Jordan Pickford, who made a string of fine saves.

Newcastle United forward Jacob Murphy netted a goal in each half as his



Super sub: Jota, right, about to score Liverpool's second against Fulham. AP

side hammered Leicester City 4-0 in their clash at St James' Park.

Two goals from Jae-sung Lee took Mainz to a shock 2-1 home win over Bayern Munich on Saturday, handing coach Vincent Kompany his first league loss.

Lee scored in each half against an uncharacteristically poor Bayern, which is now just four points clear after Bayer Leverkusen's 2-0 win at Augsburg.

The results:
Premier League: Arsenal 0 drew with Everton 0; Newcastle 4 (Murphy 30, 60, Guimaraes 47, Isak 50) bt Leicester 0; Wolves 1

(Cunha 72) lost to Ipswich Town 2 (Doherty 15-og, Taylor 90+4); Liverpool 2 (Gakpo 47, Jota 86) drew with Fulham 2 (Pereira 11, Muniz 76).

Bundesliga: Augsburg 0 lost to Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Terrier 14, Witzel 40); Mainz 2 (Lee 41, Doherty 45) bt Bayern Munich 1 (Sane 87); Borussia M'Gladbach 4 (Kleindienst 1, Hack 26, Plea 43, 79) bt Holstein Kiel 1 (Gigovic 30).

Serie A: Cagliari 0 lost to Atalanta 1 (Zaniolo 66).

On Friday: La Liga: Valladolid 1 (Tahami 20) bt Valencia 0.

Serie A: Empoli 0 lost to Torino 1 (Adams 70).

Bundesliga: Freiburg 3 (Kubler 42, 51, Gregoritsch 61) bt Wolfsburg 2 (Wind 75, Svanberg 83).

SANTOSH TROPHY

Sports Bureau
HYDERABAD

Manipur shocked defending champion Services 1-0 in the inaugural match of the Santosh Trophy national football championship at the Deccan Arena (Aziznagar) here on Saturday.



Bee magnet: A mustard field in full bloom in Morigaon district of Assam. Honeybees are drawn to the abundant nectar of the flowers.



Breakfast time: A honeybee dips in for the nectar in mustard flowers. Every day they travel up to five km for nectar.



Delicate task: Beekeepers lifting trays out of a bee box to extract honey.

As busy as a bee

Itinerant workers from other States flit from one location to another in Assam to plant bee boxes and let the honey flow, in a win-win deal for them and local farmers



Ritu Raj Konwar
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Sushanta Mandal from Malda, West Bengal, has been in the beekeeping business for over eight years. Since 2016, he has been travelling from his home State to Morigaon district of Assam with 250 bee boxes, drawn to the abundant nectar of the vibrant mustard fields there. He is not alone in this journey. Several groups of beekeepers from Bihar and West Bengal converge in Assam every winter, and their numbers are steadily growing. Barpeta, Bajali, Bilasipara, Nagaon and Morigaon districts in Assam witness this trend every year.

Mustard flowers cannot self-pollinate and need the help of insects to carry pollen between flowers. This is where the bees come in.

Rearing *Apis mellifera*, the most common of the honeybee species around the world, requires a team of at least four or five persons to ensure the smooth operation of the honey production process – scouting, camping, and production. Therefore, a farmer needs to maintain at least 200 bee boxes for the work to be financially viable.

There is a growing industry of migratory beekeeping in Assam where beekeepers move

from one location to another, across the State, in search of blooming flowers for nectar. Assam's extensive mustard cultivation and low competition attracts an increasing number of farmers to the State each year.

Mustard blossoms early in Assam, prompting beekeepers to shift there. The journey is not set to a specific route and can vary based on the availability of flowers. The migration process involves scouting potential sites for suitable flowers and accommodation. Once the promising locations are identified, beekeepers conduct inspections and engage with the local residents to assess flower availability and the feasibility of housing the apian colonies.

Production of crops such as mustard, coconut, areca nut, lychee and mango is increasing in the village due to the presence of bees. The role of honeybees and other insects is not limited to agriculture, food security, and nutrition. Without them, wild plants and the ecosystems that make the planet habitable would collapse.

Even farmers who do not keep bees have benefited as the bees' activities have increased the fertility of the region's crops and fruit trees.



Honey hunt: Workers check the trays in the bee boxes.



Combing out: Beekeepers take out the trays to retrieve honey. They can extract honey once a week under favourable conditions.



Fertile ground: Assam's extensive mustard cultivation and low competition is attractive for migratory beekeepers.



By the bucket: Beekeepers transport containers of honey from a mustard field.



Golden produce: Freshly extracted honey being poured into storage containers.



Group effort: A team of beekeepers have lunch in their temporary shelter.



Fresh and sweet: A beekeeper from West Bengal extracts honey in the middle of a mustard field.