



## IN BRIEF



Punjab farmers to resume march to Delhi on Jan. 21

CHANDIGARH  
Farmers and farm labourers protesting against the Union government in Punjab over their long-pending demands on Thursday announced the resumption of their foot march to Delhi on January 21. [» Page 3](#)

Expired saline case: 12 doctors suspended in WB

KOLKATA  
The West Bengal government on Thursday suspended 12 doctors following the death of a woman and a newborn due to the alleged administration of expired intravenous fluid at Medinipur Medical College and Hospital. It announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh and a job for the deceased woman's family. [» Page 4](#)

## ISRO docks two satellites, puts India in elite league

SpaDeX mission gained control of them as a single object; ISRO to follow up manoeuvre with undocking and power transfers; India joins the ranks of U.S., Russia and China with this feat

Hemanth C.S.  
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully executed a satellite docking experiment in the early hours of Thursday, "making India the fourth country" after the U.S., Russia and China to achieve this historic feat.

The two satellites – SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target) – launched by the PSLV C60 on December 30 successfully docked as officials from the Mission Operations Complex (MOX) at the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking, and Command Network (ISTRAC) oversaw the complex procedure.

"Docking Success Spacraft docking successfully completed! A historic moment. Let's walk

**On track** On December 30, ISRO's SpaDeX mission launched into orbit two satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target). Two weeks on, the mission proved a success but it was not without a few hiccups. Here's a timeline of events:

Jan. 7	The space agency had initially scheduled the docking for this day but postponed it to Jan. 9	Jan. 8	ISRO observed a more-than-desired drift between the two satellites and postponed the docking again	Jan. 12	The satellites were moved within 3 metres of each other in a trial attempt and then returned to a safe distance	Jan. 16	Inter-satellite distance was reduced to 3 metres from 15 metres and both satellites were successfully docked	SIGNIFICANCE	Demonstration of this technology is vital for futuristic missions such as manned craft to the moon and building and operating an Indian space station
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through the SpaDeX docking process: Manoeuvre from 15m to 3m hold point completed. Docking initiated with precision, leading to successful spacecraft capture. Retraction completed smoothly, followed by rigidisation for stability. Docking successfully completed. India became the 4th country to achieve successful Space Docking.

The SpaDeX mission is an important project designed to develop and demonstrate the technology

Congratulations to the entire team! Congratulations to India!" ISRO said on X.

Post-docking, the agency took control of the two satellites as a single object. "Undocking and power transfer checks to follow in coming days," it added.

The SpaDeX mission is an important project designed to develop and demonstrate the technology

needed for spacecraft manoeuvres. The demonstration of this technology is vital for futuristic missions such as sending an Indian astronaut to the moon, and building and operating an Indian space station.

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GATES IN THE SKY  
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## Saif Ali Khan stable after intruder stabs him at home

Snehal Mutha

MUMBAI

Actor Saif Ali Khan was stabbed by an intruder during a robbery attempt at his Bandra West residence in the early hours of Thursday. He underwent surgery at the Lilavati Hospital and was "out of danger".

The police obtained visuals of the attacker and a search was on. Ten teams from the Crime Branch and the Mumbai Police are investigating the case.

The police suspect the involvement of two persons. "The investigation revealed that it was an attempted burglary. One of the accused, who has been identified through CCTV footage, entered the house using a fire escape," said Dixit Gedam, Zone 9 Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP).

The police dismissed any Bishnoi gang connection to the case. After questioning the



Kareena Kapoor at the Lilavati Hospital where Saif Ali Khan was

being treated for his injuries. PTI

housekeepers and staff at Mr. Khan's residence at the Satguru Sharan building, where the actor stays with his wife Kareena Kapoor, the police suspect that the attacker was known to one of the housekeepers.

He did not break into the house nor make a forced entry, a police official said.

According to the Mumbai Police, the intruder entered Mr. Khan's flat on the 12th floor around 2.30 a.m. When he entered the be-

droom of Mr. Khan's youngest son, Jehangir, his house help raised an alarm, following which the actor intervened. The intruder attacked Mr. Khan with a knife. The house help was also injured.

CCTV visuals showed the intruder escaping from the building through a staircase.

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MUMBAI IS SAFE: FADNAVIS  
» PAGE 12

## Hamas backtracked on truce deal: Israel

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

Israel carried out new air strikes on Gaza on Thursday and accused Hamas of backtracking on parts of a fragile ceasefire and hostage release deal ahead of an expected vote by its Cabinet.

The truce, announced by mediators Qatar and the U.S. on Wednesday, would take effect on Sunday and involve the exchange of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, after which the terms of a permanent end to the war would be finalised. But the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday that Hamas

had "reneged on parts of the agreement reached... in an effort to extort last-minute concessions".

It also said the Israeli Cabinet, which has yet to approve the agreement, "will not convene until the mediators notify Israel that Hamas has accepted all elements of the agreement".

**'No basis for accusations'** Hamas political bureau member Sami Abu Zuhri said there was "no basis" for Israel's accusations.

In Gaza, the civil defence agency said Israel pounded many areas after the deal was announced, killing at least 75 people and wounding hundreds.

## Heightened vigil



**Winter patrol:** Army personnel patrol regions along the Line of Control in J&K on Thursday, ahead of Republic Day. ANI

## Hindenburg Research winds up operations

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI

U.S.-based shortseller Hindenburg Research will be disbanded, its founder Nathan Anderson has said, adding that the firm has completed the projects it was handling.

"The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on," Mr. Anderson said late on Wednesday. The announcement comes just days before Donald Trump's inauguration as the new President of the United States.

Hindenburg, in January 2023, made waves when it published a report accusing the Adani Group of

"pulling the largest con in corporate history", wiping out over \$150 billion in value of the group's shares at their lowest point.

The Adani Group had vehemently denied all the allegations, including that of being "engaged in a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades" and improper use of offshore tax havens to shore up group share prices.

Hindenburg's report against Adani Group led to a political storm in India.

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'NOT A CLEAN CHIT'  
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## PM approves constitution of Eighth Pay Commission

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Days ahead of the Delhi Assembly election, the Union government approved the establishment of the Eighth Pay Commission here on Thursday, accepting a demand of the central trade unions and employees' organisations.

The commission's outcome will benefit about 50 lakh Union government employees and 65 lakh pensioners.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Chairperson and two members of the commission would be appointed soon.

**FULL REPORT ON**  
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## T.N.'s 'drone didis' spray fields in a jiffy

The State's first batch of women trained under the Central scheme has been deployed to help farmers spray fertilizer and pesticide, water fields in minutes; drone's heavy weight is a challenge

S. Prasad

KALLAKURICI

**N**andini Sugumar, 27, a postgraduate in mathematics, has always had a fascination for drones. Having only seen the gadget whirring overhead at weddings, she now holds the controls as a drone pilot trained to assist Kallakurichi farmers.

A fortnight before Pongal, residents of Devapandalam, a nondescript village near Sankarapuram, watched in awe as Ms. Sugumar's drone hovered above a sugarcane field spraying fertilizer from its payload. The typical sortie covered the entire sugar cane field



**At the helm:** Saranya operating a drone on a paddy field at Kommasamuthiram in Kallakurichi district. S.S. KUMAR

in just seven minutes before returning to ground amid loud cheers from the villagers.

Ms. Sugumar is among the first batch of Tamil Nadu's women self-help group members selected

under the Centre's Namo Drone Didi scheme, aimed at empowering rural women by training them to be drone pilots and making them integral stakeholders of the local farming supply chain.

She underwent a five-day hands-on training workshop on the operation and maintenance of drones held by Garuda Aerospace Private Ltd. in Chennai. After completing the Remote Pilot Training Classes, she was given a drone worth ₹7 lakh free, equipped with two tanks and a battery set.

Having graduated as a skilled drone pilot, Ms. Sugumar is excited to embrace the technology to meet a wide range of farmers' requirements, to spray fertilisers and pesticides, and water the fields.

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## Parties asked to disclose, label AI content used in poll campaigns

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly poll, the Election Commission on Thursday issued a fresh advisory to political parties, asking them to ensure responsible and transparent use of Artificial Intelligence-generated content in their campaigns.

The move comes days after a first information report (FIR) was lodged against the Aam Aadmi Party for allegedly posting AI-generated photos and videos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the party's official 'X' handle.

Just before the Lok Sabha election last year, the electoral body had issued guidelines to curb potential use of 'deepfakes' and AI-

Election Commission of India advises all political parties and their leaders, candidates and star campaigners to also take necessary measures for prominent labelling of AI-generated/synthetic content, if any, being shared for campaigning through their social media platforms and other media platforms," the guidelines said.

The advisory issued on Thursday introduces labelling and disclosure norms as far as use of AI-generated content is concerned. This requires parties to label any material generated by AI with notations such as "AI-Generated", "Digitally Enhanced" or "Synthetic Content".

"...Considering the deepening influence of AI-generated/synthetic content in shaping public opinion, the

generated distorted content by political parties and their representatives to disturb the level playing field. The advisory issued on Thursday introduces labelling and disclosure norms as far as use of AI-generated content is concerned. This requires parties to label any material generated by AI with notations such as "AI-Generated", "Digitally Enhanced" or "Synthetic Content".

"...Considering the deepening influence of AI-generated/synthetic content in shaping public opinion, the



Bhagwant Mann at a roadshow in Ghonda on Thursday. PTI

**Mann: Centre troubling Delhi people to stop them from voting for AAP**

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Punjab Chief Minister and senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said the Central government is trying to "trouble" the people of Delhi so that they do not vote for AAP in the Delhi Assembly poll.

"The Central government is intentionally troubling the people of Delhi so that they get tired and do not vote for AAP. But Arvind Kejriwal is like your brother, family member. It is your duty to support him," Mr. Mann said while addressing a roadshow in Ghonda Assembly constituency in north-east Delhi in support of party candidate Gaurav Sharma.

"You voted AAP to power thrice and Kejriwal paid back by building schools, Mohalla Clinics, and giving jobs, providing free electricity, water and bus rides to women," he added.

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# BJP puts out fourth list of nine names, makes room for allies

**JD(U)** candidate to contest from Burari seat. Chirag Paswan's LJP (Ram Vilas) likely to field its nominee from Deoli; Cong's Sandeep Dikshit, AAP's Manish Sisodia file nominations amid fanfare

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

**With** just one day left for the filing of nomination papers for the February 5 Delhi Assembly poll, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced its fourth list of nine candidates on Thursday, naming the party's choices for the Greater Kailash and Babarpur Assembly constituencies from where Delhi Cabinet Ministers are contesting.

The party has fielded Shikha Rai from Greater Kailash to take on senior AAP leader Saurabh Bhadravaj and Anil Vashishth from Badarpur to contest against AAP's Gopal Rai.

With this, the BJP has announced 68 candidates for



BJP's Gandhi Nagar nominee Arvinder Singh Lovely filing his nomination for the February 5 Assembly election. PTI

the 70-member House so far.

Subsequently, its ally Jana Dal (United) declared Shailendra Kumar as its candidate from the Burari Assembly constituency.

According to sources, the Union Minister Chirag Paswan-led Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), an ally of the



Cantonment and Purvanchali leader Chandan Kumar Chaudhary from San-

gam Vihar.

It also named Sanjay Goyal from Shahdara seat to take on Jitender Singh Shunty, who recently quit the party to join AAP. Other candidates fielded are Poonam Sharma from Wazirpur, Ravinder Kumar Indraj from Bawana, Rakvanti Ujjain from Trilokpuri (SC) and Praveen Nimesh from Gokalpuri (SC).

**High-profile candidates**

Meanwhile, several key candidates, including BJP's Harish Khurana, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Arvinder Singh Lovely, Congress's Sandeep Dikshit, and AAP's Manish Sisodia, filed their nomination papers.

The last day for nominations is January 17; for withdrawal, it is January 20.

The BJP fielded three-time MLA Karan Singh Tanwar's son Bhuvan Tanwar from Delhi Cantonment and Purvanchali leader Chandan Kumar Chaudhary from San-

gar, 1 litre edible oil, 6 kg pulses and 250 grams of tea.

Mr. Yadav said unlike the Aam Aadmi Party's 200-unit-free power scheme, the Congress's 300 units of free power will be implemented through direct bank transfer.

The promises are in addition to the ₹25 lakh health insurance cover for every resident under its

# Congress promises ₹500 LPG cylinder, ration kit, 300 units of free power to Delhi residents

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday said it will provide subsidised LPG cylinder at ₹500, a free ration kit, and 300 units of free electricity per month to every family if voted to power in Delhi.

The announcement was made by Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at a press conference with All India Congress Committee Delhi in-charge Qazi Nizamuddin and Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav.

Mr. Reddy said the guarantees will help the people tackle inflation. "AAP and the BJP have ruined the lives of families with sky-rocketing inflation, but the Congress guarantee will take inflation out of the kitchens," he said.

The free ration kit will contain 5 kg rice, 2 kg su-



Telangana CM A. Revanth Reddy and Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav in New Delhi on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

proposed 'Jeevan Raksha Yojana', ₹2,500 per month 'Pyari Didi Yojana', and ₹8,500 every month for unemployed youth for one-year apprenticeship.

The party said it has come up with the five promises after receiving feedback from people during senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and Mr. Yadav's Delhi Nyay Yatra.

## Tahir Hussain files papers, returns to jail

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen candidate from Delhi's Mustafabad seat, Tahir Hussain, on Thursday filed his nomination papers and returned to Tihar jail hours later, the police said.

The former AAP councilor, who is in jail in connection with the 2020 riots in north-east Delhi, left the jail around 9.15 a.m. under heavy

security and returned to custody at 2.16 p.m., a Tihar jail official said.

The Delhi High Court had on Tuesday granted custody parole to Mr. Hussain in a riots-related murder case to enable him to file his papers. Mr. Hussain has been lodged in jail since March 2020.

Reacting to the development, Kapil Mishra, BJP's candidate from the Karawal Nagar constituency, said,

candidates should be chosen on the basis of their work. "If parties give tickets to those who have harmed people, they will vote them out," added Mr. Mishra, who is accused of making hate speeches in the run-up to the riots in February 2020, which left 53 people dead. Earlier, the High Court had once issued notice to him over a plea related to the riots. But no FIR was ever filed against him.

## BJP, AAP spar over Kejriwal and Parvesh's assets

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday claimed that there was a steep rise in the income of Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal, and said the surge is inexplicable as he has cited his MLA salary as his "sole source of income" in his election affidavit.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the former Chief Minister de-

clared his 2020-21 income as ₹44,90,040, which is almost 40 times his 2019-20 income of ₹1,57,823.

**'Seek clarification'**

"The people of Delhi seek a clarification from Kejriwal on a 40-fold increase in his income in 2020-21 and a six-fold increase in 2023-24, despite declaring his MLA salary as his sole source of income," Mr. Sachdeva said at a press

conference.

AAP hit back at the claims and said that Mr. Kejriwal is a three-time Chief Minister and a former IRS officer who does not own any personal property in Delhi or even a car.

This is a testament to his "simplicity and commitment" to public service, the party added.

It accused the BJP of "hypocrisy", citing the assets of Mr. Kejriwal's BJP

rival from the the New Delhi seat Parvesh Sahib Singh.

"Mr. Singh's total wealth is ₹89 crore, about 27 times Mr. Kejriwal's. His family's assets are worth over ₹100 crore. His asset value increased by 2,600% in 5 years," the AAP claimed in a statement.

The BJP must reveal the sources behind the "massive surge" in Mr. Singh's wealth, it demanded.

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(Construction Organisation)

**S.R. NO. TENDER NOTICE NO:CEC/BSP/24-25/18 Dated : 09-01-2025 (Open E-Tender) (Single Packet System)**

**Name of Work:** "Conducting Final Location Survey, including collection of field details for geotechnical investigation, preparation of GADS & other drawings and preparation of survey report & estimate etc for the work of construction of double line Flyover/ROR at Lajkura(10 km) in S.E.C. Railway." **Tender Value:** Rs. 1749154.10 **EMD :** Rs. 35000.00 **Cost of Tender Document:** NIL **Completion period of Work:** 06(Six) months, from the dates of acceptance letter. **Date & Time of Tender Closing:** Up to 15:00 hours on 31-01-2025. **Date & Time of Tender Opening:** 15:30 hrs. on 31-01-2025. For further details related to tender document, eligibility criteria and the complete details for the above work, please contact office of the Chief Administrative Officer/ Con / S.E.C.R/Bilaspur, Pin-495004 or Dy. Chief Engineer (Con) /S.E.C.Railway/Bilaspur-Pin-495004 or Dy. Chief Chief Engineer/ Con/ S.E.C.Railway/Rajpur - Pin-492009, Chief Project Manager/ West/Construction/ South East Central Railway, Nagpur - Pin-440001 or refer to our website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in)

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The Superintending Engineer, 6th Circle HP.PWD, Kullu on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under (NABARD) RIDF-XXVI for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HP.PWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag (Contractors of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag are eligible to participate for the works having amount put to tender above Rs.100 Lacs). Non registered contractors may submit the bids however successful bidder has to register in appropriate Class with appropriate authority in HP.PWD.

District	RIDF	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Total Cost (Rs.)	Period of completion	Bid Security (Rs.)	
			Construction	Maintenance		The bid security is 2 percent of the total cost, rounded to the nearest Thousand	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Kullu 1	XXVI	CIO Balance work of link road from Loran to Sarti Via Khalara Km 2/510 to 6/660 Under NABARD-RIDF-XXVI	2,36,31,840/-	-	2,36,31,840/-	18 Months	4,73,000/-

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement on 17-01-2025 at 10:00 AM  
3. Cost of Bid Form:- Rs.5,000/- per package/job (non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft in favour of Executive Engineer, Division HP.PWD, Manali at Katrain.  
4. Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission:- The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website [www.hptenders.gov.in](http://www.hptenders.gov.in). The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). "Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering may obtain the same from the website: [www.hptenders.gov.in](http://www.hptenders.gov.in). Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.  
5. Submission of Original Documents:- The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.48 (a) (ii) of ITB with Superintending Engineer, 6th Circle HP.PWD, Kullu, not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand.  
6. Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering:- Upto on 24-01-2025 at 05:00 PM  
7. The site for the work is available.  
8. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore, bids must be submitted online in the office of Superintending Engineer, 6th Circle HP.PWD, Kullu by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.  
9. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are

Trucks allowed entry into Delhi as air quality improves

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

As the air quality index of Delhi improved to 302 on Thursday, the Centre lifted the ban on trucks entering the national capital.

However, the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) said the ban on construction and demolition activities and the plying of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four-wheelers will continue.

Timings	
FRIDAY, JAN. 17	
RISE 07:15	SET 17:48
RISE 21:09	SET 09:32
SATURDAY, JAN. 18	
RISE 07:15	SET 17:49
RISE 22:03	SET 10:00
SUNDAY, JAN. 19	
RISE 07:14	SET 17:50
RISE 22:56	SET 10:26

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	20	10
Safdarjung	20	10
Palam	17	09

**Delhi Palam Today**  
17°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with Fog and mist. Day will be cool. Night also will be cold and foggy.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
18°C Morning will be cold and foggy. Day will be cool. Night also will be cold and uneasy. Dry weather to prevail.

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# Punjab farmers to resume march to Delhi on Jan. 21

The announcement comes a day after 111 farmers sat on an indefinite hunger strike in solidarity with Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered 52nd day; SKM calls for *kisan mahapanchayats* in all States

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHANDIGARH



**Protest mode:** Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher addressing mediapersons at Shambhu border in Patiala on Thursday. PTI

Farmers and farm labourers protesting against the Union government in Punjab over their long-pending demands on Thursday announced the resumption of their foot march to New Delhi on January 21.

The announcement came a day after a group of 111 farmers began a fast-unto-death on the Haryana side of the border near Khamarai in solidarity with farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose similar fast entered its 52nd day on Thursday.

Farmers under the banner of the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) have been camping since February 13 last year at Shambhu-Ambala

and Khanauri-Jind borders – the inter-State boundaries between Haryana and Punjab – after being stopped from entering Haryana. They have been demanding a legal guarantee for purchasing our crops at a minimum support price (MSP) and farm loan waiver, among other demands.

KMM coordinator Sar-

wan Singh Pandher said, "We have been protesting for the last 11 months and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government in Haryana is stifling our constitutional rights of freedom of expression and protest. We will resume our foot march on January 21 from the protest site at Shambhu."

A group of 101 farmers

made three attempts to restart their march from Punjab on December 6, 8 and 14. However, elaborate security arrangements with multi-layer barricades put in place by the Haryana government have prevented them from proceeding ahead.

**'Initiate talks'**

The SKM, meanwhile, demanded that the Union government initiate talks with the protesting farmers and called for holding *kisan mahapanchayats* in all States.

The outfit's statement added that it will write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the deteriorating health of Mr. Dallewal. "A massive *kisan mahapanchayat* has been scheduled for February 11 in Patna," the statement read.

(With inputs from PTI)

# For slum dwellers of Rangpuri Pahari, water still a pipe dream

**Satvika Mahajan**  
NEW DELHI

At Rangpuri Pahari, a slum cluster near Vasant Kunj in south-west Delhi, water taps don't run dry – because there are no taps.

For hundreds of slum dwellers, mainly from marginalised communities, water is still a distant dream even when slums have become one of the focal points of the upcoming Delhi Assembly election, and parties, including the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), are trying to seek their support.

Sushila Devi, 67, who has been living in the slum for decades, has not seen tap water for as long as she can remember. Ms. Devi said the survival of her six-member family depends on a weekly water tanker service.

"The water filled from the tanker lasts for five days in a week. For the remaining two days, we buy water from over 3 km away," she told *The Hindu*.

A five-minute walk from the slum is Rangpuri village, which has water pipelines. However, the residents of Rangpuri Pahari say they are forbidden to access them.

None of the political parties have helped in solving the water crisis, according to the residents. "When election is announced, politicians meet us and make tall promises, but forget us after the election," a slum dweller said on condition of anonymity.

Last month, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal promised to provide round-the-clock clean tap water supply across Delhi if his party is voted to power.



**Precious commodity:** Rangpuri Pahari residents collecting water for their daily needs from a tanker. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

er. He said his promise of ensuring non-stop water supply by 2025 faced "a slight delay" due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TINA factor**

Several residents said lack of water has changed their priorities from bathing or washing clothes to conserving water. "I have not taken bath in a long time. We save water to ensure that we don't go thirsty," said Dhanpal Pradhan, a 71-year-old resident of the slum.

He said several political parties are promising *pucca* houses, but "we will be more than happy if we even get access to tap water".

Mr. Pradhan's daughter-in-law, Pinky, 36, holding on to her infant, said she cannot afford to buy water as her family of seven is dependent on the income of her husband, a daily wage worker. "... they [parties] promised clean drinking water, well-built roads, sanitation facilities, and consistent electricity sup-

ply. Five years have passed. None of these have been met," she rued.

There is no fixed time for the arrival of the weekly water tanker, Kashish Yadav, a 15-year-old student, said. "The day the tanker comes, many of us miss school, and the elders work; we all get busy collecting water," he said.

Rangpuri Pahari is part of the Bijwasan Assembly constituency and has been held by AAP since 2015. This time, the ruling party has replaced sitting

MLA Bhupinder Singh Joon with Surender Bharadwaj, a grassroots-level worker.

Meanwhile, the BJP has fielded Kailash Gahlot, former AAP leader and Cabinet Minister, who switched to the BJP in November 2024. From the Congress, Devinder Kumar Sehrawat, a former MLA, will contest from the seat.

In the 2020 poll, the Assembly seat had witnessed a tight contest, which was won by AAP by a slender margin of 750-odd votes.

## JD(U) asks BJP to act against spokesperson

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The Janata Dal (United) on Thursday asked its ally BJP to act against the party's national spokesperson, Shehzad Poonawalla, for his recent comments targeting an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislator as they have caused "deep displeasure" among people from Purvanchal".

"The JD(U) seeks action from the BJP's leadership

against him," JD(U) leader Rajiv Ranjan Prasad said.

During a television debate on Wednesday, Mr. Poonawalla took a dig at AAP legislator Rituraj Jha by allegedly making a comment about his surname, which was slammed as "abusive" by Delhi's ruling party. His swipe had come after Mr. Jha made a jibe at the BJP spokesperson referring to his surname.

Mr. Poonawalla claimed he never abused anyone

and accused AAP of spreading "lies".

**Tender apology'** BJP's Purvanchali face and north-east Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari also condemned the remarks and said both Mr. Poonawalla and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal should apologise for using objectionable words against members of the Purvanchali community.

In a video message on X, Mr. Tiwari said members of

every party should refrain from targeting anyone for their caste, State or community.

"I strongly condemn the words spoken by Shehzad Poonawalla. No matter how much anyone provokes you, the party expects its workers to remain sensitive and maintain decorum... The party will take cognisance, I believe, and I want Shehzad Poonawalla to apologise without any further comments," the BJP legislator said.



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Member of Parliament  
U.T. of Lakshadweep

3.00 PM | 17th January 2025 | Agatti, Lakshadweep

ALL ARE WELCOME

## IN BRIEF



## SGPC writes to Mann, seeks ban on Emergency in Punjab

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Thursday wrote to Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann seeking a ban on the release of *Emergency*, saying it "tarnishes" the image of Sikhs and "misrepresents" history. The film by actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut is set to hit theatres on January 17. In the letter, SGPC chief Harjinder Singh Dhami said if the film is released in Punjab, it will spark "outrage and anger" in the Sikh community and that it is the responsibility of the government to ban it. He said the SGPC will submit a letter to all Deputy Commissioners seeking a ban on the film.

## Despite being born poor, Modi didn't harbour negativity: Shah

Despite being born in a poor family, Prime Minister Narendra Modi never harboured any negativity and transformed his impoverishment into compassion for the needy and strenuously worked for people's welfare, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday. Mr. Shah, who is on a visit to Gujarat, was addressing a gathering at Mr. Modi's home town, Vadnagar, in Mehsana district after inaugurating three key projects, including a redeveloped school where the PM received his early education. He said after becoming PM, Mr. Modi has changed the lives of crores of poor citizens by providing them various facilities such as houses, toilets and free ration.

# 12 doctors suspended in West Bengal after use of expired IV fluid kills two

Govt. announces compensation of ₹5 lakh, job for deceased woman's kin; newborn of critically ill woman dies; CM should take responsibility for incident as she holds the Health portfolio, says Lop

**Shrabana Chatterjee**

KOLKATA

The West Bengal government on Thursday suspended 12 doctors for "medical negligence" following the death of a woman and a newborn due to the alleged administration of expired intravenous fluid at Medinipur Medical College and Hospital. The government also announced compensation of ₹5 lakh and a government job for the deceased woman's family.

While the 31-year-old woman, who had delivered a baby on January 8, died the following day, the baby of one of the three women, who had fallen critically ill after being administered the IV fluid, died on Thursday morning.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who also holds the Health portfolio, said medical personnel on duty during the incident will face action. "The Chief Secretary and Health Secretary have submitted two investigation reports. As per



West Bengal Congress chief Subhankar Sarkar stages a protest over the alleged administration of expired intravenous fluid. FILE PHOTO

their suggestion, we are suspending 12 doctors. The CID will look into the criminal cases," she said.

The 12 include the medical superintendent and vice principal of the hospital, the resident medical officer, an assistant professor, the head of the department, and six post-graduate trainee doctors.

Ms. Banerjee said various irregularities have pointed towards "medical negligence and violation of procedures". "What has happened is deeply tragic

and unacceptable."

Reacting to the suspension of doctors, Leader of the Opposition and BJP leader Suvenu Adhikari said Ms. Banerjee should take responsibility for the incident as she is also the Health Minister. During a visit to the deceased woman's family, Mr. Adhikari said, "Banerjee sent the saline and damaged the health of thousands of women even after knowing that it is of bad quality."

Earlier, the Joint Platform of Doctors had issued a statement over the blame for the incident being put on doctors. "The administration has been ignoring the problem of fake medicines for a long time, which highlights a political conspiracy. Efforts have been made to divert public attention and point fingers at doctors," it had stated.

## Rising controversy

Many sections of doctors and Mr. Adhikari had raised questions about the quality of the IV fluid administered to the women. The fluid was from Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals, which was flagged earlier by the Karnataka Health Department for allegedly causing maternal deaths in the State.

The government has issued a notice to all medical colleges and hospitals stating that "items procured through the Store Management Information System from Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals should not be used even if available..."

The Chief Minister said the authorities concerned found 220 mines in the area during a post-disaster survey. "We will try to find out their origin based on

# Assam govt. orders judicial probe into coal mining mishap

**Rahul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

The Assam government has detected 220 rat-hole coal mines in the Dima Ha-sao district's Umrao area, including the ill-fated one where nine miners were trapped on January 6.

The State government has also ordered a judicial probe into the mishap that claimed the lives of four miners. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said after a Cabinet meeting in Morigaon on Thursday.



The mine still has 11 crore litres of water. The Cabinet has approved continuous dewatering in the presence of Army engineers till we reach a logical conclusion.

**HIMANTA BISWA SARMA**

Assam Chief Minister

satellite imagery. We'll take steps to close all rat-hole mines in consultation with Central agencies," he said.

He said experts from the Geological Survey of India, Coal India Limited, Oil India Limited, National Disaster Response Force, and Indian Navy initially estimated 14 crore litres of water in the flooded mine.

"The mine still has 11

crore litres of water and I

have been told by officers

at the site that it may take

up to 60 days to pump it

out at the current speed.

The Cabinet has approved

continuous dewatering

in the presence of Army

engineers till we reach a logical

conclusion," he said.

The Chief Minister said

the authorities concerned

found 220 mines in the

area during a post-disaster

survey. "We will try to find

out their origin based on

the next of kin of the four victims.

# Six die in jallikattu and other bull-related sports in T.N.

**The Hindu Bureau**  
TIRUCHI/MADURAI

Six persons were killed in jallikattu and other bull sport such as eruthattam and manjuvirattu in Tamil Nadu on Thursday.

Three spectators, including two elderly citizens, were killed in the jallikattu organised at Alanganallur in Madurai district, Rachanadhir Thirumalai in Karur district, and Mangadevanpatti in Pudukkottai district. Two persons were killed at a manjuvirattu in Sivaganga district and one person in eruthattam in Salem district. Several people were also injured in jallikattu events held in villages in Madurai, Tiruchi and Pudukkottai districts.

N. Kuzhanthivelu, 65, of Samuthiriam at Srirangam taluk in Tiruchi district, was gored by a bull at the event in Rachanadhir Thirumalai.



Action-packed: Participants trying to tame a bull at the jallikattu in Rachanadhir Thirumalai on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Police sources said he began to bleed from his nose and mouth, and was referred to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital after administration of first aid. He died at the hospital.

At the Mangadevanpatti event, C. Perumal, 70, of Vilavayam in Kulathur taluk, was killed after being hit by a bull. He died at the Pudukkottai Government Medical College Hospital.

Police sources said 734

bullets were released into the arena during the event at Rachanadhir Thirumalai, and 372 bull-tamers took the field in batches. A total of 62 persons were injured, of whom 55 were treated at the venue. Over 600 bulls were released into the arena at the Mangadevanpatti event, and 300 tamers took part in the event. Eleven persons were injured.

A total of 56 persons were injured in the Avarangadu jallikattu.

Police sources said 734

# Survivors opting out of township can't demand more money: Kerala HC

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Thursday orally observed that survivors of the Wayanad landslides who want to opt out of the proposed township cannot demand more money than what the State government has offered as it is not something that they can ask for as a matter of right.

The Bench comprising Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambari and Justice Eswaran S. made the observation when a suo motu case registered after the landslides came up for hearing.

The court orally observed that unlike in the case of land acquisition, they do not have a right. No obligation could be attributed to the State. It was a natural disaster and as a welfare state, Kerala has

got certain funds and it is using the money not only for the benefits of one or two persons but for all those affected by the landslides, the court said.

There has to be equitable distribution of resource and money. The State cannot look into the individual preferences of some survivors. "It cannot do that and it will not do that because if it does, it will be accused of showing preference to certain individuals over others," it said.

## Welfare state

It is a humanitarian gesture by a welfare state. With the available resources, the government has to distribute the resource equitably. Therefore, individual preference has to take a back seat. It is a policy decision of the government and so the court could not interfere with it, the court said.

# Miffed Shivakumar says KPCC chief's post is 'not up for sale'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The tussle over the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) leadership took a serious turn on Thursday after a miffed Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar said the State party chief's role was "not for purchase in any store".

Under constant attack in public by Cabinet Ministers and leaders close to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the KPCC chief — whose replacement is being sought by Ministers such as Satish Jarkiholi, G. Parameshwaran, and R.B. Thimmappa — said, "The KPCC chief's post is something that is not available in a store for purchase, nor can it be acquired by speaking openly about it in the media."

He indicated that those attacking him were also undermining the authority



D.K. Shivakumar

of Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge. "The Congress has the power to survive irrespective of who stays or leaves the party. It was not only D.K. Shivakumar who brought the party to power. The hard work of workers and voters enabled the party to come to power," Mr. Shivakumar told mediapersons.

On the demand for change in the KPCC leadership, he said, "Hard work and accomplishments will always be recognised by party leaders and rewarded suitably... If I want some

position, will the media get me that? There is no use speaking to the media. In fact, it may boomerang..."

## Internal matters

Pointing to AICC general secretary in charge of Karnataka Randeep Surjewala and Mr. Siddaramaiah's recent direction to leaders, Mr. Shivakumar said, "Everyone has been instructed not to discuss party affairs in public. Internal matters must not be discussed in the media. Any issue or concern should be discussed with the AICC chief, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, the CM, or the KPCC chief. Internal matters must be discussed within the party forum."

He also said if anyone has any concern, "I appeal to them to take it up with the high command and Mr. Surjewala, who is coming to Belagavi on Friday."

# Ex-Kerala HC judge loses ₹90 lakh to online fraud

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI

A former Kerala High Court judge was allegedly cheated of ₹90 lakh by online fraudsters who promised him huge returns for online share marketing.

Sasidharan Nambiyar, 73, of Nadam in Eloor, lost the money in less than a month, between December 4 and 30, 2024. The Hill Palace police have registered a case after the former jurist lodged a petition on December 30.

Those arraigned as accused in the case have been named as Ayana Joseph and Varsha Singh, though their real identity and location remain yet to be tracked down. According to the FIR, he was promised a profit of 850%.

# Odisha to overhaul management of multipurpose shelters after Cyclone Dana exposes deficiencies

**Satyasundar Barik**  
BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has decided to overhaul the management of multi-purpose shelters in the State after they couldn't be put to optimum use during Cyclone Dana in October 2024 owing to issues such as non-functional toilets and lack of power supply.

The government had constructed multipurpose cyclone and flood shelters (MCS & MFS) after the 1999 Super Cyclone led to the loss of thousands of lives.

The Revenue and Disaster Management Department has now resolved to hand over the task of improving the quality of management and maintenance of existing shelters and monitoring those under construction in rural and



urban areas to the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Department, and the Housing and Urban Development Department, respectively. As per the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), the two departments will maintain these shelters after the Super Cyclone shall also be repaired and universally accessible to disabled persons.

and maintained by the two departments. Both departments will also make necessary budgetary provisions for the purpose.

## Funds to be allocated

"Funds from the State Disaster Risk Management Fund will also be provided for augmenting budgetary provisions wherever permissible and possible," the resolution states.

The Revenue and Disaster Management Department will also provide funds to panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies for "securing electricity connections for the shelters and bearing energy charges".

According to the resolution, the secretaries of the Cyclone Shelter Management and Maintenance Committee and Flood Shel-

# Odisha forum urges parliamentary panel to bat for caste census

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BHUBANESWAR

The Samajika Nyaya Abhijan (SNA), an Odisha-based forum comprising different political parties and social organisations, urged Ganesh Singh, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of Other Backward Classes, to back the inclusion of a caste-based census in the forthcoming national census.

"Accurate socio-economic data gathered through such an initiative will enable better informed policymaking, equitable resource distribution, and development of targeted welfare programmes," the SNA told Mr. Singh.

A memorandum submitted by the forum stated

that OBCs and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) face gross injustice in the State. "Despite comprising 54% of Odisha's population, these communities face glaring inequities," it stated.

"The OBCs in Odisha receive 0% quota in education. The memorandum requests the committee to direct the government to revise its reservation policies and implement 27% reservation for OBC/SEBC in education to ensure equity and inclusivity," the SNA's memorandum stated.

## Book exploring rich culture and history of Tamils released



(From left) David Davidar, publisher, Aleph Book Company; Gopalkrishna Gandhi, former West Bengal Governor; V. Vedachalam, distinguished epigraphist and archaeologist; and author of the book, Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group Publishing Private Limited, at the launch event in Chennai on Thursday. R. RAGU

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

A host of eminent scholars, journalists, academics, artists and the who's who of Chennai came together for launch of the book, *The Tamils: A Portrait of a Community*, written by Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson, The Hindu Group Publishing Private Limited. The book was launched on Thursday by former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi, and the first copy was received by epigraphist and archaeologist V. Vedachalam.

how to tackle this vast subject. The Tamils, like many other Indian communities, are complex people with staggered history, and as Walt Whitman once said, we contain multitudes. I knew it would be very challenging to settle on a structure, but we did, and we thought the chronological approach would be the best way forward, giving me the space to choose topics within the historical frameworks," Ms. Lakshman said.

"I came to this more as a journalist than anything else, and not an expert or an academic," she said. "However, I was aware that there are complex issues such as caste inequities, caste violence, economic and political imbalances, and multiple ways of reading society and politics of Tamilagam."

Mr. Gandhi said the "book is a triumph of miniature details".

Epigraphist and archaeologist Dr. V. Vedachalam said Ms. Lakshman travelled the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu, visiting historical sites and excavation sites in person.

Mr. Davidar, publisher, Aleph Book Company, introduced the book to the audience.

## Union Cabinet clears third launch pad at Sriharikota

Planned with a ₹3,984.86-crore outlay and a four-year timeline, the third launch pad will serve as a 'standby' for the first two launch pads, and support newer launch vehicles developed by ISRO

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the construction of a third launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday.

The launch pad will have an outlay of ₹3,984.86 crore, and is targeted to be completed by early 2029.

The launch pad comes as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) seeks to launch its Next Generation Launch Vehicles (NGLVs) starting in 2031.



**Fresh boost:** The previous launch pad at Sriharikota has been operational for almost two decades. PTI

ISRO said in a statement that it would also support Indian-manned spaceflight missions, with its chairman V. Narayanan envisaging a 2026 target for the

first such mission.

"The third launch pad is designed to have configuration that is as universal and adaptable as possible that can support not only

NGLV but also the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 vehicles with semicryogenic stage as well as scaled up configurations of NGLV," a Cabinet note statement said.

The previous launch pad has been operational for almost two decades, and this new pad will boost ISRO's launch capabilities and capacities in Sriharikota.

"The expeditious establishment of a third launch pad to cater to a heavier class of Next Generation Launch Vehicles and as a standby for SLP is highly essential so as to meet the evolving space transportation requirements for another 25-30 years," the Cabinet note underlined.

## File counter-affidavit by Jan. 30, HC tells BPSC

**Amit Bhelari**

PATNA

The Patna High Court, which is hearing a plea calling for a retest of an examination conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), on Thursday directed the panel to file a counter-affidavit by January 30.

Justice Arvind Singh Chandel issued the direction while hearing the petition filed by Pappu Kumar and others on the 70th BPSC Combined (Preliminary) Competitive Examination. The petitioners have demanded a retest and not allowing the results of the exam to be published.

The BPSC exam was held at 912 centres across the State on December 13 last year. However, some candidates boycotted the exam alleging that they did not get the question paper on time at Bapu Exam

Centre in Patna. Later, the panel cancelled the exam at the centre and conducted a re-exam on January 4 at 22 centres, for which 5,943 eligible candidates appeared. The petition has demanded cancellation of the January 4 exam as well.

Senior advocate Y.V. Giri told the court that there was "large-scale rigging" in the exam, but BPSC is neither investigating these cases nor ready to conduct the examination again.

The next hearing will be held on January 31.

Meanwhile, Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor, who was on indefinite hunger strike over the issue for 15 days, ended his fast on Thursday.

## KTR appears before ED for questioning

**The Hindu Bureau**

HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president K.T. Rama Rao appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Hyderabad on Thursday in connection with alleged irregularities in the Formula-E race.

Tension prevailed outside the ED office as several BRS leaders and activists raised slogans accusing the government of political vendetta. Eight BRS leaders were detained.

The FIR was based on a complaint alleging irregularities in payments exceeding ₹54.88 crore during the race held in 2023.

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### Admission Announcement for the Academic Year 2025-2026 through CUET-PG

This is to inform all the prospective candidates that the admission process for the Academic Year 2025-2026 will be conducted through the Common University Entrance Test for Postgraduate Programs (CUET-PG). All the candidates who wish to apply for the following postgraduate programs at IIPS are required to appear for the CUET-PG exam:

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For detailed information on the CUET process, programs offered, eligibility criteria, and to submit your application, please click the link given below: <https://exams.ntaonline.in/CUET-PG/>

Director & Sr. Professor (Additional Charge)

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS, TRAINING, PENSION AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES DEPARTMENT

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- The Salaries, Allowances and other Terms of Appointment will be the same as provided under the Right to Information Act, 2005, as amended.
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Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Assam  
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## EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

### TENDER NOTICE

No. DRNS/S&T/2025/3

Danapur, dtd. 14.01.2025. Divisional Railway Manager

(Signal & Telecom), East Central Railway,

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[www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) for the following work:

1. Name of work with its location : S&T work

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Danapur Division. 2. Approximate Cost of work : Rs. 18589315.7, 3. Bid Security :

Rs. 243000.4. Last Date & Time of Submission : Up to 15.00 hrs. on

03.02.2025. 5. Opening of tender : 15.30 hrs. on 03.02.2025. 6. Website particulars where detail of the work and criteria can be seen : [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). 7. Address of the office from where detail information can be obtained : Sr. Divn. Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, East Central Railway, Danapur. Note : Any corrigendum if required will be uploaded on above website before 14 days.

DSTE / Danapur

PR/1931/DRNS/S&T/24-25/32

## Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited

(Wholly Owned Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

(CIN: U04010KA2002SGC030438)

### BRIEF SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through KPP Portal)

BESCOM invites tender through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal for the following: Tender Enquiry No.:BESCOM/2024/25/SE0217/CALL-2. Description of work: Maintenance of the Unified Online Portal of the GangaKalyana Scheme for ESCOMs and Development Corporations in Karnataka for a period of three years. Availability of Bid document: On or After 17.01.2025. The detailed notification can be obtained from the Website: [https://kpp.karnataka.gov.in](http://kpp.karnataka.gov.in). Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.

Sd/- The General Manager (DAS, SG & TIC)

BESCOM, BICC-1, 23rd Main, 17th Cross, 2nd Sector,

HSR Layout, Bengaluru-560102

For Electricity related complaints call: 1912  
Download BESCOM Mithra Mobile APP

## Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency, First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatiraj, Opp-IT Park, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun.

Date: 16.01.2025

### PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)

e-Procurement Notice-19(P-II)/2024-25

The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of works under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of Haridwar for 01 number of packages with estimated cost totaling to **Rs. 3.80 Crore** including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors (Class-A and above) registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent\*.

Date of release of Invitation for bids through e-procurement: 18-01-2025

**Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission:** The bid documents available online and should be submitted online in [www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in](http://www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in). The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.

Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 01-02-2025 01.00 PM.

For further details please log on to [www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in](http://www.pmgstendersuk.gov.in)

Chief Engineer, URRDA, Dehradun.

\*Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.

Note: For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

## HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

1. The Executive Engineer, Mandi Division No. I, HPPWD, at Padhar, Distt. Mandi (H.P.) on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the percentage rate bids, in electronic tendering system, from the eligible class of contractor registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Starting Date for downloading Bid	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Eligible Class of Contractor	Deadline for Submission of Bid


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# SPOTLIGHT



Anita Devi (far left), mother of Vishal Sahani, with Vishal's cousin Vijay Sahani and his aunt Anita, in Sihorwa village of U.P.'s Gorakhpur district. Vijay and Anita are the brother and the mother of Rajkumar Sahani, who is also stranded with Vishal in Libya; (above) youth working in a field in the village; (below) Ramesh and Vikash Vishwakarma, the father and the brother of Mithilesh, who is stuck in Benghazi, Libya. SANDEEP SAXENA

tioning the MEA seeking the government's intervention to extradite the 16 men in Benghazi. But he says aside from assurances that he received for his initial letter dated October 19, he hasn't seen any action.

During his weekly briefing on December 20, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had acknowledged the problem, saying, "We reached out to our workers through our community there." The Indian Embassy in Tripoli, which was reopened in late July 2024 after being shut for five years, is "closely following" the situation, he had said.

In the past four months, the Indian workers have been supported by their Bangladeshi counterparts at the cement factory. They have been buying them groceries and food, the money for which has been repatriated to their families back in Bangladesh through the Indian workers' relatives in Dubai, says Mithilesh Vishwakarma, another worker from Gorakhpur who travelled to Benghazi in September last year.

"I have also sent ₹40,000 to my son, but he is in serious trouble, and we want him back," says Ramesh Chandra Vishwakarma, 26-year-old Mithilesh's father, who is also from Sihorwa, the same village as Vishal and Rajkumar Sahani.

Ramesh recalls how his son – an athlete – wanted to join the police force after he graduated with a BSc degree. But the family's debts of more than ₹4 lakh spent on Mithilesh's younger sister's wedding led him to look for better-paying jobs abroad. "We used to receive ₹32,000 a month in our account, which helped us pay off ₹2.5 lakh that we had borrowed from the money lender at 6% monthly interest rate," Ramesh says.

He is a welder – one of the traditional occupations of the Vishwakarma caste – and runs his shop from home. The family owns half an acre of land and earns about ₹15,000 during peak harvest season from it. Ramesh is a Bharatiya Janata Party booth-level president. He says he took the matter to his local MP and Union Minister of State for Rural Development Kamlesh Paswan, who took cognisance of the matter and in turn wrote to the Minister of External Affairs, S. Jaishankar.

Fragmented landholdings, a collapse of agriculture, the lack of awareness of global events, and the paucity of skilled education avenues have led the men of this region to pursue work abroad. Gorakhpur's Gross District Domestic Product at constant price in the financial year 2020-21 was less than one-fourth of Gautam Buddha Nagar district, which abuts neighbouring Delhi.

**Waiting for an escape**  
Mani, from Manav Seva Sansthan, says Indians from eastern U.P. and western Bihar who travelled for work led by similar fake recruitment agents have been rescued from other war-torn African countries like Somalia. He also gives examples of dozens of workers being brought back from the Gulf and other countries with his organisation playing a key role.

Lalit Mohan Prajapati, from Dhanni Patti village of Kushinagar district, is one of two evacuated from Somalia in October 2023. "An acquaintance took me along with him through a Mumbai-based agent, who promised us better wages at a metal bar making factory in Somalia," says Prajapati, who spent almost a year between 2022-2023 in the war-torn country.

Recollecting his ordeal, he says that cooped up in the factory premises, he had no idea of his whereabouts. "Outside the factory there was firing every week, while inside, there was no work and no wages," Prajapati says. He was not aware of the protracted internecine wars in Somalia and went there lured by the prospect of being able to save and repatriate ₹50,000 every month.

In October last year, U.P. law enforcement authorities sent out circulars to field staff asking them to act against unauthorised recruitment agents. They were to ensure that those who are registered follow protocols like obtaining enrolment letters from the Protector General of Emigrants division within the MEA, and to adhere to the rules specified in The Emigration Act, 1983.

Meanwhile, following *The Hindu*'s reporting, the 16 workers were shifted out of the cement factory on New Year's Eve, to two rooms in the backyard of Bakkr's house. "At first, we were told it's for a medical check-up. We were hustled into two buses with all our belongings, and they brought us here," says Mithilesh over the phone.

The Indian Embassy in Tripoli has assured the workers of a return "within weeks". The Libyan authorities have promised safety, food, and water. Tabassum Mansoor, a non-resident Indian social worker, has been following up on the workers. "She told us the documentation to enable us to leave has been done, and that only buying the tickets is taking time," Mithilesh says. In response to a question from *The Hindu*, the MEA reiterated their December 20 response and said that India is currently working with Libyan authorities to process 'exit cards' for the workers, which would enable their repatriation. However, they did not give a definite timeline on when the repatriation will take place.

## The maybe-escape from Benghazi

Indian workers, most of them youth from Uttar Pradesh, say they are being held in prison-like conditions in Benghazi, Libya, lured there by fake recruitment agents. Their families point to cycles of debt and poverty at home, and the hope of economic mobility abroad as reasons for stepping into the unknown, find **Mayank Kumar** and **Kunal Shankar**



and foreman before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vijay says thousands of unemployed youths from low-income families of the region who lack skilled training or graduate degrees, work as welders, plasterers, ceramic tilers, foremen, mine workers, drivers and more, in factories and industries in West Asia and North Africa, or WANA.

"I was able to construct a 'pucca' house of two rooms and finance my sister's wedding with my savings from the five years I spent in Dubai," says Vijay, explaining how such stints in WANA countries help low-income families. He says the family received between ₹35,000-₹40,000 from his brother Rajkumar every two months "for a major part of the period" since January 2023.

### The unemployment challenge

U.P., a State of roughly 240 million people with a per capita income of ₹70,792 measured in terms of Per Capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) in 2021-22 according to the Government of India's reply in the Rajya Sabha, is three times lower than developed States like Maharashtra with ₹2,15,233, in the same period.

While the latest available annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report compiled by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation estimates U.P.'s unemployment rate (UR) at 2.4% in 2022-23, critics have questioned its methodology. They say it includes data for unpaid work, which does not accurately capture the state of unemployment in the country. The grim picture of unemployment in the State can be gauged by the fact that more than 43 lakh youths appeared for 60,244 constable posts in the police examination in 2024.

The State has witnessed a rise in unregistered recruitment agencies, many of them in the Gorakhpur region, attracting overseas job seekers through manipulative, and often fake advertisements. "People from low-income families fall in

the trap of such agencies and get cheated," says Mujahid Husain Khan, president, U.P. chapter of the Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council, an association of recruiting agents.

Khan says he has written multiple letters to U.P. government officials including to the Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Gorakhpur, in the past couple of months seeking action against such fake recruitment agencies. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)'s eMigrate portal mentions only 36 registered agencies/recruiting agents that promote 'safe and legal migration' in the Gorakhpur Administrative Region consisting of four districts in eastern U.P.

While the eMigrate portal mentions only 22 registered agencies in Gorakhpur district alone, when *The Hindu* visited the Singhariya locality near Gorakhpur's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, there were at least two dozen training

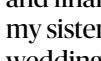
and testing centres that promise to facilitate jobs in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Their charges range between ₹10,000 and ₹1 lakh, depending on the nature of work and salary structure. The staff at the centres say engineers and foremen will be called for an interview this month. They did not disclose any information about their registration status or details of the prospective employers.

Rajesh Mani, the director of Manav Seva Sansthan, a Gorakhpur-based non-profit that works on socio-economic development, has been peti-



I was able to construct a 'pucca' house of two rooms and finance my sister's wedding with my savings from the five years I spent in Dubai

**VIJAY SAHANI**  
Brother of Rajkumar, who is trapped in Libya



and foreman before the COVID-19 pandemic. Vijay says thousands of unemployed youths from low-income families of the region who lack skilled training or graduate degrees, work as welders, plasterers, ceramic tilers, foremen, mine workers, drivers and more, in factories and industries in West Asia and North Africa, or WANA. "I was able to construct a 'pucca' house of two rooms and finance my sister's wedding with my savings from the five years I spent in Dubai," says Vijay, explaining how such stints in WANA countries help low-income families. He says the family received between ₹35,000-₹40,000 from his brother Rajkumar every two months "for a major part of the period" since January 2023.

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A nita Devi, 48, barely eats two meals a day. Her leaky roofed two-bedroom house in Sihorwa village in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur district requires urgent repair. But she cannot stop thinking about her 22-year-old son Vishal Sahani, who left for Libya in June 2023, for what appeared to be a well-paying job at the Libyan Cement Company in Benghazi, the war-torn North African country's second largest city.

"I think of him all the time. On the phone, when he tells me he often goes hungry, my heart sinks," Devi says, her eyes welling up, as she looks forlornly onto the dirt road that leads to the village from her house.

Two of Devi's family members are at the factory in Benghazi, "one of the largest cement production companies in Libya" founded in 1968 with a total production capacity of 2.9 million tons, says the company's website. The Sahanis are among 16 Indian men, 13 of whom are from the Gorakhpur district. They have been at the factory for times ranging between one and five years. The other three are from western Bihar.

Their stories are starkly similar: rural distress, poverty, and joblessness leading them to traps laid out by a wide network of fake employment agents working across the region who prey on the vulnerabilities of such communities by promising them lucrative jobs largely in West Asia and North Africa.

With prison-like conditions, work hours that stretch to 16-hour days, and odd and unscheduled shifts, their passports are confiscated on arrival in the guise of 'updating their visa status'. For the past four months, these men have been without work or wages, following a confrontation with their 'contractor' Abu Bakr, a Libyan national, over unscheduled shifts and extra work hours.

Two of the men say Bakr facilitated their travel from Dubai to Benghazi. Bakr had obtained tourist visas and not work permits, which could have allowed them legal status in Libya, but such permits are expensive, says Vijay Sahani, 31. His younger brother, Rajkumar, 28, had travelled to work at the cement factory in 2022. Rajkumar had suggested Vishal join him.

### Responsibility and limited choices

Devi's family belongs to the Nishad community in U.P. They are categorised as Other Backward Classes but have been demanding that they be identified as a Scheduled Caste. This demand was supported by former Chief Minister and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav but was stalled by the courts.

The Sahanis are marginal farmers who own just half an acre of land that hardly fetches them ₹5,000 a month. "It does not even support our basic needs. Vishal's father has an alcohol problem," says Devi, as she explains the reasons that forced her son to seek greener pastures.

Vishal dropped out of school after Class 10 and began working on the family farm. In Uttar Pradesh, traditionally, sons must finance their sisters' weddings, and as Devi's only son, he began to feel the pressure of getting his third sister married. He is one of five children.

"We are forced to take loans from local moneylenders for marriages or health issues at high interest rates, as agriculture has become unsustainable," Devi says.

In eastern U.P.'s villages, local moneylenders charge anywhere between 5% and 10% a month on the principal. They generally lend without documentation or a paper trail, exploiting the vulnerabilities of impoverished rural families. The enticement of earning ₹40,000 a month was enough for Vishal to travel 6,000 kilometres west to a country he knew nothing about.

The extended Sahani family is in deep financial crisis. "We took a loan of more than ₹80,000 from a moneylender at 10% monthly interest to finance Rajkumar's travel. Now it seems like a debt trap with our lives at stake," says Vijay.

He adds that an acquaintance – Raju Chouhan, from neighbouring Deoria district – who had worked in Libya for 12 years and is among those at the cement factory, "facilitated the travel and the job opportunity," says Vijay, who himself worked for four years in Dubai as an iron welder.

Anuj Kumar  
anuj.kumar@thehindu.co.in

In 1973, when the Angry Young Man was raising his iron fist and a teenage Bobby was selling wet dreams at the box office, Awtar Krishna Kaul was busy documenting the internal and external journey of his nonheroic protagonist Sanjay in *27 Down* (1974).

Partly shot on the Bombay-Varanasi train, the introspective study of a train conductor whose vibrant dreams are emasculated by an obstinate father, pushing the young man with an artistic bent of mind into leading a life of regret on regimented rails paved the way for the Parallel Cinema movement in the Bombay film industry.

Made on a shoestring budget provided by Film Finance Corporation (later NFDC), Awtar and Apurba Kishore Bir captured the rhythm in the chaos of Bombay's working class through a hand-held Arriflex 2c camera. Long before *All We Imagine As Light*, the black and white frames shot with block lens created enduring images of a conflicted state of love, loneliness, and longing in a sea of crowded platforms at Bombay VT railway station.

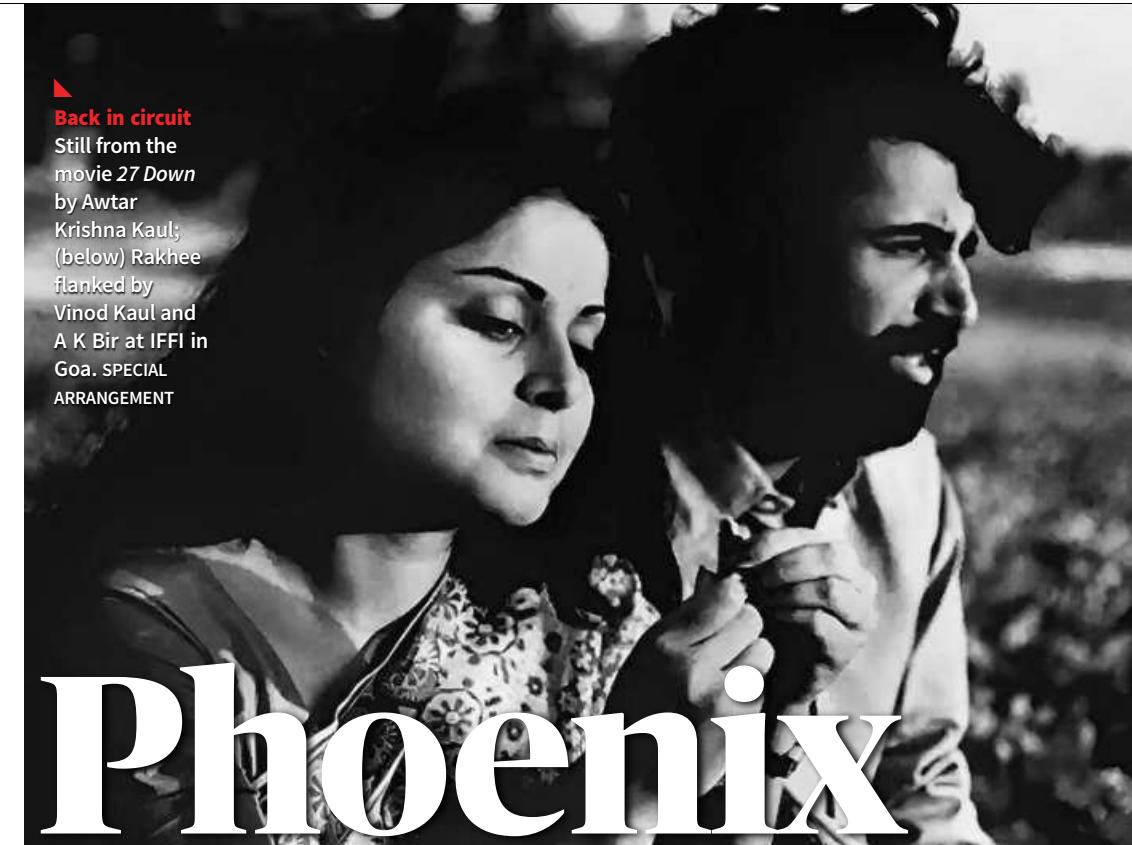
One swallow doesn't make a summer, but in Awtar's case, his singular work of art continues to find love and add new layers even five decades after his promising career was tragically cut short by a freak drowning accident.

**The characterisation**  
Rakhee's unvarnished beauty and tenacious turn as a working woman continue to beguile the discerning. Om Shiv Puri's performance as a lonely and manipulative father fills you with disgust, and M.K. Raina's portrayal of a mild-mannered man grappling with a muddled destiny and an indecisive mind tightens the throat.

Now, 50 years after Awtar's death, his nephew Vinod Kaul is piecing together the tumultuous life of the unfettered soul by wading into the fading memories of family members, friends, and critics. A former senior executive producer at Rajya Sabha TV, Kaul's efforts led to a screening of the restored version of the film at the International Film Festival of India-2024 in Goa.

Like Sanjay, Kaul says, Awtar had a tenuous relationship with his father. "When he was looking for inspiration, he asked the librarian of a Delhi library to give him 50 books that have the least readership and picked Ramesh Bakshi's Hindi novel, *Athara Sooraj Ke Paudhe*, for adaptation."

Like his protagonist, Awtar had to cross several real and metaphorical bridges in his life. Ironically, neither could reach the destination. Recounting



## Phoenix out of the ashes

**As Awtar Krishna Kaul's 27 Down finds a new life in the festival circuit, his nephew Vinod Kaul pieces together the journey of the filmmaker**



Awtar's journey, Kaul says when his father threw Awtar out of the house, he found refuge on a railway platform and worked at a tea stall to sustain himself. "He didn't allow the challenges to thwart his spirit. He shifted to Ambala, worked at a hotel, and managed to graduate through open school and made it to a class IV job in the Ministry of External Affairs."

### A chequered career

The job provided him with an opportunity to serve in the US, which, in turn, opened a window to a filmmaking course in New York. "He worked as a copyholder for the Associated Press and when the editor caught him reading Arthur Koestley's *Darkness at Noon*,

he realised that Awtar was well-read and offered him the job of a news brief writer. Awtar held the job till 1964 before joining The British Information Services in New York," says Kaul.

In the US, Awtar also met his wife, Anne. He returned to India in 1970, when he was hired by the Merchant Ivory Productions as an assistant director for their film *Bombay Talkie*.

Bir is full of anecdotes of the challenges faced during the shooting on moving trains and crowded platforms without

**Awtar's singular work of art continues to find love and add new layers even five decades after his death**

drawing the attention of the crowd. He says the shooting style and Awtar's insistence on the no-make-up look created doubts in Rakhee's mind. She asked Awtar to show the rushes before moving ahead and came to the theatre with apprehension. As soon as the rushes unspooled, she was thrilled to see her depiction. The seasoned actor made a rare public appearance when the film was screened at the IFFI.

While shooting a platform from the bogey of the Bombay-Varanasi Express, Bir recalls, they were hauled up by Army men who thought them to be Pakistani spies. "On another occasion, Railway police in Bombay halted our shooting, hoping for a bribe. Each time we had to reach out to senior officials and show them the papers that it was a government-funded project," says Bir.

**Multi-faceted filmmaker**  
Raina, who would converse with Awtar in Kashmiri, describes the filmmaker as one of the harbingers of New Wave cinema. "His training in New York, combined with his deep interest in literature, music, theatre, and Indian culture, made Awtar an original voice."

"When he died, he had three scripts in hand and had he been around he surely would have been an influential filmmaker." He recalls that *27 Down* was described as a "mini-miracle from FFC" by a leading film magazine as the film ran for weeks in Mumbai's Opera House and Bengaluru's Blue Diamond.

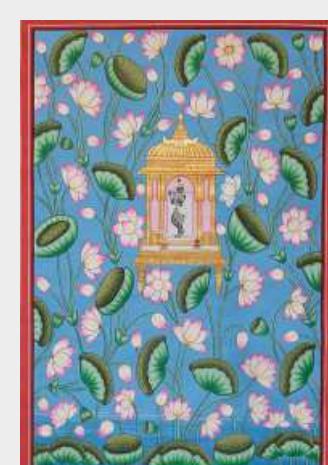
Meanwhile, as *27 Down* makes fresh rounds of the festival circuit, Kaul is searching for his aunt Anne and is keen on taking the second script of Awtar to the world. "It is titled *Chandu*, again a tale of unrealised dreams of a child. I have come to know that he had approached Sanjeev Kumar perhaps for another film."

across the country.

The art form is also being adapted on clothes and bags as well. Nobody could take their eyes off Nita Ambani's purple blouse paired with a Manish Malhotra Banarsi saree worn during her son Anant Ambani's wedding last year. The blouse was based on a Pichwai by 77-year-old master artist Shehzad Ali Sherani, which he had handpainted using real gold.

Sherani breathes and lives Pichwai. For him, it is an act of meditation and service to his Thakur ji. "Thakur ji to sabke hain. Jab tak Krishna ji ko dil me na uttar le to aap aisi painting nahi kar sakte (Krishna belongs to all. Until an artist loves Lord Krishna with all his heart, he cannot paint like that)," says Sherani, who is popularly called Bhaiyya ji.

So when an artist of that ilk brings his exhibition to the city, it shouldn't be missed. "Shringar: The Divine Art of Pichwai," his debut exhibition, brought by MeMeraki, a culture-tech platform promoting traditional Indian arts, is on at Shridharani Art Gallery. The works include Pichwai



in traditional style with a contemporary touch rendered in natural colours as well as real gold and silver leaves. The paintings portray scenes from the life of Lord Krishna, such as the Raas Leela, Govardhan Dharan, Sharad Purnima etc. "In Pichwai, you have to stick to the theme of Lord Krishna but you have to be mindful if you introduce modern elements. I have mastered the colour scheme over the years," says the senior artist, who trained in various art

forms under Kripal Singh Shekhawati and his father, Dr. Fayyaz, a polyglot scholar.

The artist says he is able to attain an antique look for his paintings through the unique application of colours that are made by him. "We use Palash tree flowers, Harsingar flowers, vermillion, tea, and even extract a colour from the ashes. All the colours are sourced naturally and made by us – how I apply them distinguishes my work from others," says Sherani.

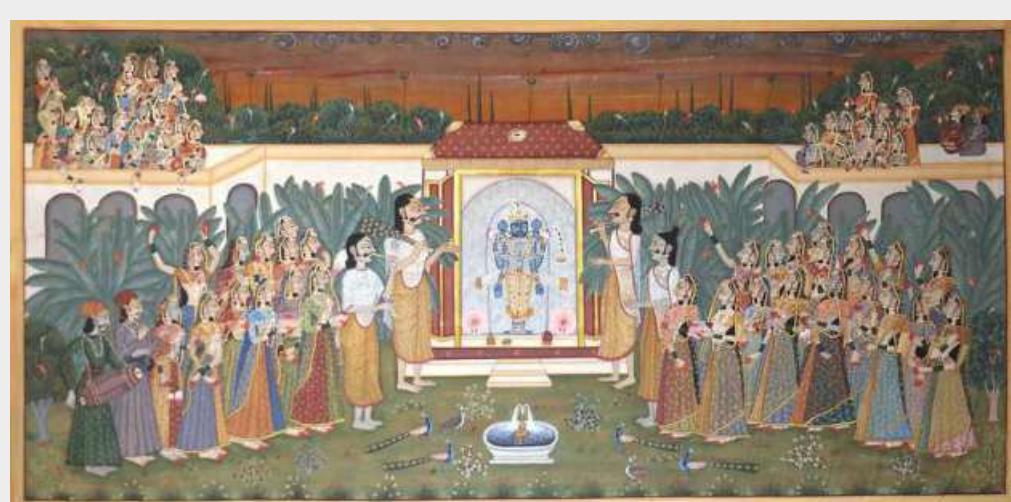
Offering a critical glimpse into his style, curator Misha states, "His work seamlessly blends the classic elements of Pichwai with influences from the Kishangarh school of Rajasthani miniature painting. This fusion is evident in his stylistic

depiction of women, characterised by lotus-bud eyes, arched eyebrows, and almost transparent dupattas (stoles). His portrayal of grey water bodies and intricate marble architecture further enhances the aesthetic."

As a child, Ali's interest in art was cultivated by his father through exposure to numerous books on art. "Some of my relatives have openly boycotted me and refuse to drink water at my place; others criticise me quietly but I am hardly bothered. I have been serving Lord Krishna through my art for so many years and I have never felt any kind of lack in my life," says Sherani. His son, Faizan Ali, is a Pichwai artist in his own right.

The exhibition also offers a unique opportunity for visitors to get a hands-on experience of the art form through workshops.

(At Shridharani Gallery, Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House. Till January 21 from 11am to 7pm)



**Traditional paintings** Shehzad Ali Sherani and his Pichwai paintings on display at Shridharani Gallery. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Hues of devotion

For Shehzad Ali Sherani, Pichwais are an act of service to Lord Krishna, and it shows in his paintings on display at Shridharani Art Gallery

### Shailaja Tripathi

Pichwai, an exquisite painting depicting Lord Krishna, is an approximately 400-year-old tradition. Hung behind the deity in Nathdwara in Rajasthan, Shrinathji, it's called 'pichwai' and the tradition continues to date. It is an act of service. In the last few years, Indian folk art forms have seen a revival and Pichwai is one of them. No longer confined to temples, they have become the centre of attraction in drawing rooms

across the country. The art form is also being adapted on clothes and bags as well. Nobody could take their eyes off Nita Ambani's purple blouse paired with a Manish Malhotra Banarsi saree worn during her son Anant Ambani's wedding last year. The blouse was based on a Pichwai by 77-year-old master artist Shehzad Ali Sherani, which he had handpainted using real gold. Sherani breathes and lives Pichwai. For him, it is an act of meditation and service to his Thakur ji. "Thakur ji to sabke hain. Jab tak Krishna ji ko dil me na uttar le to aap aisi painting nahi kar sakte (Krishna belongs to all. Until an artist loves Lord Krishna with all his heart, he cannot paint like that)," says Sherani, who is popularly called Bhaiyya ji.

The works include Pichwai

## French flavours in town

**Bistro Francaise at Alliance Francaise de Delhi stands out as a reliable go-to for an authentic experience**

### Rahul Verma

With the sun playing a cruel game of hide-and-seek, I decided it was time to lift our spirits with something special. What could be more exotic – or satisfying – than a French meal?

A few months ago, a friend told me about the quaint cafe at Alliance Francaise offering a French menu. On my first visit, I enjoyed a delicious meal of soups and salads, and pâtés, ratatouilles and crepes. Recently, I returned and raised a (metaphoric) toast to Equality, Liberty and Fraternity over another fulfilling French meal.

Bistro Francaise, located at Alliance Francaise de Delhi in Lodhi Estate, serves a regular menu for students during the day and a special French menu in the evening. The café, open to all, closes at 9 pm and does not have a liquor licence. Reservations and pre-orders are essential to ensure the kitchen has all the ingredients ready.

**Authentic taste**  
The food is superb. We placed our orders earlier that day – and asked for pâté de volaille (chicken pâté cooked in garlicky brandy-infused butter), cassoulet – bean stew with duck, bacon and sausage, and cordon bleu – crumbed fried chicken stuffed with cheese and ham, served with fries. I paid about ₹2,000 for the meal.

The pâté de volaille was an excellent starter, with the chicken liver delivering a robust flavour that paired perfectly with thin slices of crusty bread. The cordon bleu, crumbed chicken oozing with melted cheese, made for a rich and hearty entrée. The highlight for me was the cassoulet. The small, dried beans added a subtle sweetness to the stew-like sauce, complementing the rich, meaty flavours of the duck, sausages, and bacon strips. The dish was served with a generous portion of sautéed French beans and crispy potato fries, making it both hearty and satisfying.

Chef Kulbeer, who heads the café, mentioned that he uses thyme to infuse



**Hearty meal** Cordon bleu available at Bistro Francaise. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the broth with its earthy aroma, adding an extra layer of flavour to this comforting French classic.

During my first visit to Bistro Francaise, I tried the ratatouille (₹495), a flavourful medley of zucchini, peppers, tomatoes, and eggplant, and enjoyed it. However, the highlight for me was the Salade Niçoise (₹625), a fresh and hearty combination of tuna, cherry tomatoes, olives, hard-boiled eggs, greens, and potatoes. Some of the evening specials are available during the day as well, with smaller portions and significantly lower prices, too. The café also offers a range of coffees along with a dessert menu comprising cinnamon apple crumble, crème caramel, and fresh fruit sorbet.

While Delhi does not boast many French restaurants, Oriental Express at the Taj Palace is renowned for its exquisite French offerings. There is also Reve Bistro Modern in Aerocity, which I have heard good things about. Sadly, the charming Bistro du Parc in Defence Colony is no longer around. Bistro Francaise, however, is connected to Mikki Tapas in Chanakyapuri, adding another layer of culinary intrigue. It's nice to have a slice of France in the heart of Delhi. Très bien, indeed!

At Alliance Francaise de Delhi; Lodhi Estate; Opens at 8.30am, Fine dining 6pm to 9pm, Open all days; Ph: 9911067205

## STEP OUT



### About climate emergency

Using a diverse range of materials including bricks, stone, pigment, dust, LED lights, paintings and other found objects, artist M Pravat is displaying his series of sculptures and installations for the first time in Delhi. Terraform presented by Pune-based art gallery, Vida Heydari

Contemporary, is a reminder of the interrelationship and tensions between the built urban landscape and the natural environment.

At Stir Art Gallery, 2 North Drive, Block C DLF Westend, Chattarpur Farms; January 19 to 25; 11am to 7pm



### Nurturing talent

Swaranjali, an organisation promoting Indian classical music and dance among youth, is celebrating its silver jubilee with a Gharana festival featuring upcoming artistes Jayateerth Mevundi and Gauri Pathare (vocal), Anupama Bhagwat (sitar) and Satyajit Talwalkar (Tabla)

At India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Estate; January 18 and 19; 7pm

## ARTS

### Paintings

### Traditional

### Paintings



## Gates in the sky

Docking technology allows ISRO to think of longer space flights

**I**n December 30, 2024, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched its PSLV-C60 mission. Its primary payload was a pair of satellites for the Space Docking Experiment, or SpaDeX, to demonstrate orbital rendezvous and docking. The ability to execute it in orbit is an essential stepping stone to more complex missions. The launch was also hailed as ISRO ending the year on a high, but SpaDeX reminded us that sophisticated spaceflight missions care little for arbitrary deadlines. The satellites successfully docked on January 16 after a few abortive attempts. They were expected to dock on January 7, which ISRO postponed to January 9, then brought them close without docking on January 12 in an apparent data-taking effort. It nixed the January 9 attempt after the satellites were found to have drifted more than expected, prompting measures to arrest the displacement and reinitialise the experiment. Once docked, ISRO began tests to verify if the satellites could exchange electric power, then undock and separate, followed by testing their own payloads that would be spread over two years. The C60 mission also launched the fourth stage of the rocket as an orbital platform. It carried 24 payloads from various ISRO centres and private enterprises testing various technologies. The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre's Compact Research module for Orbital Plant Studies was able to have cowpea seeds germinate in orbit, capturing the popular imagination.

Docking allows spacefaring components to be launched separately and assembled in space to form a larger module. This allows a space agency to plan interplanetary missions whose spacecraft are heavier than what the heaviest rockets can launch. Docking is thus a symbolic gateway to new opportunities, with the Chandrayaan-4 lunar sample return mission being a good example. In anticipation, ISRO loaded the SpaDeX satellites with enough fuel for multiple tries and also continuously collected data. Its own nervousness became evident, too: after the first two attempts, it backed down from its promise to live-stream the successful one. Docking technology has become desirable thanks to the perceived inevitability of long-duration spaceflight. The pressure to lower costs imposed by, say, crewed missions to Mars or space-mining operations has rendered ideas such as in-space satellite servicing and orbital resupply platforms, both of which require docking, more lucrative. ISRO plans to start launching the 'Bharatiya Antariksh Station' (BAS) later this decade. As it embarks on a new phase of operations, with V. Narayanan as its new chairman, ISRO should also describe a coherent vision for the ex ante utility expected of BAS. Without this context, the larger pieces of the Indian space programme and their purpose relative to other countries' plans seem adrift.

## Open era

The Australian Open this year marks more than the start of a new season

**C**oming as it does at the beginning of a brand new tennis season, the Australian Open is never short of fresh and intriguing storylines. The 2025 edition, which started on Sunday, is no exception. Of interest will be Novak Djokovic's quest for a record-breaking 25th Major, Jannik Sinner's title defence amidst a doping cloud, Carlos Alcaraz's search for a maiden trophy in Melbourne and Aryna Sabalenka's desire to make it a hat-trick Down Under. With his greatest rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal retired, Djokovic is the lone representative from the Big Three era. The 37-year-old, a record 10-time champion in Australia, has not won an ATP Tour-level title since November 2023 and will be looking to three-time Slam winner Andy Murray, who is now his coach, for some fresh solutions as he enters the last leg of his career. Sinner, who had an otherwise impeccable 2024, awaits an April hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) after the World Anti-Doping Agency appealed his acquittal by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) over two failed dope tests. Alcaraz, at 21, can become the youngest man to win a career Grand Slam (acquiring all four Majors at least once) while Sabalenka, with her fourth Slam, can cement her position as the best hard-court player in the world.

With Sinner and Alcaraz having split 2024's Majors equally, the onus was on Alexander Zverev and Daniil Medvedev to ensure that their generation – sandwiched between the times of the Big Three and the Sinner-Alcaraz duopoly – is not squeezed out in tennis' all-new era. But Medvedev lost on Thursday, leaving Zverev with the responsibility of maintaining their position at the high table. Though the rungs are not as clear cut among women, there is intense jostling at the top among the trinity of Sabalenka, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff. Swiatek is a five-time Slam champion but has gone past the fourth round at Melbourne Park just once (2022, semifinal). The 23-year-old also has her aura dimmed after accepting a month's ban in November for a positive dope test. For the United States' Gauff, a lack of consistency has been her bane. But if she can carry her strong recent form – WTA Finals crown in November 2024 and United Cup triumph earlier this January – she will be a real force. Unfortunately, Indians are never part of these conversations. Sumit Nagal is already out, losing in the first round, and so are men's doubles practitioners Rohan Bopanna – who at the 2024 Australian Open became the oldest man to be No.1 and win a Major – and Yuki Bhambhani.

# Great anniversaries of peace initiatives, a role for India

**I**n the minutes before the deadliest tsunami in India's memory tore through its south-eastern shores on December 26, 2004, people living in those parts were just being themselves – laughing, crying, quarrelling, making love, lamenting or celebrating their destinies.

Seconds before wildfires gutted a huge swathe of Los Angeles' beautiful landscape earlier this very month, people there were in different states of exhilaration – with the sheer loveliness of their surroundings, the blue of the sky, the reflection of that in the azure of the sea, shopping, discussing the future of their country under Trump and Musk, wringing their hands or raising them in celebration.

'We could never have imagined...' is how those affected put it. The calamities were put down to the caprice of nature which cannot be predicted or prevented.

But we can imagine; in fact more than imagine, we can see with the clarity with which the high-end scientific team in Los Alamos saw the first detonation of a nuclear weapon, conducted by the United States under the instructions of U.S. President Harry S. Truman at 5:29 a.m. on July 16, 1945, as part of the Manhattan Project. The sight was piercingly sharp. General Thomas Farrell, who was a witness, said in his official report: "The lighting effects beggared description... It lighted every peak, crevasse and ridge of the nearby mountain range with a clarity and beauty that cannot be described but must be seen to be imagined..." If Farrell saw the fury as beauty, the physicist Kenneth Bainbridge who planned and executed the test exclaimed 'We are all sons of ...now'. I leave the elided word to the reader's imagination.

### 'Perish or use common sense'

This year, 2025, is the 80th year of that test, the world's first nuclear weapon test. It is also the 80th year of the first use of the bomb that had been tested over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki less than one month later, killing between 15,000 and 24,000 people, mostly civilians, leading the Director of the project, J. Robert Oppenheimer, to cite the Bhagavad Gita's stunning imagery of Death by the light and heat of a thousand suns. On the very day that the bomb fell on Nagasaki, Bertrand Russell began drafting a statement that said: "The prospect for the human race is sombre beyond all precedent. Mankind are faced with a clear-cut alternative: either we shall all perish, or we shall have to acquire some slight degree of common sense. A great deal of new political thinking will be necessary if utter disaster is to be averted."



**Gopalkrishna Gandhi**

is a former Governor

Ten years later, in 1955, Russell and Albert Einstein led nine other scientists to issue an appeal to the leaders of governments to avert nuclear disaster. Joseph Rotblat, the only scientist to leave the Manhattan Project on moral grounds convened a press conference at which the Manifesto was released. The manifesto called for "a conference where scientists would assess the dangers posed to the survival of humanity by weapons of mass destruction". One particular phrase from the Manifesto has become lore: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest.

This is the 70th year of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, the platinum anniversary of that expression of faith and hope for humanity. But in the intervening years, 'humanity' has been forgotten, 'the rest' has been pursued relentlessly. Glimmers of hope for humanity have risen through breakthrough arms control agreements and partial test bans, which have brought the world's arsenal of nuclear weapons down, but the genii keep escaping from the vat of controls.

Today, the danger of a nuclear conflagration is more real than ever. Much more real and immediate than the 'caprice' of nature is the finger that can press a nuclear button annihilating all life on planet earth. The fingertip is dangerously close to that little surface and before we can say 'Stop!', we may be cinder. Or worse, may be becoming cinder. This is not fantasy. This is not science fiction. And we are all doing exactly what we were when calamity struck us in 2004, and struck California earlier this year. We are in dangerous denial.

### The Avadi resolution

This year, 2025, is also the platinum anniversary of another event in India that is scarcely remembered now but was sensationally important at the time. On January 17, 1955 (70 years ago to the date today), the Indian National Congress met in plenary at Avadi, in what was then Madras State, and with Jawaharlal Nehru and C. Rajagopalachari present, passed important resolutions among which was one that anticipated the Russell-Einstein Manifesto. It said: 'The ominous development in respect of atomic and hydrogen bombs are a menace not only to world peace but to civilisation itself... The total prohibition of the manufacture and use of atomic and hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional atomic weapons such as atomic artillery is imperative if civilisation is to be saved from destruction.'

The Avadi resolution then called for the matter to be taken up by the Disarmament Commission of the United Nations 'so that the public of all

nations might become fully aware of the grave menace of war today'.

With Russia having revised its nuclear doctrine and officially declared arms control as 'a thing of the past', and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-made and NATO-provided missiles being sent deep into Russian space, the stage is all but set for Moscow to implement what it has declared to be its option. The Israel-Palestine theatre wobbles on the nuclear tight rope. These 'state players' apart, non-state entities acquiring access through cyber and Artificial Intelligence pathways to nuclear weapons of the subsidiary type that the Avadi resolution mentioned is not just a possibility but a high probability.

There are no Russells, Einsteins and Rotblats among our science leaders to warn the world and India – now a nuclear weapons state in itself – of what can happen to us. Deterrence is now the esoteric shibboleth of specialists who have made of negotiations for arms control and test bans a self-perpetuating ritual. The world may well negotiate itself to an upstart annihilation or a carefully designed Armageddon ignited by delusions of avenging grandeur. Nine countries are said to be 'nuclear weapons countries', India being one of them. And, by a broad reckoning, as of 2024, the world has some 12,100 nuclear warheads. This number is staggering and unbelievable to any sane mind. But let us note that it is lower than the roughly 60,000 weapons that existed during the Cold War. There is reason to not lose hope.

There may well have been scientific inputs that went into the Avadi resolution, but the propulsion came from the leadership of the day. More recently, Rajiv Gandhi's 'Action Plan for a Nuclear Weapons Free and Non-Violent World Order' of 1988, showed that India 'remembered humanity' in the Russellian and Nehruvian way as of 37 years ago. Mani Shankar Aiyar's book (*Just out*), *A Maverick in Politics*, vivifies that initiative and the cause of humanity as few books have in recent times.

### India must lead

It is high time India did something for peace, beyond what it has to impress upon Moscow and Kiev the importance of negotiation. As the Avadi resolution put it, the issue is not just about the need to halt belligerence but the need to save humanity. That 'something' has to be at the very least a conference on preventing mass annihilation, leading to a new Action Plan, which includes action by India as well. This year of great anniversaries of peace initiatives can, given a stunning new initiative, save the world from inviting Bainbridge's self-mocking lament.

## An alliance of democracies with India at its core

**T**he year 2024 was the super-election year around the world, and 2025 must be the year when the world's democracies regroup and find new ways to support each other. Nowhere is this truer than in the relationship between Europe and India, a partnership that, for too long, has been big on strategies, but small on delivery. For nearly 17 years, European Union (EU)-India relations were seen through the prism of on/off Free Trade Agreement negotiations. As a free trader, I believe that the benefits of the world's biggest democracy and its largest trading bloc coming together to buck protectionist headwinds would be an economic and geopolitical game-changer.

**Look at the bigger picture**  
However, we cannot be naive to the hurdles ahead. If a big-bang trade deal eludes us in the short term, we should develop another track away from the negotiators and bureaucrats. Fixed firmly at the highest political levels, it would focus on bigger picture geostrategic issues such as economic security, defence cooperation and a common agenda for space, emerging technology, and critical industry sectors such as pharmaceuticals.

On the geopolitical level, Europe was undoubtedly frustrated with India's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and continued close ties. These ties are historic. Conversely, India has broad rivalry with China, despite cooperation through the BRICS group and a substantial trading partnership. As a growing economy I can understand why India would not want to be sucked into power competition as the world divides into democratic and autocratic blocs. However, fundamentally, India is a democracy and its entanglement with Moscow and Beijing is unnatural. In the same vein, India's accusations of double standards from Europe are not without



**Anders Fog Rasmussen**

served as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General from 2009-14 and was the Prime Minister of Denmark from 2001-09

substance. We cannot demand that India severs all ties with Russia without also addressing our own economic dependence on China.

A restart in relations should, therefore, start with a common assessment that Russia and China – with their 'No Limits' partnership – are both a threat to the global democratic world which includes India, Europe and the United States. What happens in the Atlantic affects the Indo-Pacific and vice versa.

On this basis we should focus on a series of practical measures to break down barriers to trade and investment piecemeal while strengthening our joint security, including economic security. This will include reducing dependencies on China in areas such as critical raw materials and developing new supply chains, with Europe seeing India as a 'Trusted Partner'.

### Defence and trade

In defence, India and the U.S. already enjoy strong defence cooperation, with India being America's 'Major Defence Partner' and a member of the 'Quad' – sometimes referred to as the 'Asia-Pacific NATO'. Europe should support the continued development of this security alliance to give India more security guarantees.

EU-India defence discussions have increased but should accelerate to a high political level as Europe looks to bring much-needed investment into our industries, which can also offer India better weapons than Russia. The EU's new dedicated Defence Commissioner should visit India at the earliest opportunity and develop more collaboration, in defence and in space where both the EU and India have ambitious plans.

India and the EU have in place a Trade and Technology Council (TTC) to mirror a similar council with the Biden administration. Whether the EU-U.S. TTC survives President Donald

Europe and India need a more practical relationship; together, Europe, India and the United States can be unstoppable

Trump is unclear, but the EU-India Council has not reached its potential, especially in coordinating a technology agenda. Here, we can also draw inspiration from India's ties with the U.S., where the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET); iCET is promoting collaboration at the National Security Adviser level.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute illustrates the scale of the challenge. It tracks the top 64 emerging technologies. In 57 of them, China is winning the global race. The U.S. is hot on its heels. However, India is also emerging as a key centre of global research innovation, with many other European countries also still in the running. Individually, we are doing okay in this existential race, but by combining forces, the free world can jump ahead to lead the world in all emerging technology, from quantum computing to advanced biotech. We must not hand victory to China.

### In perspective

Europe and India should focus on a far more practical relationship built on tangible connections, including stronger people-to-people ties. For Europe, the benefits are obvious: India will become the world's third largest economy in the next decade, at a time when European global GDP share continues to fall. But there is a wider prize: forming an alliance of democracies that has India at its core.

If Europe wants to anchor India in that alliance, we need to change our approach to the subcontinent. That does not mean brushing differences or difficulties under the table. India has many challenges to its democracy, but so does Europe. We should seek to address them together. Europe, India and the United States are individually powerful, but, together, we are unstoppable against the united autocrats.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Ceasefire in Gaza?

That there could be a pause in the war in Gaza is the bare minimum the region needs (Page 1, January 16). It is crucial that the parties involved do all they can to ensure a complete end to the war, else there will be a repeat of the mindless destruction and chaos. Gaza is weary of this war.

**Anany Mishra,**  
Bhilai, Chhattisgarh

The pursuit of 'victory', at the cost of human lives and dignity, only amplifies the suffering of innocent

civilians. While a possible ceasefire offers temporary respite, we must recognise that true and long-term peace can only be achieved through honest dialogue and mutual understanding.

**Ahmed Raza Manuu,**  
Hyderabad

The promising development captures the spirit of hope and renewal to grace the dawn of the new year. It reflects the power of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving even the most entrenched conflicts. It is a reminder of the importance

of persistence and compassion in the pursuit of harmony.

**S. Rahamathulla,**  
Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh

**Check and speak**  
We do not mind Rahul Gandhi, as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, "fighting the BJP and the RSS", but no further (January 16). It is time Mr. Gandhi checked his speeches more than once before verbal contact with an ever-watchful electorate.

**Seshagiri Row Karry,**  
Hyderabad

Is it not a fact that institutions that are supposed to be independent and politically neutral now do the government's bidding? The BJP missed the spirit of what Mr. Gandhi said. The BJP characterises all those who are not with it as 'anti-nationals' and 'Urban Naxals' and one should not dignify it by reacting to it.

**G. David Milton,**  
Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

**Report card**  
With private schools mushrooming across the

nation, it is imperative that government schools catch up. Notwithstanding the decade-long efforts in improving infrastructure (Opinion page – 'Datapoint', January 16), continuous and contentious efforts are needed to improve overall quality education. The Right to Education would meet its true objective only when every poor child gets his/her right to study.

**Balasubramanian Pavani,**  
Secunderabad

**Apology**  
The apology made on

behalf of Meta head Mark Zuckerberg for his comments on the Indian election should not be construed as any kind of victory for any party or government. However, it is a lesson to all global social media platforms to avoid recklessness and irresponsible commenting on any issue, without understanding the facts and the context.

**Sharada Sivaram,**  
Ernakulam, Kerala

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

# Has T20 cricket deskilled Indian batting?

**PARLEY**

**I**ndia's 1-3 loss in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy marked the end of its decade-long dominance in the series against Australia. This was not an exception; India's performance in Test cricket has been dismal for a while now. Over the last four months, the team has lost six out of eight Tests, including a shocking 0-3 defeat against New Zealand at home. Has T20 cricket deskilled Indian batting? Wasim Jaffer and Jaydev Unadkat discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Amol Yashwant Karhadkar. Edited excerpts:

**Let's cut to the chase. Has T20 cricket deskilled Test cricket?**

**Wasim Jaffer:** It surely has, and it's quite exciting too. In our time, we had to play three-day or four-day cricket. We had to score big hundreds and double hundreds to get noticed. But ever since T20 came in, at the start of a season, players' main focus is T20 cricket. This is very unlike our time where we used to look forward to the Ranji Trophy or even the Duleep Trophy because that was the pathway. Now, IPL (Indian Premier League) provides the platform to get noticed. To be honest, if I was playing in this day and age, I would probably be doing the same. My only concern is that you should fit in all three formats (ODIs, Test cricket, and T20) and today's youngsters don't do that. They want to play white-ball cricket. They want to play T20 cricket. But four-day cricket takes a back seat. Those small pretty knocks of 30-40 in quick time look very good in T20 cricket, but they don't win you games in even one-day cricket, let alone four-day cricket or Test matches. We need to instill the mentality in them that even if they want to play in the T20 way, they will still need to score hundreds to make a statement. Up until players are 32-33, when their body is still fit and strong, they need to fit into all three formats. But prioritising T20 cricket... I've got no problem [with it].

**Jaydev Unadkat:** I agree. You can't really blame youngsters coming into the game because they look at financial security. T20 cricket has helped a lot of players and families that way. On the field, I won't say T20 has helped or has made the job easier. When we started playing, it was always red-ball cricket, which was looked up to in terms of starting a season. No one really noticed a lot of performances in white-ball cricket. The IPL has changed the game for youngsters. I was talking to Cheteshwar (Pujara) recently about how we are seeing players who have started their cricket just watching IPL. Even until 2015-16, it was a mix of T20 and red-ball cricket. Red-ball cricket is hard work. For a bowler to bowl 18-20 overs a day, sometimes



Virat Kohli and his teammates during the presentation ceremony. India lost the fifth and final Test against Australia, and the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, in Sydney, on January 5, 2025. AFP

without reward, is hard work. Even batters have got to grind through phases, play out sessions, play some good spells. Those were the skills that used to be seen in extraordinary players, not just hitting boundaries. It is changing, but I don't want players to forget that sometimes bowling an eight- or a nine-over spell – despite what your physio or strength and conditioning team has told you for managing workload – is the need of the hour. You have got to do that for your team and for playing at the highest level.

**With IPL having become the epicentre of world cricket and not just Indian cricket, is it too much for old-timers to expect good-old batting to be on display in the coming years?**

**WJ:** Yes, it will be non-existent. You probably won't see a player getting a hundred in 200-250 balls. Or a player leaving a ball outside off stump over after over. You'll see a counter-attack. Pujara is the last lot of that old batsmanship, but that (old batsmanship) is the need of the hour.

A coach will now encourage a child to attack first and then teach him to defend later. It was the other way around when I was growing up. If you teach a young kid to defend first, he will lose interest because he wants to play all those fancy shots because that's what he has seen on TV. If you try and stop him from doing it right from the word go, he will stop playing cricket.

Today's batters give up easily mentally. They have got fantastic shots. Australia's Sam Konstas, for example. Playing like that in one's first Test match... we would have not even dreamt of playing like that. But today's generation is like that. They can go out and play outrageous shots and get 20-30. They just need to understand how to dig deep. Once they understand that, the sky is the limit because they can change a game within a session or two. To make them understand this is a big challenge for the captain, coach, or mentor.



Today's batters are not scared to get out. I find that very strange. If they see a ball which is above their eyeline and even if the fielders are at long off, long on, deep cover, and deep midwicket, they will still play the high-risk shot. They need to play that 'low risk, high reward' game to be successful.

**WASIM JAFFER**

**JU:** The counter-attacking game has produced a lot more results and generated greater crowds, even for Test cricket, which is important. Sometimes, as players, we don't understand the importance of the game needing crowds because that's where you generate revenue.

As a captain, if I see the shift from T20 cricket to Ranji Trophy, the first couple of net sessions, the batters just put the bat to everything. They have got to leave some balls outside off stump as well. They have the ability but maybe not the hunger to fight it out.

**You touched upon generating support from the fans, but will it last? If Test cricket played merely as an extension to T20 cricket, why will anyone follow it over five days?**

**WJ:** T20 will always be the most viewed format. Obviously older people won't enjoy it, but for the guys who are growing up now, that will always take a front seat. Test cricket has its own beauty. It's like a game of chess or a marathon, so people enjoy it. It's never a straight route in Test cricket. It gives you a different high and the spectators also understand that. We saw that when India won in Gabba (2021).

**JU:** At Gabba, you needed a Pujara and you needed a Rishabh Pant. It's the balance and it starts from the top. If you have the mindset of rewarding those who can grind it out and those who can play those shots, that's where we can find the balance. I can give you an example about bowlers. We (Saurashtra) have a couple of young fast bowlers who have come in, but all they think about when they want to take a wicket is whether to bowl a bouncer or a slower ball or a yorker. When I ask them about their wicket-taking plan, they never say sticking to the off-stump line or playing with a batter's patience.

**One of the challenges young batters face is managing an array of scoring strokes. How do you make them understand to manage the shots?**

**WJ:** You need to make them understand that

they don't need 12 shots in every match. Probably three-four shots and they can easily get a hundred. They need to understand that they have got all the armoury but they don't need to use all of it. On a flat wicket, they don't need to play a sweep shot because they can score runs by just playing straight. After they hit a boundary or a six, the best way is to take a single and go to the other end and let the other guy play the next ball. That's the challenge for the coaches – how to get them to play 100 balls? Stopping them from playing shots is not the right way. In Test cricket, you don't need to score at a strike rate of 150; a 60-70 strike rate is good enough.

**JU:** Everything comes down to balancing it out. They have to figure out the strongest four on a particular day and stick to it. The captain's and coaches' role has also changed in that way.

**WJ:** Today's batters are not scared to get out. I find that very strange. If they see a ball which is above their eyeline and even if the fielders are at long off, long on, deep cover, and deep midwicket, they will still play the high-risk shot. It is difficult for them to realise that if they play such a high-risk game, they could lose the wicket and if they keep doing that for two-three innings, they are playing for their spot. They need to play that 'low risk, high reward' game to be successful.

**What's the way forward?**

**JU:** There is no comparison in terms of the incentives that you get in IPL and a domestic tournament. That is not going to match. Individually, if you look at domestic cricket, they could keep incentivising how much a player gets in Ranji Trophy. But that is just the financial part; it is not the solution. I feel some players just don't want to go through the grind. You can give them financial incentives, but you have to find ways of keeping that hunger going, of providing that motivation. [They should know] how much it means for a State to win the Ranji Trophy or to win a four-day contest.

**WJ:** I am against under-19 boys getting huge (IPL) contracts. The BCCI needs to put a cap of probably ₹50 lakh or something. A youngster getting crores of rupees if he doesn't have a good mentor... it's going to do more harm than good for him. And players getting selected for their potential rather than performance nowadays... [That needs to change too].



To listen to the full interview  
Scan the code or go to the link  
[www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

**NOTEBOOK**

## The role of a social media editor in today's newsroom

The social media team is often the first responder on the desk – tracking news, spotting trends, and delivering updates

**Debasree Purkayastha**

**I**ndia erupted in joy last December when D. Gukesh made history by becoming the youngest world chess champion. Much like the rest of the country, we at *The Hindu* celebrated the moment by sharing a quick photo feature on our Instagram handle that captured the Grandmaster's tears of disbelief and joy. Within minutes, the post garnered thousands of likes, and by the next day, a million. On social media, whether it is an election victory or a sporting triumph, news and emotions travel fast.

As the digital world reshapes how we consume information and opinions – relentlessly, exhaustingly – the role of a social media editor in a newsroom continues to evolve. An editor needs to be fast, proactive, and often nocturnal. This is equally nerve-wracking and exciting.

The job started off simple: we shared selected articles from the newspaper or the website. But since then, it has transformed into a more dynamic and demanding role. Today, we are often the first responders on the desk – tracking news, spotting trends, and delivering updates the moment there is confirmation.

Confirmation is the operative word. Last December, for instance, was a whirlwind month and one to reckon with. There were at least three high-profile deaths in India. There was a barrage of news to break on social media. While some were busy planning and hoping for news-free holidays – if such a thing is ever possible in the life of a journalist – those without holiday plans were glued to their laptops.

When X started buzzing with news of acclaimed filmmaker Shyam Benegal's death on the evening of December 23, most news organisations declared him dead. Obituaries and condolence messages flooded social media. We glanced at the wire and had a quick chat with our cinema writer in Mumbai, who confirmed

that Benegal had passed away. We put the news out and then dove into our rich archives to create a photo feature showcasing the filmmaker's legacy.

However, things had not been as seamless when music maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain passed away just a week earlier, on December 15. The news had trickled in late at night. There was plenty of confusion and we had no reporter in California to verify it. We had to rely on senior editors to reach out to a relative or close friend for confirmation.

Agency alerts are also not enough at times. When a Surya Airlines aircraft crashed shortly after take-off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan Airport last July, a news agency published a video that began circulating on social media. However, they took it down later after verification revealed that the footage was unrelated to the incident.

While these are stressful days, other days can bring us pure joy. When the Indian team won the T20 World Cup and clinched Olympic medals, there was jubilation in the newsroom. Sleep takes a back seat as we try to capture every moment of excitement, triumph, loss, and sorrow. In the digital age, if your social media is not pulsating with the news, are you even in the game? Absolutely not. Do we get it right every time? Not always. But we always acknowledge our typos and errors and correct them.

The role of a social media editor is, in many ways, that of a multi-tasking editor. From being the voice of the organisation and ensuring that its tone and views are accurately represented, to selecting the most impactful visuals and battling the relentless tide of fake news, this is a job that demands versatility. It is also never too late to appreciate the dedicated followers of *The Hindu*'s digital community. Their engagement and trust inspire us to keep working and grow bigger.

*debasree.purkayastha@thehindu.co.in*

## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

### A sea of devotees



Sadhus of the Mahanirvani Panchayati Akhada take a dip in the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers, to kickstart 'Amrit Snan', at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on January 14. SANDEEP SAXENA

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Hindu**

**FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 17, 1975**

### Uneasy calm in W. Asia

London, Jan. 16: The present ominous quiet in West Asia is highly deceptive. The world's attention in the last few days has been focussed on Moscow where speculation on the political and physical health of the Communist Party leader, Mr. Brezhnev, could cause a big dent in the armour of detente politics.

In the Arab world there is growing

impatience with the present status quo on the Israeli front and there are strong rumblings in important Arab capitals.

The current visit to Syria by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia coincides with rising complaints by Arab frontline States and the Palestine Liberation Organisation that military aid from oil producing countries is inadequate.

Yesterday Syrian sources confirmed that President Assad would explain to King Feisal the "fundamental reasons" for which the Syrian Government could not give its concurrence to a partial settlement between Israel and Egypt.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 17, 1925**

### Medical relief in villages

Bombay, Jan. 16: A thousand more villages at least comprising roughly 60 lakhs of souls in the Bombay Presidency will shortly enjoy the benefits of medical relief, if the Bombay Government's new scheme, just published proves successful. The scheme seeks to devise a system whereby overcrowding in large cities can be avoided and medical practitioners induced to settle in big villages and small towns.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### China's investiture in landmark oil deal with Sri Lanka

**3.7** in \$ billion. Sri Lanka has secured its biggest-ever foreign investment after signing a deal with Chinese state-run oil giant Sinopec, officials said. Sinopec has agreed to invest in the construction of a "state-of-the-art oil refinery" in the southern Hambantota region. AFP

### Probability of 'megaquake' in Japan in the next 30 years

**82** in per cent. According to a Japanese government panel, such a "megaquake" could have a 8.9 magnitude, trigger tsunamis, and kill several people. A Research Committee said it has increased its estimate of the probability to between 75% and 82% from between 74% and 81%. AFP

### Number of internet users in rural India in 2024

**488** in million users. Rural India makes up 55% of the total internet population, according to a report by IAMAI and KANTAR. It states that the internet user base in India is set to cross 900 million this year, propelled by the growing use of Indic languages for digital content. PTI

### Death toll in Gaza since Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal

**81** The Health Ministry in Gaza said on Thursday that 81 people were killed in the Palestinian territory in the previous 24 hours, during which a ceasefire deal was announced, taking the overall war death toll to 46,788. It said at least 110,453 have been wounded in more than 15 months of war. AFP

### Boost in kerosene allocation for Kerala fishermen

**92.60** in per cent. The Centre has approved an additional allocation of 600 kilolitres of non-subsidised kerosene for fishermen in Kerala, bringing the total allocation to 1,248 kilolitres for the FY 2024-25. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## The impacts of rupee weakening

The sharp devaluation of the Indian rupee is driven by capital outflows, higher import costs, and a policy shift by the RBI; structural issues such as rising domestic prices and real exchange rate appreciation further complicate the recovery of net exports

### ECONOMIC NOTES

Zico Dasgupta

The Indian rupee recently registered a sharp devaluation with respect to the dollar after remaining stable for over two years or so. What explains such a phenomenon? What are the implications? This article aims to address these issues by discussing India's exchange rate policy and highlighting a few structural constraints in the Indian economy in the recent period.

#### Exchange rate regimes

The nominal exchange rate is the price of buying one unit of foreign currency in terms of domestic currency. The way in which the nominal exchange rate changes depends both on the demand-supply conditions of the foreign exchange market and the exchange rate policy of the central bank.

The real exchange rate is the relative price of foreign goods in terms of the domestic currency with respect to the prices of the domestic goods. It describes how cheap or costly domestic goods are concerning the foreign goods.

The demand and supply conditions of the foreign exchange market depend on the flows of the current account and capital account. The demand for foreign currency would rise if the sum of net current account and capital account flows falls, whereas the supply of foreign currency would rise if the sum increases. The net current account flows are largely influenced by the net exports, whereas net capital account flows are influenced by the net flows of foreign investments. The lower the net exports and greater the capital outflow, the greater would be demand for foreign currency and vice-versa.

Depending on how the central bank responds to the demand and supply conditions in the foreign exchange market, there can be broadly three kinds of exchange rate policy frameworks – fixed exchange rate, floating exchange rate, and managed-floating exchange rate regimes.

In the fixed exchange rate regime, the central bank responds to the higher demand for foreign currency entirely by selling (decumulating) foreign exchange reserves (and vice versa), while keeping the nominal exchange rate fixed at a predetermined level.

In the floating exchange rate regime, the central bank responds to higher demand of foreign currency entirely by devaluating the domestic foreign currency (making foreign currency costlier in terms of domestic currency) and vice versa, while keeping the level of foreign exchange reserves unchanged.

In the managed-floating exchange rate regime, the central bank responds to higher demand for foreign currency both by selling foreign currency as well as devaluing the domestic foreign currency.

Barring a few brief episodes, India has largely pursued a managed-float exchange rate regime in the last three decades. The last decade has been characterised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pursuing a particular variant of managed-float exchange rate regime, where its response under excess demand conditions in the foreign exchange market has been qualitatively different from excess supply conditions. Under excess demand conditions in the foreign exchange market, the RBI has simultaneously devalued the domestic currency and decumulated its foreign exchange reserves. However, under excess supply conditions, the RBI accumulated foreign

exchange reserves while largely resisting appreciation of the nominal exchange rate to avoid appreciation of the real exchange rate or the worsening of export competitiveness. By implication, while episodes of net capital outflow were associated with depreciation of the nominal exchange rate, the episodes of net capital inflow did not involve appreciation of the exchange rate to the same extent. This asymmetry in the behaviour of the nominal exchange rate led to an overall devaluation of the rupee throughout the 2010s decade as reflected in Figure 1.

In the post-COVID period, particularly between the latter half of 2022 and November 2024, the RBI momentarily shifted its policy stance to a regime that closely resembles the fixed exchange rate regime. This is reflected by the flat segment of the dollar exchange rate in Figure 1 during the relevant period. Deterioration of the current account deficit and capital outflow during this period were met by selling foreign exchange reserves while holding the nominal exchange rate more or less at the same level. The sharp devaluation of the rupee in the last month or so hints towards RBI returning to its earlier regime of the managed-float exchange rate that it followed during the 2010s. Responding to greater capital outflow and a rise in imports amid higher crude oil prices, the RBI allowed the rupee to depreciate with the objective of putting less strain on the foreign exchange reserves.

**Implications of devaluation** Depreciation of the nominal exchange rate can have at least two macroeconomic implications – positive and adverse. The first route involves the real exchange rate channel, whereas the second route involves the prices of domestic goods.

Cheaper domestic goods opens up the possibility of increasing net exports. For example, if the nominal dollar exchange rate is ₹85, the dollar price of foreign goods is ₹100 and the rupee price of domestic goods is ₹1,000, then the prices of foreign goods in terms of the domestic currency would be ₹850 and the real exchange rate would be 0.85.

First, a depreciation in the nominal exchange rate can positively influence net exports and output if two conditions hold simultaneously: (i) the net exports respond positively to the real exchange rate and (ii) depreciation in the nominal exchange rate is associated with depreciation in the real exchange rate. A rise in domestic prices at a given nominal exchange rate would lead to an appreciation of the real exchange rate by making domestic goods costlier, whereas a depreciation of the nominal exchange rate at unchanged domestic prices would lead to a depreciation of the real exchange rate by making domestic goods cheaper with respect to foreign goods.

Second, a depreciation in the nominal exchange rate can increase domestic prices by increasing the variable cost of firms and putting a greater squeeze on real income. In oligopolistic markets, firms typically set their prices by setting a markup over their variable cost. Since the variable cost of firms typically includes the cost of imported raw materials, nominal exchange rate depreciation would increase the variable cost of firms by increasing their effective cost of imported raw materials. The consequent rise in variable costs leads to higher prices when the firms pass on the burden of higher raw material costs to the final consumers.

The central constraint that emerged in the Indian economy since the latter half of the 2010s, however, was that the condition for the positive effect of

### The falling rupee

The recent sharp devaluation of the Indian rupee, after a period of stability, raises important questions about the country's exchange rate policy and its broader economic implications

Chart 1: Chart shows the dollar exchange rate in India (₹)

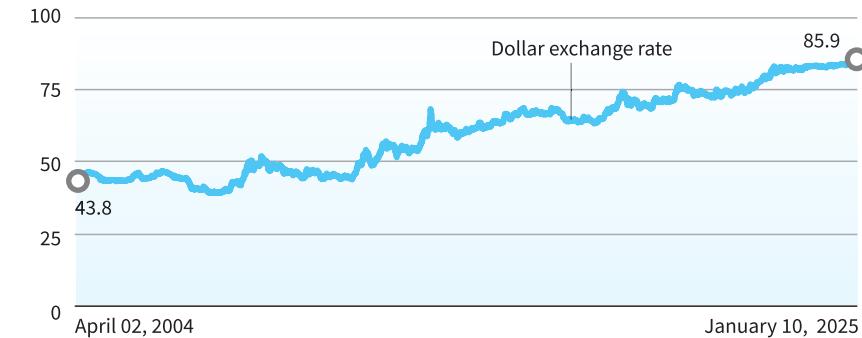


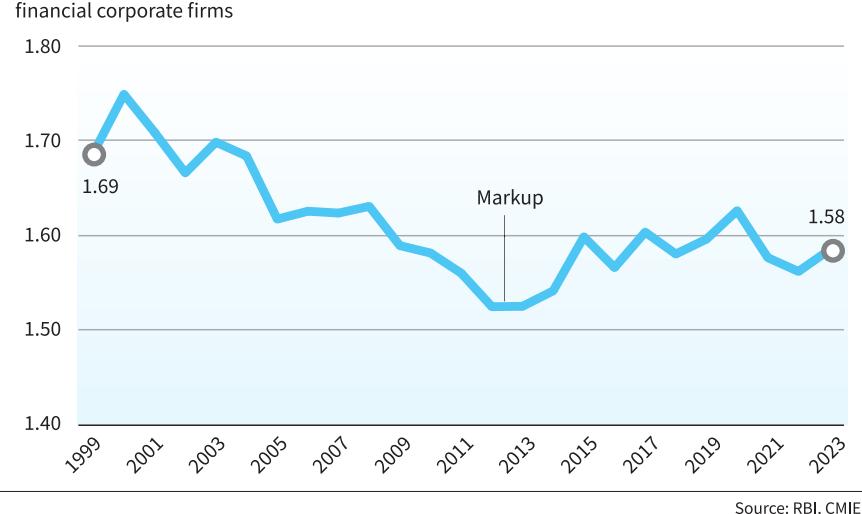
Chart 2: Chart shows the index values for the nominal effective exchange rate (NEER) and the real effective exchange rate (REER)



Chart 3: Chart shows the countrywise difference in NEER and REER indices in November 2024 compared to January 2019



Chart 4: Chart shows the ratio of nominal sales value to that of nominal variable cost for non-financial corporate firms



other countries. Figure 3 shows this by depicting the exchange rate movements of 62 countries using data from the Bank of International Settlements (BIS). The horizontal and the vertical axis respectively measure the change in the indices of NEER and REER between January 2019 and November 2024. The vertical zero-line marks no change in the NEER, while the horizontal zero-line marks no change in the REER.

Depending on how both NEER and REER changed during this period, Figure 3 can be divided into four boxes or categories. Category 1 includes countries where both nominal and real exchange rates registered appreciation. Category 2 includes countries where the real exchange rate appreciated despite the depreciation in the nominal exchange rate. Category 3 countries are those which registered depreciation in both nominal and real exchange rates. Category 4 countries are those which registered depreciation in the real exchange rate despite the appreciation in the nominal exchange rate.

The figure shows at least two important features of the global economy during this period. First, the majority of countries have been located in categories 1 and 3, indicating that the nominal and real exchange rates have moved in the same direction for most countries. Second, India parted company with most countries since 2019, as it is located in category 2.

Such appreciation of the real exchange rate in India despite a depreciation of the nominal exchange rate indicates that the latter has been associated with counteracting rise in domestic prices. One explanation for such a rise in domestic prices can be located in the recent increase in the markup of non-financial firms as shown in Figure 4.

The markup can be estimated as the ratio between the output price and the variable cost per unit of output or the ratio between the nominal value of sales and the total variable cost. Figure 4 shows the trend in the markup for 1908 sample firms in the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) Prowess database which has provided information on their variable cost in all the years in the sample period. The variable costs in this estimation include the expenses on raw materials, packaging, power, and fuel, compensation to employees, indirect taxes, distribution, and outsourcing. After registering a decline till the mid-2010s, the markup reversed its trend and started rising. Since prices are formed by a markup over variable costs, any rise in markup would push up domestic prices at any given level of variable costs and nominal exchange rate.

#### The policy question

While the weakening of the rupee puts pressure on the prices, the delinking of the real exchange rate from the nominal exchange rate has posed additional constraints on the recovery of net exports and the balance of payments adjustment mechanism. This leads to the larger questions for the exchange rate policy – should India return to the earlier strategy of the 2010s, or does it require a new and explicit exchange rate policy framework? What should the exchange rate policy aim to achieve?

The response of the RBI in the post-COVID period has appeared somewhat arbitrary, as it has frequently shuffled its policy stance without providing adequate explanation. The recent challenges bring forth the need to address these questions in a more systematic way.

Zico Dasgupta teaches economics at Azim Premji University

nominal exchange rate depreciation ceased to hold.

#### The recent constraint

The period since the mid-2010s, particularly 2019 has been characterised by the growing divergence between the nominal and the real exchange rate. Figure 2 shows this divergence by plotting the trend in the nominal effective exchange rate (NEER) and the real effective exchange rate (REER). These indices reflect the weighted average

exchange rate of India with respect to its multiple trade partners. The way in which these indices are defined, any increase or positive change of these indicators implies appreciation, and any decrease or negative change implies depreciation. After moving in the same direction till the mid-2010s, they started moving in opposite directions with the real exchange rate registering an appreciation despite a depreciation in the nominal exchange rate. Such a phenomenon distinguishes India from the bulk of the

## IN THE LIMELIGHT



Golden era: A still from 'Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai: Bollywood's global leap, 25 years later

Twenty-five years ago, a giddy Bollywood musical, *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*, reflected India's unique coordinates in a globalised world; combining romance, international settings, and a star-making debut, it became a cultural phenomenon that resonated with audiences at home and abroad

Shilajit Mitra

**I**t was a moment of national swooning. The Bollywood film *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* was released on January 14, 2000. At the dawn of the new millennium, it put the country into overdrive. Bolstered by an aggressive publicity blitz, word had already spread about its otherworldly star. He had hazel eyes and a silvery smile. His Stallone-like build betrayed a schoolboy's charm. He was 27 years old. And, it was rumoured, he could dance.

It's been 25 years since Hrithik Roshan's star-making debut in his father's musical. Families hoarded theatres. 'Ek Pal Ka Jeena' played on loop. Young boys and girls had found their new pin-up god. Some, with embarrassing mileage, aped the Hrithik handshake, flicking the palm horizontally. Manoj Desai, executive director of G7 multiplex (then Gaiety Galaxy) in Mumbai, remembers running packed shows round the clock. "The film ran for 25 weeks non-stop at my theatre. From children to grown-ups, everyone went crazy about Hrithik's dancing. When he returns in a new avatar after the interval, the *seetis* (whistles) were boundless."

The buzz overseas was just as strong. By the mid-1990s, India had one of the largest diaspora populations in the world, concentrated in north America, the U.K., the Gulf countries, and Australia-New Zealand. Bollywood, its boundaries broadened by liberalisation, began reaching out to them. Films like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, *Dil Toh Pagal Hai*, and *Pardes* successfully rode the wave of globalisation. The movement reached its apotheosis with *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*. Its star-crossed lovers danced on cruise ships and got stranded on the sands of Krabi, Thailand. Hrithik and his co-star, Ameesha Patel, rode a hot air balloon in Christchurch, New Zealand. Everything about the film was calibrated to sing an international tune. Its dual-hero storyline was a frank allegory of free-market aspirations. After Rohit, a penniless car salesman turned popstar, dies, his NRI doppelgänger Raj rolls up in a BMW and

Honda Hurricane.

The film had a curious genesis. Hrithik's father, director Rakesh Roshan, had initially intended it for Shah Rukh Khan, the reigning knight of the Hindi diaspora film. The 90s were a wild era of remakes and rejigs; *French Kiss*, the Meg Ryan comedy about a missing diamond necklace, was remade in Hindi as *Pyaar To Hona Hi Tha* (1998). A year before that, James Cameron's *Titanic* had set the bar for the sweeping romantic epic. Cruise ships, aquatic deaths, ill-fated lovers from across the class divide... *Kaho Naa...* *Pyaar Hai* was like *Titanic* filtered through *Karz* (1980). Another oft-cited inspiration is the Kannada film *Ratha Sapthami* (1986), remade in Tamil as *Love Birds* (1996). In both, the hero seemingly dies in an accident, the heroine takes a healing trip somewhere far and scenic, and the lovers are fortuitously reunited (the grungy discotheque number recurs in all versions).

**World-view**

"Toh hass kyun ki duniya ko hai hassana (smile, so you can make the world smile)," Hrithik sings in the film. It became a motto of the times. The language of globalisation is threaded throughout *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*. Rohit's bedroom wall has a poster of the Backstreet Boys. Though he dresses casually, he wears a shirt and tie to work, the dress code of the IT generation. There are product placements for Lexus, Mercedes, Ferrari, Yokohama tyres, and Coca-Cola. The multiracial, tropical-themed nightclub Raj dances at is called Club Indiana. He reads Cosmopolitan magazine on a flight. A year before Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, the film boosted tourism and migration interests in New Zealand, highlighting attractions like Lake Wakatipu and The Remarkables ski resort outside Queenstown. In 2004, Helen Clark, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, wrote to Rakesh Roshan: "Your film captured the imagination of Indian audiences and portrayed a rich and vibrant image of New Zealand."

Diaspora films tend to reflect the dualities of immigrant life, its characters

caught between tradition and modernity. But Raj – an assault of soft power charm, in a netted vest and sunglasses – seemed perfectly at home in the wider world. *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* is not a reincarnation story, unlike *Karz*, and poor Rohit, searching for 'saadgi' (simplicity) in a capitalistic world, meets a dark end. Written by Honey Irani and Ravi Kapoor, the screenplay has silly contrivances that most audiences happily ignored at the time, but which do not survive a rewatch. Rohit's younger brother is frozen mute by his passing. Sonia's fashion sense changes every 15 minutes. A lovelorn Raj follows her back to Mumbai, happily abandoning his aging parents (returning NRIs were a fiscal asset, and were granted tax benefits).

Though a parade of pretty people in pretty places – Krabi also featured in Danny Boyle's *The Beach* the same year, becoming a major tourist hotspot – *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* is also a film of sounds. There are lines, at times mere words, that are permanently stuck in our heads: Tannaz Irani's nasal "Sonias...", for instance, or Raj tooting, "Iss kehte hai ittefaq No. 3." Rakesh Roshan, Hrithik's uncle, composed the film's songs, appropriating – not his first time – tunes from Greek composer Vangelis. The film's cultural legacy is inextricably linked to its soundtrack. Lucky Ali blessed it with his vocals, belting out two diametrically opposite hits, the electronic headrush of 'Ek Pal Ka Jeena' soothed out by 'Na Tum Jaano Na Hum', with its tranquil guitar strums and melancholic outro.

**Off-shoring**

*Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* was the antithesis of all the raucous energies shaping Hindi cinema at the time. Ram Gopal Varma's *Satya* and John Matthew Matthian's *Sarfarosh* had nudged Bollywood into gritty, challenging directions. But Roshan, with his escapist blockbuster set aboard a big boat, steered it back on course. Anurag Kashyap, the lead writer of *Satya*, mocked this apparent regression in a line of dialogue in *Naya: The Real Hero*, released the following year. Reluctant to join politics and change his country's

course, Anil Kapoor's character remarks, "I want to live the easy life... watch *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* on Sundays."

There was a shocking, *Satya*-like coda to the *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* wave. On January 21, 2000, a week after the film's release, Rakesh Roshan was shot at by two unidentified gunmen outside his office. In a bleeding state, he drove to Santa Cruz police station, scared more for his son's life than his own. It emerged that the shooters belonged to Mumbai's Budes gang, who had tried extorting the director over the film's overseas earnings. Bollywood was corporatising and bringing in the big bucks, and the underworld, its uneasy ally since the 90s, wanted a piece of the pie.

Over the last 25 years, *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai* has turned up in popular culture in amusing ways. *Na Tum Jaano Na Hum* became a full-length film with Hrithik, Saif Ali Khan, and Esha Deol. Raj flipping through photographs of his dead lookalike is a meme. During the surreal early weeks of COVID-19, someone registered the film title 'Corona Pyaar Hai,' inviting the wrath of Rakesh Roshan. Canadian YouTuber Lilly Singh made Hailey Bieber dance to the film's title track, and, in 2021, while campaigning for the Trinamool Congress in Asansol, West Bengal, Ameesha Patel sang a few lines from the same song – an apparent dig at Babul Supriyo, a singer on the film, who was fielded from the BJP in the Assembly elections.

Hindi blockbusters today have moved past the candied nothingness of *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*. They have become more strident and unabashed. Curiously, even their internationalism now feels parochial. Hrithik's most recent smash was *Fighter*, a politically-slanted actioner from 2024, inspired by the *Top Gun* franchise. In a disappointing scene, Hrithik's combat pilot, bashing up a terrorist, yells the words 'India-Occupied Pakistan' – the kind of triumphalist coinage that has become depressingly commonplace. It makes one long for the easygoing Sundays, when life was less hectic and charged, and we all watched *Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai*.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

# Know your English

K. Subrahmanian  
S. Upendran

"When I was young, my teachers asked me to memorise idioms and use them in my writing and speech."

"It is good to know idioms, better to use them sparingly and appropriately. Some think that it will impress others if they use a lot of idioms in their speech and writing."

"What is wrong?"

"I'll tell you. Listen to the following dialogue:

How are you?

Fit as a fiddle

How is your work?

The less said, the better.

Why?

I am at daggers drawn with my boss.

What's wrong?

I don't dance attendance on the blighter.

How is your father?

He had one foot in the grave, you know.

He kicked the bucket with the other foot three months ago.

I am sorry to hear this.

My children were the apple of his eye.

They cried their eyes out.

Poor things! How is your daughter?

Moon-struck.

She is in love?

Yes. With herself.

How is your son?

Merry as a cricket.

Nice to hear that. What does he do?

He makes my flesh creep tilting at windmills.

How is your wife?

She is down in the dumps and wants to shuffle off her mortal coil.

Sorry to hear this. I hope and pray things will improve.

She, why the whole family, is past praying for.

"What do you think of the dialogue?"

"It is funny, it is hilarious."

"Why?"

"The person who answers speaks unnaturally. He answers in idioms."

"That's the point. We don't speak like that. We shouldn't write like that. Good writing or speech is not a string of idioms. For humorous effect, you can write or speak like that. But ordinarily you don't, you shouldn't. My staple diet is rice. I eat rice day after day. I like sweets. I can't live on sweets. Ordinary language is the staple diet and idioms are the sweets. Idioms should be used appropriately, sparingly, to enrich ordinary language. They should be used with discrimination. If you string together idioms indiscriminately, you will be considered idiotic!"

"You have told me what to avoid. Tell me how to write."

"How to write? Well, from left to right. Sorry for the poor joke. We will discuss the essentials of good writing next week."

Published in The Hindu on October 04, 1994

## THE DAILY QUIZ

Anne Bronte was born on this day in 1820. Here is a quiz on her, and her sisters

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Sindhu Nagaraj

**QUESTION 1**  
Let's start with a simple one. Name the three sisters.

**QUESTION 2**  
Anne Bronte has written only two novels. One of them is *Agnes Grey*. The other, often considered as one of the earliest feminist works is the final one. Name the second.

**QUESTION 3**  
The three of them have worked on a collection of poems, 21 from Anne, 21 from

Emily, and 19 from Charlotte. The book was published under pen names which retained their initials but concealed their sex. What was the book called?

**QUESTION 4**  
Along with Anne's *Agnes Grey*, name the two well-known novels of the other two sisters.

**QUESTION 5**  
In 1850, a little over a year after the deaths of two sisters (among the three), which of them wrote a preface for the re-print of the combined edition of their published works, in which she publicly revealed the real identities of all three sisters?



**Visual Question:**  
Identify this place, related to the three sisters.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:**

- From the ascension of Augustus Caesar until the death of Marcus Aurelius, the Roman empire enjoyed a period of relative prosperity called \_\_\_\_\_, marked in particular by assurances of safe and fast travel for traders. **Ans: Pax Romana**
  - In the five decades since 235 AD, the empire was rocked by widespread unrest. One result was for smallholder farmers to cede their land to wealthier landholders in exchange for protection. What were the smallholder farmers subsequently called? **Ans: Colonii**
  - In 285 AD, emperor Diocletian quelled the unrest and abdicated the throne 20 years later, plunging the empire into another crisis that was only overcome by \_\_\_\_\_. **Ans: Constantine**
  - Name the Roman physician whose ideas dominated Western medicine for more than a millennium. **Ans: Galen**
  - Name the type of pasta popularised in Europe by the Roman legions travelling to fight on different lands. **Ans: Gnocchi**
- Visual: Name this Roman temple in modern-day Nîmes, France, whose name in French means "square house". **Ans: Maison Carrée**
- Early Birds:** Rajmohan Velayudhan | Siddhartha Viswanathan | K.N. Viswanathan | Sonali Das | Aaradhy Yadav

## Word of the day

**Obfuscate:**

make obscure or unclear

**Synonyms:** confuse, complicate, disrupt

**Usage:** The instructions only served to obfuscate the process.

**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/obfuscatepro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ɒbfəskərt/

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

**From Page One****ISRO docks 2 satellites, puts India in elite league**

The other objectives of the mission include demonstration of the transfer of electric power between the docked spacecraft, which is essential for future applications such as in-space robotics, composite spacecraft control and payload operations after undocking.

According to ISRO, after the docking and undocking events, the spacecraft will be separated and used for application missions.

"After successful docking and rigidization, electrical power transfer between the two satellites will be demonstrated before undocking and separation of the two satellites to start the operation of their respective payloads for the expected mission life of up to two years," ISRO said.

**Saif Ali Khan stable after intruder stabs him**

Before the assault, the intruder reportedly demanded ₹1 crore from the house help who first saw him.

After the attack, Mr. Khan's son, Ibrahim Ali Khan, rushed him to the Lilavati hospital in an autorickshaw around 3:30 a.m. Mr. Khan suffered six wounds, and a 2.5-inch piece of knife was lodged near his spine. "He sustained injuries to the thoracic spinal cord as the knife was lodged in his spine. Surgery was performed to remove the knife and also stop the leaking spinal fluid. Two other deep wounds on his left hand and neck were repaired by the plastic surgery team. He is stable now and recovering," said Dr. Nitin Dange, consultant neurosurgeon. Cardiologist Dr. Shrinivas Gudva monitored the entire surgery along with a team of doctors.

The Mumbai Police have registered an FIR against the accused invoking sections 311 (robbery), 312 (attempts to commit robbery or dacoity while armed with a deadly weapon), 331(4) (house-trespass or housebreaking to commit any offence), 331(6), and 331(7) (grievous hurt during housebreaking) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita.

**Hindenburg Research winds up operations**

But as months passed, the Supreme Court dismissed a petition from litigators while the Adani Group recovered lost ground with strong operating performance and stock recovering most of the losses.

While Mr. Anderson cited the toll of the "rather intense, and at times, all encompassing" nature of the work as the reason for his decision, critics were quick to link the shutting down to Hindenburg's alleged ties with George Soros and the so-called deep state being under significant pressure from the incoming Trump administration.

Adani Group CFO Jageshinder Robbie Singh, in a cryptic post on X, said: "Kitne Ghazi aaye, kitne Ghazi gaye" (Many Ghazis came, many Ghazis went).

Typically, shortsellers like Mr. Anderson, who managed his firm's own money but not that of others, bet against companies they believe are plagued with mismanagement or involved in some fraud/scam. Shortsellers borrow a stock to sell it in the expectation the price will fall, then repurchase the shares and pocket the difference. They book losses if the reverse happens. Mr. Anderson wrote in a letter posted on the firm's website, "There is not one specific thing – no particular threat, no health issue and no big personal issue... The intensity and focus has come at the cost of missing a lot of the rest of the world and the people I care about. I now view Hindenburg as a chapter in my life, not a central thing that defines me."

Hindenburg in 2020 went after electric truck-maker Nikola, which led to a U.S. jury convicting founder Trevor Milton of fraud two years later. This month, it went after Ernie Garcia III's Carvana Co, accusing him and his father, Ernie Garcia II, of an "accounting graft for the ages". The auto retailers denied the allegations and its stock soon recovered. Hindenburg's past targets include Lordstown Motors Corp (U.S.), Kandi (China), Clover Health (U.S.) and Tecnoglass (Colombia). In 2023, it shorted Carl Icahn's Icahn Enterprises and Jack Dorsey-led Block. (With inputs from Reuters)

**T.N.'s 'drone didis' spray fields in a jiffy**

"The spraying of liquid fertilisers and pesticides through a drone is very cost-effective and takes around seven minutes to cover an acre of farmland," she says. She charges ₹400 per acre.

V. Saranya of Kommasamuthiram near Eraiyan in Kallakurichi district is also a trained drone pilot. Having completed the drone pilot training in Chennai, Ms. Saranya is now criss-crossing the villages in Ulundurpettai block on call to execute flight runs that give her an assured monthly income.

There have been other challenges as well. "Though I get calls from farmers from nearby blocks, transporting the drone is a problem as it weighs nearly 30 kg after being loaded with fertiliser and water. It takes two people to carry it and a second-hand vehicle for transporting the drone costs nearly ₹3 lakh. However, my new occupation supplements my income and hope it is beneficial in the long run," says Ms. Saranya.

**Singapore to help India's semiconductor industry**

President Tharman Shanmugaratnam says Singapore and India are exploring opportunities for manufacturing semiconductor chips in the country in the 60th year of diplomatic relationship

**Kallop Bhattacharjee**

NEW DELHI

**S**ingapore is exploring new initiatives such as manufacturing of semiconductors and building a semiconductor ecosystem in India and participating in the creation of a new generation of technological solutions, the city-state's President, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, said on Thursday.

The visiting dignitary recounted his 2022 visit to India as the Senior Minister of Singapore when he toured Assam and announced that this time he is focusing on Odisha.

"We will never forget India was one of the first countries to recognise Singapore's independence in 1965. It's a natural partnership between a small country - Singapore - and a very large country - India. In a whole range of areas, our business relationships are thriving," said Mr. Shanmugaratnam highlighting



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

that Singapore has been the "largest investor in India for many years now".

**Data corridor**

"We are also exploring other initiatives in the digital space. We are exploring possibility of a data corridor between Gift City and Singapore so that our financial institutions can exchange data on a safe and trusted basis," he said after the official welcome accorded to him at the fore-

court of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He mentioned the two sides were working in the areas such as renewable energy and spoke about India's "high ambition" for the eastern states such as Odisha and Assam.

The visiting President spoke about the "natural advantages" of the eastern States such as availability of natural resources and the desire among the people to develop in "logistics,

connectivity, and petrochemicals". "We are now on a new trajectory with India with the upgrade of our relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which was announced during Prime Minister Modi's last visit to Singapore in September last year. We are working on cooperating with advanced manufacturers and semiconductors - helping to build up a semiconductor ecosystem in India," the Singapore President said in his remarks to the media.

Later in the day, he and President Droupadi Murmu jointly launched the joint logo here to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Singapore.

President Shanmugaratnam's visit is part of a series of exchanges that will take place during the year as both sides plan to celebrate the 60th anniversary through visits and events.

**SRK, Salman too facing threat: Mamata**

**The Hindu Bureau**

KOLKATA

Condemning the attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan in Mumbai, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Thursday that actors Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan too were facing threat to their lives. She described the attack as shocking and said the entire family of the actor should be provided security.

**Actor attack: Opposition pins down Mahayuti**

**Purnima Sah**

MUMBAI

The attack on actor Saif Ali Khan at his home by an intruder has shocked the entire country and raised questions on safety concerns of public personalities and common people. As the day progressed, the incident took a political turn as the film industry and the Opposition questioned the ruling Mahayuti alliance in Maharashtra over the law and order situation.

Responding to the alle-

gations that claimed Mumbai is no longer safe for anybody, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis appealed to everyone not to tag the city as "unsafe" based on a few incidents that can happen in any city.

"Mumbai is the safest among all the other mega cities in the country and there is no doubt about it. What happened with Saif Ali Khan is a serious matter of concern but it won't be right to call Mumbai unsafe. Such statements malign the image of the city. If

any such incident happens in the city, we must take them seriously and act accordingly to ensure the safety of Mumbai. The government will take all steps to make Mumbai safer for all," he said.

Criticising the law and order situation, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole called Mr. Fadnavis an "ineffective" and "weak" CM and demanded his resignation from the post of Home Minister. "If such incidents occur in the bustling area of Mumbai's Bandra, then who is safe in the

city? Looking at the increasing crime rates in Mumbai, Pune, Beed, and Nagpur, one wonders if there is a Home Minister in the State at all."

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said not a single individual in the State is safe under the current government's regime. "Saif Ali Khan is a Padma Shri recipient... But what is this situation of law and order in this State? Where is our Home Minister?"

Law and order is deteriorating in Maharashtra, said the Nationalist Con-

gress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray took to social media platform X and wrote: "The intrusion and knife attack on Saif Ali Khan is shocking. We are relieved to hear that he is stable and recovering, and we pray that tough times are over, and he bounces back to normalcy at the earliest."

Indian Film and Television Directors Association (IFTDA) president Ashoke Pandit called the incident a matter of major concern.

**Centre announces constitution of Eighth Pay Commission**

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Days ahead of the Delhi Assembly election, the Union government approved the establishment of the Eighth Pay Commission here on Thursday, accepting a demand of the Central trade unions and employees' organisations. The outcome of the new Pay Commission will benefit about 50 lakh employees and 65 lakh pensioners of the Union government, including serving and retired defence personnel. Delhi itself houses about four lakh employees of the Union government.

Talking to reporters after a Cabinet meeting, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken the decision to constitute the Eighth Pay Commission. He said the Chairperson and two members of the commission would be appointed soon.

Usually, a retired Supreme Court judge heads the Pay Commission. The Seventh Pay Commission was headed by Justice A.K. Mathur (retd.). It started functioning in 2014 and submitted its report in 2016. The new scale as recommended by the Seventh Pay Commission was implemented in November 2016, and the expenses to



Ashwini Vaishnaw

the exchequer for implementing it were about ₹1 lakh crore in 2016-17.

Once accepted, the Pay Commission's recommendations will be the basis for wage settlement in public sector undertakings, and similar pay revision exercises in States. "This will provide a significant boost to consumption and economic growth, along with improved quality of life for government employees," a source in the government said.

Mr. Vaishnaw said that though the term of the Seventh Pay Commission ended only in 2026, the Prime Minister had approved the Eighth Pay Commission well ahead of time.

Trade unions said they welcomed the move, and that they would wait for the terms of reference and the constitution of the panel. The Central Secretariat Service Forum thanked the Prime Minister and the Union government for the decision.

**Justice K. Vinod Chandran sworn in as SC judge; top court close to full strength**

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna administered the oath of office to the new Supreme Court judge Justice Krishnan Vinod Chandran on Thursday.

Justice Chandran was formerly the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court. His appointment has raised the judicial strength of the Supreme Court to 33, one short of the full sanctioned strength.

The Supreme Court Collegium had recommended Justice Chandran to the Union government for appointment as a top court judge on January 7.

**Collegium resolution** In its resolution, the collegium headed by Chief Justice Khanna had noted that there was currently no judge with the Kerala High Court as the parent court on the Bench of the Su-



Justice K. Vinod Chandran

preme Court.

At the time of his recommendation, Justice Chandran was the senior-most among High Court judges hailing from Kerala. He had stood 13 in the combined all-India seniority of High Court judges.

Justice Chandran was appointed a judge of the Kerala High Court in November 2011 and elevated as the Patna High Court Chief Justice on March 24, 2023.

Justice Chandran is the second Supreme Court judge successfully recom-

mended by the Khanna Collegium after Justice Manmohan in December 2024. His tenure in the top court would last till April 24, 2028.

**Judicial vacancies**

With pendency nearing 83,000, the Supreme Court Collegium has repeatedly emphasised the need to have its full sanctioned strength of judges.

A November 2023 collegium resolution had pointed out that the top court cannot afford even one judicial vacancy taking into account the "ever-mounting pendency of cases".

The same sense of urgency was conveyed in a January 2024 resolution of the collegium, which said that the "workload of judges has increased considerably and it has become necessary to ensure that the court has full working judge-strength at all times".

**New app to promote battlefield tourism**

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Civilians can soon visit battlefield locations along India's borders, thanks to a newly introduced app.

An initiative of the Ministries of Defence and Tourism, as well as the Army, the "Bharat Rambhoomi Darshan" app was launched by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on January 15 coinciding with the Army Day celebrations. A related website too has been created.

Locations of the 1962, 1971, and 1999 (Kargil) conflicts, the Siachen base camp, and even the site where the Galwan clash of 2020 took place, will be accessible for tourists.

"The Indian Army is transforming border areas and historic battlefields into tourist destinations, offering citizens a chance to witness valour up close," the Army posted on X ahead of the launch.

**Kuldeep Sengar seeks reprieve from Delhi HC**

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Sengar on Thursday sought from the Delhi High Court suspension of a 10-

year jail term in the custodial death case of the Unnao rape survivor's father. He sought the reprieve saying his appeal was yet to be decided and he had already spent a long period in jail.

**12 Maoists killed by security personnel in Chhattisgarh**

**Shubhomoy Sikdar**

RAJPUR

In the biggest anti-Maoist operation in Chhattisgarh since the beginning of the year, at least a dozen Maoists were gunned down by security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur on Thursday, the police said.

Carried out 10 days after the IED blast in Bijapur that left eight security personnel dead, the operation was reported in the south Bastar region, spread across Bijapur, Dantewada and Sukma districts, which is considered a stronghold of the Maoists. Many new security camps have come up there in the past one year.

**Encounter in forest** A senior police officer said the encounter broke out around 9 a.m. when a joint team of security personnel was out after receiving a tip-off about the presence of Maoists in the forest area. The team comprising contingents from the District Reserve Guard (DRG) from three districts, five battalions of CoBRA (Com-

**APPEAL**

**Advik Shrisail Bagali** 3 years old son of Shrisail Bagali is admitted Mazumdar Shaw Medical Center and the only curative treatment is Bone Marrow Transplant. The approximate cost of transplant would be Rs. 21,50,000/- Kindly send donation however small by Cheque/ D.D./M.O. favouring Save Poor Lives A/c/Advik Shrisail Bagali. Our Account Details: SBI Account No. 20000913487, State Bank of India, Krishnagiri. SAVE POOR LIVES REGISTERED PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST, Flat No. A1, Ceebos Garden, Ground Floor, Okhla, New Delhi - 110 020. Contact Nos. 011 42044165 & 011 35691848, Mobile: 9884607377, Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com. Our website: www.savepoorlives.com

Rahul Gandhi in the grip of 'urban Naxal thinking': BJP

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Criticising Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's remark that the party is "fighting the Indian state" apart from the ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday accused him of being "in the complete grip of urban Naxals' thinking process".

At a press conference, BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad said there was a need to change Mr. Gandhi's "tutor". "You are the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament. Do you genuinely understand the meaning of 'Indian state'?", he asked.

Mr. Prasad said the "Indian state" represented the Constitutional identity of India as a free country. "It encompasses the President, Vice-President, Parliament, Leader of the Opposition, State Assemblies... Supreme Court/High Courts, journalists..." he said, wondering if seasoned Congress leaders had stopped advising Mr. Gandhi.

The senior BJP leader took exception to Mr. Gandhi's charge against Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, and said the Sangh was a nationalist organisation.

Mr. Prasad accused the Congress of working with Hindenburg, which was now closing "shop", for destabilising India.

# Closure of Hindenburg is not a clean chit for Adani Group: Jairam Ramesh

**Congress leader reiterates call for Joint Parliamentary Committee probe, says matter involves abuse of Indian foreign policy to enrich PM's close friends at the expense of national interest**

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI



Without a JPC, the already compromised institutions of the Indian state will continue to act only to protect the Prime Minister's friends

JAIRAM RAMESH  
Congress leader

between industrialist Gautam Adani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Congress has been running a sustained campaign highlighting the government's alleged bias towards Mr. Adani. Mr. Ramesh said that the Hindenburg Report only covered one part of the "hydro-headed Modani mega scam", namely securities laws violations. "Out of the 100 questions on the Adani Mega Scam that the Congress party had asked of the PM in the *Hum Adani ke Hain Kaun* (HAHK) series during January-March 2023, only 21 questions related to revelations made in the Hindenburg report," Mr. Ramesh said.

**Misuse of agencies'**

The matter, he said, goes far deeper. "It involves the abuse of Indian foreign policy to enrich the PM's close friends at the expense of the national interest. It involves the misuse of investigative agencies to force Indian businesspersons to divest critical infrastructure assets and help Adani build monopolies in airports, ports, defence and cement," Mr. Ramesh alleged.

He claimed that it involves the capture of once-respected institutions such as SEBI whose "discredited" chairperson continues in her position despite "clear evidence" of conflicts of interest and financial links to Adani.

"Modani may have – and it has – captured India's institutions, but criminality exposed outside the country cannot be covered up in this way. The U.S. Department of Justice has accused Adani of bribing Indian officials to secure lucrative solar power contracts," he said.

The Congress reiterated its long-standing demand for a probe by a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

"These are all serious acts of blatant favouritism and brazen criminality that can only be fully investigated by the Joint Parliamentary Committee. Without a JPC, the already-compromised institutions of the Indian state will continue to act only to protect the powerful and the PM's friends,

while India's poor and middle classes are left to fend for themselves in a deteriorating economic environment," Mr. Ramesh said.

## BJP is twisting Cong. leader's comments: Bhupesh Baghel

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

**He also targeted RSS chief, says he insulted ancestors who fought for Independence**

The Congress on Thursday countered the BJP's criticism over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's comments that the party had to fight the "Indian state itself".

It also renewed its attack on RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat over his remarks that India's "true independence" was established on the day of the Ram Temple's consecration.

Addressing a press conference, former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said that Mr.

Bhagwat's remarks clearly showed that he did not believe in the Constitution.

He said, "It also means that he is insulting our ancestors who fought for independence and made innumerable sacrifices."

He accused the BJP of twisting Mr. Gandhi's remarks out of context.

Reiterating Mr. Gandhi's

remarks from Wednesday, Mr. Baghel said that if anyone would have given a statement like Mr. Bhagwat's in any other country, they would have been arrested.

"Mr. Bhagwat and BJP MPs have been speaking against the Constitution and they want to change the Constitution," he said.

Asked why the Congress has not filed a case against Mr. Bhagwat, he said that all institutions are under government control. "Will Delhi Police allow anyone to file an FIR against Mr. Bhagwat?" he asked.

**Congress announces new schedule for campaign**

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

As part of its 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' campaign, the Congress will be holding rallies on January 21 at Belgaum, and on January 27 at Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, Madhya Pradesh.

The campaign was halted on former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's death. Senior leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi will be present at Mhow rally, said party leader Jairam Ramesh.

## Manmohan memorial still in early stages

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The finalisation of a site for a memorial to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away last month, is still in the preliminary stages.

Sources in the Urban Affairs Ministry said that a site at the Rashtriya Smriti Complex (a part of Rajghat precinct) has been earmarked for the memorial, and the family of Dr. Singh has been intimated of the same.

However, they have not visited the site as they are still grieving.

Sources said that for the procedural formalities to

Pannun inquiry report is a 'positive first step', but not the end, says Eric Garcetti

Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI



The Modi government's announcement of the results of its high-level inquiry into the Pannun case was a "positive first step", but not the end of the U.S.'s expectations of action in the alleged assassination plot, the outgoing U.S. Ambassador, Eric Garcetti, said here on Thursday.

In the first official reaction to the government's statement that it had identified an "individual", believed to be a former Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) official, as responsible for the conspiracy to assassinate Khalistani activist Pannun, Mr. Garcetti welcomed the statement, and said it must now lead to a full prosecution.

"It wasn't just about identifying them, it will be about a prosecution, which they alluded to [in the statement]," Mr. Garcetti told *The Hindu* in an interview before departing office. "I think we were clear, this has to be about accountability and systemic change and never happen again."

The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) has filed a chargesheet in the case in New York.

Asked if the U.S. would now demand the extradition of former intelligence official Vikash Yadav, who

has, however, not been named by an Indian inquiry committee, Mr. Garcetti said that the case would proceed in the United States "independent from anything here in India". He

said that the U.S. wanted India to "take seriously any malfeasance that has happened", and encouraged "Indian counterparts to share information and hold people accountable for provable crimes where they are".

He denied that the Pannun case investigation, raised by the U.S. government at the highest levels, as well as the recent DoJ indictment of the Adani Group for alleged corruption practices, had overshadowed his tenure.

"We've broken more records in two years, and I think we lose sight of what the core of this relationship is and its accomplishments, if we let the clickbait moments overshadow the truth," he said, referring to "record" figures in

trade, defence exercises, visas and students travelling to the U.S.

Mr. Garcetti is expected to step down as the next U.S. President, Donald Trump, will be sworn in on January 20. He said he expected to hear an announcement on high-level contact between the Modi government and the new Trump administration in the next few days.

Mr. Garcetti said he expected the next steps in the agreement for transfer of technology for the GE-414 jet engine deal with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. to be completed in due course.

He denied that any delay in the agreement could be compared to the India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement, where more than 15 years after the original memoranda were signed and a decade since Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Obama announced the deal "was done", no U.S. company set up a nuclear power plant in India, primarily due to legal issues with India's civil liability law.

"This is for India to resolve on its own, but it is the responsibility of the historic agreement we made almost 20 years ago to conclude this agreement, and it is a lost opportunity if we don't," he added.

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Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) invites Expression of interest from Prospective bidders through <https://etender.up.nic.in> for Setting up of 2 GW solar projects on build-own-operate basis on Govt. land parcels spread across Chitrakoot, Jalaun, Jhansi & Lalitpur districts of Uttar Pradesh.

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Sl. No.	e-Tender No.	e-Tender document availability on site	Pre Bid Clarification	Bid Submission End Date & Time	Technical E-bid opening date & Time
1	EOI No: 03 / UPNEDA/ SPV/EOI/2025 dated 17.01.2025	17.01.2025	up to 06:00 P.M	10.02.2025 up to 06:00 P.M.	11.02.2025 at 12:00 P.M.

Director, UPNEDA reserves the right to cancel the EOI without assigning any reason thereof.

DIRECTOR, UPNEDA

SAVE ELECTRICITY FOR YOUR BETTER TOMORROW



be completed, a trust has to be formed by the family, The step is a mandatory requirement for allocation of public land.

Initially, the government had identified three potential sites for the memorial namely Ekta Sthal, Vijay Ghat and Rashtriya

Smriti Sthal.

The site of Dr. Singh's memorial is likely to be right next to the one earmarked for former President Pranab Mukherjee. The Centre had informed the former President's daughter Sharmishtha Mukherjee of its decision of a memorial to Mr. Mukherjee earlier this month following which she had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and thanked him.

Mr. Mukherjee passed away on August 31, 2020. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 2019, by then president Ram Nath Kovind.

A controversy had erupted over the memorial to Dr. Singh when Con-



## LITERARY TRIVIA CHALLENGE

- Which book by Suzanne Collins depicts a dystopian society where children are forced to fight in an arena?
- In which book by Herman Melville does Ishmael recount the tale of a great white whale?
- What pseudonym did J.K. Rowling use to write The Cuckoo's Calling?

Scan QR code or visit [newsth.live/LFL2025QZ](http://newsth.live/LFL2025QZ) take the quiz. Top 3 winners\* every day win gift vouchers.

Answer to yesterday's quiz:

1. Lucy | 2. Harper Lee | 3. Smaug

Yesterday's Winners:

1. Pulkit P, Delhi | 2. Nandana Nair, Trivandrum | 3. Abul Bashir, Ballia





## IN BRIEF



### RBI assessing Tata Sons' plea for de-registration as NBFC

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) again named Tata Sons – the holding company of the salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Group – among the large NBFCs that need to mandatorily list on exchanges but decision on de-registration of the firm as NBFC, which will exempt it from going public, is pending with the central bank. Tata Sons Private Limited, a core investment company, was categorised as NBFC-UL (upper layer) on September 30, 2022. PTI

### Sun to buy Canadian clinical stage biotech firm Antibe

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire 100% stake in Antibe Therapeutics Inc., an Ontario, Canada incorporated clinical-stage biotechnological company developing novel drugs primarily focusing on reducing pain and inflammation. Antibe is under court-observed liquidation proceedings. The decision follows Sun Pharma subsidiary Taro Pharmaceuticals Inc. entering into an agreement with Antibe.

### 'China's export curbs to dent electronics, solar, EVs in India'

Indian firms in the electronics, solar and electric vehicle (EV) sectors are experiencing disruptions due to China's curbs on export of key inputs and machinery, GTRI said. This could be China's response to India's curbs on Chinese investments and visas. "We hope the restrictions go away soon as they will also hurt China," Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) founder Ajay Srivastava said. India's imports from China rose to \$101.73 billion in 2023-24 from \$98.5 billion in 2022-23. PTI

## Axis Bank Q3 net rises 4% to ₹6,304 cr., NII up 9%

### The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Axis Bank Ltd., the third largest private sector bank, said net profit grew 4% to ₹6,304 crore year-on-year.

Operating profit grew 15% to ₹10,534 crore.

Net Interest Income (NII) grew 9% to ₹13,606 crore while Net Interest Margin (NIM) was 3.93%.

Provision and contingencies stood at ₹2,156 crore. Specific loan loss provisions for Q3FY25 were ₹2,185 crore.

The bank holds cumulative provisions (standard plus additional other than NPA) of ₹11,875 crore at the end of Q3FY25, it said.

"We reported healthy operating profit during the quarter and our focus remained on sustainable



profitable growth," said Amitabh Chaudhry, MD & CEO, Axis Bank.

As on December 31, gross NPA and net NPA levels stood at 1.46% and 0.35% respectively as against 1.44% and 0.34% as on September 30.

Recoveries from written off accounts for the quarter were ₹1,300 crore.

Gross slippages stood at ₹5,432 crore, compared with ₹4,443 crore in Q2FY25 and ₹3,715 crore in

Q3FY24.

Recoveries and upgrades from NPAs stood at ₹1,915 crore. The bank wrote off NPAs aggregating to ₹3,133 crore.

As on December 31, provision coverage as a proportion of gross NPAs stood at 76% as compared with 77% as at September 30, 2024 and 78% as at December 31, 2023.

Balance sheet size grew 9% year on year and stood at ₹15,25,712 crore as on December 31.

Total deposits rose 9% year-on-year, on month end basis of which current account deposits grew 8% and saving account deposits remained flat. The share of CASA deposits in total deposits stood at 39%.

Advances rose 9% y-o-y to ₹10,14,564 crore.

LTMindtree reports 7% dip in Q3 net to ₹1,085 crore

### The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

LTMindtree, a Larsen & Toubro-owned tech firm based in Bengaluru, reported a 7.1% year-on-year dip in net profit for the third quarter ended December to ₹1,085.4 crore. Revenue at ₹9,660.9 crore grew 7.1%.

Commenting on revenue growth in dollar terms, Debashis Chatterjee, CEO and MD, LTMindtree, said differentiated AI strategy and new partnerships helped the company record its highest-ever order inflow of \$1.68 billion during the quarter.

## Adani shares rise as Hindenburg disbands

### The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Shares of Adani Group companies on Thursday surged 2.5%-7% in the morning hours before correcting on the BSE as Hindenburg Research founder Nathan Anderson abruptly said he would to disband the short seller.

"The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on and as of the last Ponzi cases we just completed and are sharing with regulators, that day is today," he said in a post on Hindenburg's website.

After market hours, Adani Enterprises Ltd., the holding company closed

with a gain of 1.74% to ₹2,427, Adani Ports 2.3%, Adani Power 2.45%, Adani Energy Solutions 1.54%, Adani Green Energy 3.35%, Adani Total Gas 1.78%, ACC up 0.77%, Ambuja Cement 3.88% and NDTV 9.15%.

The American short-seller had in 2022 accused the Adani group of violation of corporate governance norms and manipulation of its share prices which the group had rejected and termed as incorrect and motivated.

In 2024, it accused SEBI Chairperson Madhab Puri Buch of conflict of interest and proximity to the group for allegedly covering up the Adani case. She had denied all the allegations.

## RIL Q3 net rises 7.3% to ₹18,540 cr.

Reliance Industries Ltd. clocked strong growth in digital services, retail, oil to chemicals (O2C) EBITDA and stable upstream performance; digital services' ARPU rose to ₹203.3; strong local demand and operational flexibility drove O2C results

### The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) consolidated net profit grew 7.3% year-on-year in Q3 to ₹18,540 crore led by strong growth in digital services, retail, O2C (oil to chemicals) EBITDA and stable upstream performance, the company said.

Reliance Industries' consolidated revenue was up 7.7% at ₹2,67,186 crore. "Robust growth in digital services business was led by sustained subscriber addition and consistent improvement in customer engagement metrics," RIL chairman and managing



Festive boost: Retail segment delivered a strong performance, with contribution from all formats. REUTERS

director Mukesh D. Ambani said on Thursday.

"This was well supported by a favorable subscrib-

er mix, with increasing number of users upgrading to 5G networks," he added. "The retail segment de-

livered a strong performance, with contribution from all formats. The business ably capitalised on the pick-up in consumption amid festive demand in the quarter," he said.

The O2C business registered growth despite a prolonged volatile phase in global energy markets. "Refining margins recovered sequentially, with petrochemical deltas exhibiting a mixed trend. Upstream segment continues to play a pivotal role in providing the crucial transition fuel bolstering India's energy security," he said.

Digital services also had a strong EBITDA of ₹16,640 crore, up 17%, thanks to a

higher ARPU of ₹203.3 with the sustained impact of tariff hikes and a better subscriber mix.

Reliance Retail's gross revenue for the quarter grew 8.8% to ₹90,333 crore, driven by several productivity improvement initiatives and increased customer engagement during festive period.

The performance of the O2C business was led by strong domestic demand, higher volumes and operational flexibility. O2C EBITDA at ₹14,402 crore rose 2.4% led by operational flexibility, robust domestic demand and higher volumes. Capital expenditure stood at ₹32,259 crore.

## NCLAT admits Meta, WA pleas on CCI's ₹213-cr. fine

### Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT admitted the petitions filed by Meta Platforms and WhatsApp (WA) against an order passed by fair trade regulator CCI which imposed a penalty of ₹213.14 crore for abuse of market dominance.

"We find the submission raised by the parties needs consideration. We admit both the appeals," said the NCLAT bench which also comprised its Chairperson Justice Ashok Bhushan.

## MARKETS

### MARKET WATCH

	TUESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	77,043	0.42
US Dollar	86.61	-0.24
Gold	81,300	0.62
Brent oil	80.51	-0.37

### NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2427.85	-34.45
Adani Ports	1150.75	21.85
Apollo Hosp	6789.65	97.80
Asian Paints	2215.60	-14.10
Axis Bank	1038.00	-11.20
Bajaj Auto	8581.95	3.95
Bajaj Finserv	1697.35	25.70
Bajaj Finance	7259.75	82.35
Bharat Elec.	276.15	-8.30
Bharti Airtel	1630.20	22.75
BPCL	266.90	-0.10
Britannia Ind	4944.55	-32.45
Cipla	1443.50	-3.70
Coal India	378.85	-4.25
Dr Reddys Lab.	1302.75	-34.45
Eicher Motors	5047.80	-34.10
Grasim	2350.70	33.15
HCL Tech	1792.25	-33.45
HFDC Bank	1652.00	9.00
HFDC Life	641.40	-47.20
Hero MotoCorp	4074.10	-37.80
Hindalco	602.60	-11.05
Hindustan Unilever	2345.00	-28.00
ICICI Bank	1249.10	10.85
IndusInd Bank	975.35	12.90
Infosys	1928.45	-21.20
ITC	432.85	-4.50
JSW Steel	906.75	-2.75
Kotak Bank	1805.55	15.95
L&T	3507.90	6.50
M&M	2980.60	20.35
Maruti Suzuki	12092.30	144.90
NestleIndia	2169.30	-30.35
NTPC	325.50	4.15
ONGC	263.71	5.00
PowerGrid Corp	297.65	-1.00
Reliance Ind	1266.45	14.25
SBI	1513.60	-40.85
State Bank	766.30	-12.60
Shriram Finance	546.80	13.60
Sun Pharma	1763.30	6.45
TataConsumerProd.	937.70	-17.85
Tata Motors	774.35	10.75
Tata Steel	127.81	1.28
TCS	4206.30	-43.30
Tech Mahindra	1687.65	11.70
Titan	3316.90	-6.60
Trent Ltd.	6211.55	-178.70
UltraTech Cement	10636.20	144.55
Wipro	288.05	-4.60

### EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 16

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	86.35	86.67
Euro	88.83	89.16
British Pound	105.38	105.78
Japanese Yen (100)	55.43	55.64
Chinese Yuan	11.78	11.82
Swiss Franc	94.69	95.05
Singapore Dollar	63.15	63.40
Canadian Dollar	60.07	60.30
Malaysian Ringgit	19.17	19.25
Australian Dollar	53.63	53.84

Source: Indian Bank

## Infosys Q3 net increases 11% to ₹6,806 crore

### The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

fit to ₹6,806 crore. Revenue grew 7.5% to ₹41,764 crore. The quarter saw the total contract value of large deal wins at \$2.5 billion.

In his commentary, Salil Parekh, CEO and MD, said

the company saw YoY growth in all verticals and across most geographies.

Buoyed by Q3 performances and positive market outlook, the company revised its FY25 revenue

**OSLO**

Venezuela's embassy in Oslo vandalised, investigation opened



Norway's domestic intelligence service PST said on Thursday it had launched an investigation into the break-in at the Venezuelan embassy in Oslo, where items were stolen and premises vandalised. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Yvan Gil Pinto condemned the act, labelling the perpetrators as "fascist elements". AFP

**BEIJING**

Beijing condemns Marco Rubio's 'unwarranted attacks' on China



Beijing on Thursday condemned "unwarranted attacks" after Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of state Marco Rubio labelled China a "dangerous" adversary to fellow senators during his confirmation hearing. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun urged the U.S. to cease smear campaigns against China. AFP

## Dissanayake secures \$3.7 bn Chinese FDI for oil refinery

The refinery, in southern Hambantota district, will have a capacity of 2,00,000 barrels; China emphasises its 'readiness to work closely' with Sri Lanka in ushering in a new era of development'

**Meera Srinivasan**

COLOMBO

**S**ri Lanka has secured "one of its largest FDIs", President Anura Kumara Dissanayake announced on Thursday, after signing a \$3.7 billion agreement with Sinopec during his ongoing state visit to China.

Following bilateral discussions, President Dissanayake and Chinese President Xi Jinping, pledged to usher in a "new era" of development in bilateral ties, deepen traditional friendship, and advance Belt and Road cooperation, official statements said.

"During my state visit to China, we secured one of our largest foreign direct investments – a \$3.7B agreement with @SinopecNews to build an advanced oil refinery in Hambantota.

This will boost exports, create jobs, and fuel economic growth," Mr. Dissanayake posted on social media platform X. The investment entails, "a state-of-the-art oil refinery with a capacity of 200,000 barrels" in the southern Hambantota district, the Presidential Media Division said in a statement. The refinery is planned adjacent to the Hambantota port that China Merchant Port Holdings controls, on a 99-year lease.

Mr. Dissanayake is on



Closer ties: Anura Kumara Dissanayake with Xi Jinping during a meeting in Beijing on Wednesday. PTI

his second state visit abroad – from January 14 to 17 – following his visit to India in December 2024. Both India and China have expressed their desire to closely work with the leader, who has vowed to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy that will put Sri Lanka's interests first.

Sri Lanka's deal with the state-run Sinopec signals continuity in China's investment strategy in the island nation, after Mr. Dissanayake and his National People's Power captured power in 2024. It also reflects Sri Lanka's preference for investments over loans after its devastating economic crash and sovereign default in 2022.

The Sinopec investment was cleared in November 2023, during the term of Mr. Dissanayake's predecessor Ranil Wickremesinghe. The project appears

to have come in place of an earlier investment proposal linked to a Singapore-based company, in which the family of Member of Parliament S. Jagathrakshan, of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, held stakes. The project ran into a controversy – after Oman, said to be another investor, denied having a role – and was eventually scrapped.

Mr. Dissanayake held discussions with Mr. Xi on Wednesday, at the Great Hall of the People, where he was accorded a red-carpet welcome. "The welcoming ceremony was conducted with great honour, including a ceremonial gun salute," Mr. Dissanayake's office said in a statement. Mr. Xi emphasised China's "readiness to work closely with Sri Lanka in ushering in a new era of development", the joint statement said.

New horizons: A Blue Origin New Glenn rocket lifts off from Space Launch Complex 36 at Kennedy Space Centre on Thursday. AFP

achieve orbit, which they accomplished 13 minutes after lift-off. Mr. Bezos watched from Mission Control, celebrating the milestone with company employees.

Originally scheduled for a Monday launch, the flight was delayed due to ice build-up in critical systems. New Glenn is designed for multiple flights and aims to compete with SpaceX's Falcon 9. Blue Origin plans six to eight launches this year, with the next one anticipated in spring.

Despite setbacks, Mr.

Bezos expressed optimism about the future of space exploration and collaboration within the industry. New Glenn is part of a broader initiative that includes launching Amazon's Project Kuiper satellites and supporting NASA missions.

The rocket's debut was initially intended to send twin spacecraft to Mars for NASA, but that mission will now occur later due to delays. The spacecraft, named Escapade, will study Mars' atmosphere and magnetic environment while orbiting the planet.

Gunned ambushed a convoy in Pakistan's Kurram region on Thursday, targeting vital supplies and medicines despite a ceasefire.

The convoy, consisting of 33 vehicles carrying rice, flour, and cooking oil, was attacked alongside two aid vehicles.

This area has experienced ongoing Sunnis-Shia violence, with over 140 fatalities since November.

Local police reported intense gunfire following the ambush, with some trucks catching fire. Kurram deputy commissioner Muhammad Ashfaq Khan confirmed that "firing was ongoing" outside Thal.

This incident marks the third convoy attempt since a January 1 ceasefire.

Previous attacks had already injured local officials and disrupted aid deliveries amid long-standing sectarian tensions over land disputes in the region.

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**ISLAMABAD**

World Bank plans \$20 bn payout for Pakistan over coming decade



The World Bank plans to loan Pakistan \$20 billion over the next decade to support private sector growth and climate resilience, according to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. This funding aims to address challenges in child nutrition, education, clean energy, and inclusive development, starting in 2026. AFP

**CAPE CANAVERAL**

NASA's stuck astronaut Sunita Williams steps out on spacewalk



NASA astronaut Sunita Williams stepped out for her first spacewalk on Thursday since arriving at the International Space Station over seven months ago. She completed overdue repairs alongside Nick Hague. Ms. Williams and Butch Wilmore, who launched on Boeing's Starliner, won't return until late March or early April. PTI

Trump looks for options to 'preserve' TikTok: Waltz

**Associated Press**  
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump's national security adviser pick, Rep. Mike Waltz, said on Wednesday that the President-elect is exploring options to "preserve" TikTok amid a potential ban.

Mr. Waltz's comments followed reports that Mr. Trump might issue an executive order to delay enforcement of a federal law requiring TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, to divest due to national security concerns.

Mr. Waltz emphasised Mr. Trump's commitment to protecting user data and maintaining TikTok as a platform that benefits many Americans, particularly in reaching younger voters during his campaign.

While Colombo thanked China for its assistance in restructuring its loans to Sri Lanka, China said it would continue to play a positive role in the IMF and maintain friendly communication with other creditors to help Sri Lanka ease its financial difficulties and achieve debt sustainability, the statement said. "The two sides agreed to work toward the early conclusion of a comprehensive free trade agreement in one package in line with the principles of equality, mutual benefit and win-win outcomes," the joint statement said.

Several MoUs aimed at strengthening collaboration in areas such as economy, social development, and industry were inked.

Sri Lanka and China "set a fine example of friendly interactions and mutually beneficial cooperation between countries of different sizes", stated a joint statement issued by the two governments. "The two sides agreed to advance all major signature projects including the Colombo Port City and Hambantota Port integrated development, fully utilize such platforms as the Silk Road Workshop...The two sides were pleased to sign a Belt and Road cooperation plan to upgrade China-Sri Lanka high-quality Belt and Road cooperation."

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Several MoUs aimed at strengthening collaboration

**DOING HIS BIT**

Fritz donates prize money to help people affected by LA wildfires



American tennis player Taylor Fritz said on Thursday he was donating the prize money he earned for his first-round victory at the Australian Open — about \$82,000 — to relief funds to help people affected by the wildfires in the greater Los Angeles area. "I mean, I feel like it's really the least I can do," said U.S. Open finalist Fritz.

**MAKING THE MOST**

'Lucky loser' Lys through to third round at a Slam for the first time



'Lucky loser' Eva Lys made it to the third round of a Grand Slam for the first time. The 23-year-old German defeated France's Varvara Gracheva 6-2, 3-6, 6-4 in the Australian Open on Thursday. Lys, who is ranked 128th, made it to the main draw after 13th seed Anna Kalinskaya withdrew from the tournament due to health issues.

**STALEMATE**

Karelis' strike cancels out Majcen's goal as MCFC-PFC share honours



The Punjab FC-Mumbai City FC ISL contest ended in a 1-1 draw in New Delhi on Thursday. Punjab FC's Luka Majcen broke the deadlock in the added time of the first half before the visitors pulled level in the 58th minute through Nikolaos Karelis. MCFC (24 points) lies sixth while PFC is eighth with 20.

**SAILING THROUGH**

Kho Kho World Cup: India to face Sri Lanka in men's quarterfinal



The Indian men's team beat Bhutan 71-32 in the final group-stage match of the Kho Kho World Cup at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on Thursday. The host will face Sri Lanka, the runner-up in Group C, in the quarterfinal on Friday. The women's side defeated Malaysia 100-20, and will face Bangladesh next.

# Lancers prove too good for Pipers

Brinkman scores a brace for the winners who move up to third spot while the Delhi outfit continues to languish at the bottom

HIL

Y.B. Sarangi

ROURKELA

**T**hierry Brinkman struck a magnificent brace as Vedula Kalinga Lancers decimated Delhi SG Pipers 5-1 in the Hockey India League at the Birla Munda Hockey Stadium here on Thursday.

Lancers' third win improved their position to the third spot, while Pipers, who wasted 11 penalty corners, continued to languish at the bottom after their sixth successive defeat.

Pipers showed promise with 10 circle entries in the opening period before flattening to deceive.

Lancers, who penetrated the D' four times, went up in the 11th minute. Brighton Nicholas Bandurak dashed into the circle and unleashed a shot before spectacularly scoring off the rebound.

Pipers moved the ball well on both flanks and kept the Lancers under pressure with more raids. In the closing moments of the second quarter, Jake Whetton's long pass could not be utilised by Iktidar Ishrat as Pipers struggled with their finishing.

Pipers continued to press and secured three more penalty corners close



Celebration time: Bandurak struck early for Lancers. R.V. MOORTHY

to the half-time, but could not put it past the vigilant Krishan Pathak.

Lancers made good use of the counter-attacks to grab the momentum by getting four goals within nine minutes of the third quarter even as Pipers missed the services of Jarmanpreet Singh at the back.

The Belgian pair of Alex Hendrickx and Arthur van Doren combined well to convert a short corner through a variation as the latter deflected in the former's accurate flick.

Brinkman stole the ball from Varun Kumar and went in to slot it in.

Minutes later, with goalkeeper Pawan grounded, he pounced on another loose

ball to score his second.

Gursahibjit Singh tapped in a cross from the right to make it 5-0.

Corey Weyer's reverse hit following a solo run reduced the margin in the final quarter.

**Women's matches**

The women's league will make its first appearance here on Friday with Pipers taking on JSW Soorma Hockey Club. Odisha Warriors will meet Shachi Rarh Bengal Tigers in the other women's match scheduled here on Sunday.

**The result:**  
Vedula Kalinga Lancers 5  
(Bandurak 11, van Doren 36,  
Brinkman 38, 43, Gursahibjit 45)  
bt Delhi SG Pipers 1 (Weyer 46).

# Warriors walk away with a win after tense shoot-out

Santdeep Dey

RANCHI

The Shachi Rarh Bengal Tigers will be kicking itself after losing 2-3 to Odisha Warriors in the first shoot-out of the Women's Hockey India League at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium here. The sides were tied 1-1 at the end of regulation time.

Although the Tigers ran the Warriors ragged for a major part of the day, their opponents walked away with two of the three points as Freeke Moes, Sonika, and Kaitlin Nobbs found the goal, and Jocelyn Bartram, the busier of the two keepers on Thursday, played hero in the shoot-off.

**Nowhere to be found**  
In fact, the Warriors were nowhere to be found in the first six minutes. The side had started without Victoria Sause, the Paris 2024 bronze medallist, after the Argentine sustained a minor injury the previous night.

But then out of nowhere,



Rock-solid: Bartram denied Tigers any leeway. K.R. DEEPAK

ere, in the 8th minute, Sause, who had just come on as a rolling substitute, showed her teammates what they were missing. The experienced midfielder linked up with Baljeet Kaur, waiting patiently at the far post, and before Jennifer Rizzo could realise, the 23-year-old Indian guided the ball home for the second time this season.

The Tigers got back to the drawing board, and Beauty Dung Dung got on the scoresheet moments after resumption in the second quarter.

Neha Goyal and Co. were spared the blushes after they managed to ward off Udit Duhan, who had a swipe at goal after the Warriors conceded a penalty corner for having six foreigners on the turf.

Rutuja Pisal threatened to disturb the equilibrium with a minute to go, having a shy at goal with a loose ball on offer, but Grace O'Hanlon was quick to snuff it out.

**The result:** Shachi Rarh Bengal Tigers 1 (Beauty 16) drew with Odisha Warriors 1 (Baljeet 8) (Warriors bt Tigers 3-2 in shoot-out).

# Tien stuns Medvedev in an epic encounter

## AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agence France-Presse

MELBOURNE

Last year's runner-up Daniil Medvedev was knocked out in the second round early on Friday morning by 19-year-old qualifier Learner Tien in a massive Melbourne shock.

In his debut Australian Open, the American ranked 121, stunned the World No. 5 6-3, 7-6(4), 6-7(8), 1-6, 7-6 [10-7] in a nail-biter and faces France's Corentin Moutet in the next round.

With the time ticking towards 3.00 a.m. local time, the left-handed Californian Tien soaked up the applause at the Margaret Court Arena after the biggest win of his young career.

**Marathon battle**

The two players battled it out for a grueling four hours and 48 minutes in a contest that had a short rain break during the closing stages. Tien had defeated Argentina's Camilo Ugo Carabelli in five sets in the first round for his maiden victory at a Grand Slam in his fourth attempt.

It was a meek exit for Russia's former World No. 1 Medvedev, who has lost three of the last four finals

## Day five in numbers

1

**Tien** (19y 55d) becomes the youngest American man to reach the third round of a Slam since Donald Young (18y 48d) at the 2007 US Open

3

**Tien** is just the third man (after Alcaraz and Rune) born in the 2000s to beat a top-5 player at a Major before turning 20

## Friday's picks

**Men** 2-Zverev vs Farnley, 3-Alcaraz vs THIRD ROUND vs Baena, 14-Humbert vs Fils

**Women** 1-Sabalenka vs Tauson, 3-Gauff vs Fernandez, 7-Pegula vs Danilovic, 11-Badosa vs Kostyuk, Osaka vs Bencic

4

**Monfils** is the fourth oldest man (38y 147d) to reach the third round in Melbourne since 1988

**Feliciano Lopez** 39y 154d

**Ivo Karlovic** 38y 334d

**Roger Federer** 38y 178d

9

**Sinner** is the youngest player to register nine consecutive men's singles wins at the Australian Open since Djokovic (between 2008 and 2009)

24

**Swiatek** has registered 24 bagels at Slams since the start of 2020. Sabalenka, with nine, is second

30

**Navarro** has played the most three-set matches (30) on the WTA Tour since the start of the 2024 season

39

**Monfils** now has the third most Grand Slam third-round appearances (tied with Cilic) among active players, after Djokovic (72) and Wawrinka (42)

50

**Rybakina** becomes only the fifth woman (after Swiatek, Sabalenka, Gauff, and Jabeur) to win 50 Major main draw singles matches since 2020

## TOP RESULTS

**Men: Second round:** 1-Sinner (Ita) bt Schoolkate (Aus) 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-3; Kecmanovic (Srb) bt 18-Hurkacz (Pol) 6-4, 6-4, 6-2; 13-Rune (Den) bt Berrettini (Ita) 7-6(6), 2-6, 6-3, 7-6(6); 19-Khachanov (Rus) bt Diallo (Can) 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-3, 8-De Minaur (Aus) bt Boyer (Ita) 6-2, 6-4, 6-3; 4-Fritz (USA) bt Garin (Chi) 6-2, 6-1, 6-0; Monfils (Fra) bt Almagro (Ger) 7-5, 6-3, 7-6(3); 21-Shelton (USA) bt Busta (Esp) 6-3, 6-3, 6-7(4), 6-4; 16-Musetti (Ita) bt Shapovalov (Can) 7-6(3), 7-6(6), 2-6; Sonego (Ita) bt Fonseca (Bra) 6-7(6), 6-3, 6-1, 6-3, 6-3; Marozsan (Hun) bt 17-Tiafoe (USA) 6-7(3), 6-4, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1; Tien (USA) bt 5-Medvedev (Rus) 6-3, 7-6(4), 6-7(8), 1-6, 7-6 [10-7].

**Doubles: First round:** Balaji (Ind) & Reyes-Varela (Mex) Haase (Ned) & Nedovyesov (Kaz) 6-4, 6-3; Heiloavaara (Fin) & Patten (GBR) bt Bollipalli (Ind) & Seggerman (USA) 7-6(5), 6-1.

**Women: Second round:** 6-Rybakina (Kaz) bt Jovic (USA) 6-0, 6-3; 19-Keys (USA) bt Ruse (Rou) 7-6(1), 2-6, 7-5; 10-Collins (USA) bt Avila (Aus) 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-2; 15-Haddad Maia (Bra) bt Andreeva (Rus) 6-2, 6-3.

Kudermets (Rus) bt 22-Boulter (GBr) 7-6(3), 2-6, 6-2; 28-Svitilina (Ukr) bt Dolehide (USA) 6-1, 6-4; 8-Navarro (USA) bt Xiyu (Chn) 6-3, 3-6, 6-4; Jabeur (Tun) bt Camila Osorio (Col) 7-5, 6-3; 24-Putintseva (Kaz) bt Shuai (Chn) 6-2, 6-1; 9-Kasatkina (Rus) bt Raducanu (GBr) bt Anisimova (USA) 6-3, 7-5; 2-Swiatek (Pol) bt Sramkova (Svk) 6-0, 6-2.

# Kotak is India's batting coach for England series

## Sports Bureau

Former Saurashtra batter Sitanshu Kotak has been appointed as India's batting coach ahead of the upcoming limited-overs series against England and the ICC Champions Trophy next month on Thursday.

Kotak's appointment comes after a review conducted by the Board of

Control for Cricket in India following back-to-back Test series losses to New Zealand (0-3 at home) and Australia (1-3 away).

The Indian batters' performance came under scrutiny in both contests and cost the team the chance to qualify for the World Test Championship Final to be held in Lord's later this year.

Kotak's appointment comes after a review conducted by the Board of

the Women's Premier League (WPL) will be held at four venues (Vadodara, Bengaluru, Lucknow and Mumbai) from February 14 to March 15

at Melbourne Park, including to Jannik Sinner in 2024. World No.1 and defending champion Sinner roared back to surge into the third round even as Iga Swiatek set up a showdown with Emma Raducanu.

Sinner dropped a set for the first time in 14 matches when he lost the opener to Australian wildcard Tristan Schoolkate.

Taylor Fritz was an emphatic winner in his pursuit of a maiden Major title,

but exciting 18-year-old Joao Fonseca was edged out in a five-set thriller.

Sinner dropped a set for the first time in 14 matches when he lost the opener to Australian wildcard Tristan Schoolkate.

But he wrested back control after a slow start to go through 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-3,

against the World No. 173 at a cool and breezy Rod Laver Arena. It was Sinner's 16th consecutive win – an ominous sign for next opponent Marcos Giron.

Fritz swept through to a third-round clash against Gael Monfils, thrashing Chilean qualifier Cristian Garin 6-2, 6-1, 6-0.

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## IN BRIEF



## Manu, Vinesh and Avani nominated for BBC award

Paris Olympics double medallist Manu Bhaker, left in pic., two-time Paralympics champion Avani Lekhara and ace wrestler Vinesh Phogat, right in pic., are among five athletes nominated for the BBC 'Indian Sportswoman of the Year' award. Indian cricket team vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and ace golfer Aditi Ashok are the two others shortlisted for the honour by an eminent jury of sports journalists and writers. The winner will be decided by public voting.

## Former judge Arun Mishra appointed BCCI Ombudsman

Former Supreme Court judge, Justice Arun Mishra (retd), has been appointed as the Ombudsman of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). He will also function as the BCCI Ethics Officer.



## IWL – Nita FA fights back to hold Sethu FC

One of the two promoted teams, Nita Football Academy pulled off an impressive 2-2 draw, after being down by two goals, against former champion Sethu FC in the Indian Women's League at the Nehru Stadium, Chennai, on Thursday.

**The result:** Sethu FC 2 (Malavika 6, 12) drew with Nita FA 2 (Gifty Acheampong 27, Jabamani Tudu 74).

## Arsenal reignites title hopes; Isak stars for Newcastle

Arsenal came from behind to beat Tottenham 2-1 and reignite its Premier League title challenge on Wednesday as Alexander Isak fired Newcastle into top four.

**The results:** Everton 0 lost to Aston Villa 1 (Watkins 51); Leicester 0 lost to Crystal Palace 2 (Mateta 52, Guehi 78); Newcastle 3 (Isak 34, 57, Gordon 74) bt Wolves 0; Arsenal 2 (Solanke 40-og, Troxsell 44) bt Tottenham 1 (Son 25).

## LIVE TELECAST

**Pakistan vs West Indies:** 1st Test, day 1, FanCode, 11 a.m.

**Kho-Kho World Cup:** Quarterfinals, SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 11.45 a.m. onwards.

**Australian Open:** Evening session, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.

**I-League:** Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2 & 7 p.m.

**ISL:** Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.

**Hockey:** HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8.15 p.m.

**Australian Open:** Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Saturday).

## Maaya enters semifinals

## Sports Bureau

Maaya Rajeshwaran defeated qualifier Antonina Sushkova of Ukraine 2-6, 6-2, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the ITF junior tennis tournament at the CLTA Complex in Chandigarh on Thursday.

**The results:** U-18 quarterfinals: Boys: Donghyun Hwang (Kor) bt Emanuel Ivanisevic (Cro) 6-2, 6-4; Erasyl Bakhtiyar (Kaz) bt Alexey Shibaev 6-1, 6-3; Rustan Katsiukevich bt Artem Bogomolov 6-4, 2-6, 6-1; Roman Kharlamov bt Kerem Yilmaz (Tur) 7-5, 6-1.

**Girls:** Daria Koreshkova bt Miku Kitakova 6-2, 6-4; Masa Jankovic (Srb) bt Alibna Kakenova (Kaz) 6-2, 6-4; Maaya Rajeshwaran bt Antonina Sushkova (Ukr) 6-2, 6-2, 6-4; Polina Kuharenko bt Yuka Naito (Jpn) 6-1, 7-5.

## Adopt one sport each: Sports Minister Mandaviya to corporates

## Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union Sports Minister, Mansukh Mandaviya, asked corporates to adopt one sport each in an interaction with about 40 corporates here on Thursday.

Explaining the country's vision to be a top-five sports power in the world by 2047, Mandaviya stressed the critical role of public-private partnership for sustainable sports infrastructure and talent development.

"Each corporate entity should focus on a single sport to ensure dedicated attention and optimal resource allocation," the Sports Minister said.

He also asked the corporates to contribute towards



**Clarion call:** Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya with some of the corporate leaders on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

upgrading sports facilities in district-level schools, apart from developing Olympic training centres, sports academies, and also be actively involved in the organisation of nation-level leagues in disciplines that are yet to take up such ventures.

"The Sports Minister wanted to understand our view and how to take In-

dian sports forward. The government is already doing a lot of incredible work in sport. The corporates are also doing their bit. The idea is to collaborate and improve our medal tally in the 2036 Olympics," said Parth Jindal, the managing director of JSW Sports.

"Development of sports in the rural areas is the

need of the hour. A lot of raw talent resides in more than six lakh villages. They need to be nurtured and motivated to play sports. We will have further dialogue with officials to do our best for rural sports," said P.K. Sinha, chairman of ICICI Bank.

"Engaging young generation to play sports is of great importance, as the kids are spending many hours on the mobile. If we want to have a healthier and fitter generation, we have to get to the towns where sports is still not a priority. We are present in 14 States and 27 cities, and would like to develop sports infrastructure at the district level," said Puneet Dalmia, the managing director of Dalmia Cement.

## Shardul Vihan and Bhavya Tripathi triumph in trap

## SHOOTING

Kamesh Srinivasan

NEW DELHI



**The toppers:** Shardul and Bhavya, the men's and women's trap champions. KAMESH SRINIVASAN



Vihan 45(116); 2. Lakshay Sheoran 42(121); 3. Prithviraj Tondaiman 34(121).

**Juniors:** 1. Vinay Pratap Singh 43(12); 2. Shardul Vihan 41(116); 3. Zuhair Khan 117(32).

**Women:** 1. Bhavya Tripathi 41(9); 2. Sabeera Haris 41(8); 3. Shrestha Sisodiya 32(109).

**Juniors:** 1. Shrestha Sisodiya 44(109); 2. Sabeera Haris 41(111); 3. Aashima Ahlawat 31(108).

**The results:** Men: 1. Shardul

AN-ND-E

## Aggressive Sindhu leads the Indian charge into the quarterfinals

Satwik and Chirag hit a minor road bump before beating Mitsuhashi and Okamura in the second round; Kiran continues his impressive run

## BADMINTON

**Uthra Ganeshan**  
NEW DELHI

In her first round match, P.V. Sindhu was a diva turning up to put on a show. On Thursday, it was all business as the Indian, all focus and sans all the adornment, made light work of Manami Suizu in the second round to lead the Indian charge into the quarterfinals of the India Open badminton tournament at the Indira Gandhi Stadium here.

## Dominant

The disappointment of first-round exits among the Indian men was offset not just with Sindhu's dominating win but also Kiran George's impressive run in the competition and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's comeback victory to stay on course to go one better on their runner-up performance last year.



Easing through: Sindhu made light work of Manami's challenge. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Former champion Sindhu showed signs of her old aggressive self, taking control of the match from the word go and not allowing Manami any space to either play her shots or recover from the barrage of smashes.

While she managed a

semblance of a fight in the first game, there was little Manami could do in the second with Sindhu leading by a massive 11 points at one stage.

Playing only her second tournament since the Paris Olympics, Sindhu thrashed her Japanese opponent 21-

15, 21-13 in 45 minutes to advance into the last eight, setting up a clash against Grigoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia.

Satwik-Chirag, however, had a little stutter losing the opening game against the Japanese pair of Kenya Mitsuhashi and Hiroki

Okamura before regrouping to completely outplay their opponents in the next two to wrap up 20-22, 21-14, 21-16 in 72 minutes.

The back-court body smashes down the middle and forcing the Japanese to err at the net with soft drops were a delight to watch. "We should have wrapped it up in straight games like last year (at the Asia Team Championships) but we made some easy errors and allowed them to win but a win is a win," the 2022 champions admitted.

Kiran, meanwhile, continued his dream run with a 22-20, 21-13 win against Frenchman Alex Lanier in the Super 750 event, saving six game points and reeling off eight straight to go from 14-20 to 22-20 in the opening game. He will be up against Hong Yang Weng of China next.

## Important Results (Round 2):

**Men:** Chou Tien Chen (Tpe) bt Lu Guang Zu (Chn) 21-15, 12-21, 21-13; Lee Cheuk Yiu (Hkg) bt Toma Junior Popov (Fra) 14-21, 21-18, 22-20; Kiran George (Ind)

bt Alex Lanier (Fra) 22-20, 21-13; Viktor Axelsen (Den) bt Jia Heng Jason (Sin) 21-11, 21-14.

**Doubles:** Liang Wei Keng & Wang Chang (Chn) bt Ben Lane & Sean Vendy (Eng) 21-15, 24-22; Aaron Chia & Soh Wooi Yik (Mas) bt Xie Hao Nan & Zeng Wei Han (Chn) 21-10, 21-18; Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty (Ind) bt Kenya Mitsuhashi & Hiroki Okamura (Jpn) 20-22, 21-14, 21-16.

**Women:** An Se Young (Kor) bt Ratchanok Intanon (Tha) 21-15, 21-8; Yeo Jin Min (Sgp) bt Wen Chi Hsu (Tpe) 21-12, 19-21, 21-19; Gregoria Mariska Tunjung (Inda) bt Natsuki Nidaira (Jpn) 21-12, 24-22; PV Sindhu (Ind) bt Manami Suizu (Jpn) 21-15, 21-13; Tomoka Miyazaki (Jpn) bt Anupama Upadhyaya 21-6, 21-9.

**Doubles:** Baek Ha Na & Lee So Hee (Kor) bt Rutuparna Panda & Swetaparna Panda (Ind) 21-6, 21-7; Yuki Fukushima & Mayu Matsumoto (Jpn) bt Ashwini Ponnappa & Tanisha Crasto (Ind) 21-9, 23-21. **Mixed doubles:** Goh Soon Huat & Lai Shevon Jamie (Mas) bt Yuta Watanabe & Maya Taguchi (Jpn) 21-10, 19-21, 21-16; Hiroki Midorikawa & Natsu Saito (Upn) bt Dhruv Kapila & Tanisha Crasto (Ind) 21-18, 21-17; Yang Po-Hsuan & Hu Ling Fang (Tpe) bt Ashith Surya & Amrutha Pramuthesh (Ind) 21-8, 21-11.

## It's important that I keep my foot on the pedal and not take it off: Padikkal

## HAZARE TROPHY

**S. Dipak Ragav**  
VADODARA

Days after returning from the Test tour to Australia, Devdutt Padikkal seamlessly switched into white-ball mode and smashed a match-winning century for Karnataka against Baroda in the quarterfinals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

He followed it up with another crucial 86 against defending champion Haryana to guide his side home to the summit clash. It was his seventh consecutive 50-plus score in List-A cricket, a format Padikkal relives in.

The left-hander averages 82.52, the best in the world among players with more than 2000 runs.

"I enjoy batting in one-dayers because you have to adapt throughout the innings," Padikkal told *The Hindu* recently. "You play the first 10 overs in the PowerPlay, then move out of it, and then again have a different scenario in the end."

"I enjoy adapting and



**Best format:** Padikkal says adapting throughout the innings makes one-dayers enjoyable. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

changing my game as and when required. So that's why, I guess, this is one of the best formats for me."

The current streak is a continuation of a purple patch that started over a

year ago that helped Padikkal become India's 314th Test cricketer when he featured against England in Dharamshala in March 2024.

Though he played only

one more Test, the first game against the Aussies in Perth in November, Padikkal is enjoying this phase of his career.

"To be honest, everyone has the skill and talent to make it big at this level, but it's all about that hunger... how badly you want it."

"I am very motivated and looking forward to whatever is left of this season," he said about being in a happy space.

"Being part of the Test squad drives you even further to be there and continue to push those limits, and that's all I'm going to be looking to do this season. It's important that I keep my foot on the pedal and not take it off."

At 24, Padikkal has already seen the highs and lows of being a professional cricketer and might be hitting his groove at the right time.

"I have had a lot of experience at such a young age. It's good that I am in my mid-20s, and at a stage where I understand my game better. It's going to be a really exciting time ahead for me," Padikkal signed off.

## Miyazaki gets the better of Riya



**On the move:** Miyazaki in action against Riya. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

## TENNIS

**Kamesh Srinivasan**

NEW DELHI

**The results: Pre-quarterfinals:** Darja Semenistaeva bt Ekaterina Maklakova 6-2, 6-0; Anastasia Tikhonova bt Naho Sato 7-6(6), 3-6, 6-2; Mai Kozyreva bt Priska Nugroho 6-2, 6-3; Dalila Jakupovic bt Alevtina Ibragimova 6-1, 6-0; Yuriko Miyazaki bt Riya Bhatia 6-4, 4-6, 6-1; Laura Samson bt Tina Smith 6-4, 7-5; Panna Udvardy bt Mei Yamaguchi 2-6, 7-5, 6-3.

**Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Maria Kozyreva & Tikhonova bt Alicia Barnett & Prarthana Thombare 7-5, 6-3; Jessie Aney & Jessica Failla bt Semenistaeva & Udvardy 6-4, 6-4; Riya Bhatia & Vaidehi Chaudhari bt Maria Ramirez & Ekaterina Yashina 4-6, 6-3, [10-5]; Naiktha Bains & Ankita Raina bt Jakupovic & Laura Pigossi 6-2, 3-6, [10-3].

Riya managed to pull off the second set with an ace, but that was after squandering a 4-1 lead. Later, she marched into the doubles semifinals with Vaidehi Chaudhari.

# Shami's return adds much-missed firepower to India's pace arsenal

The 34-year-old quick reintegrated into the national squad, after a long rehabilitation following an injury during the 2023 World Cup, would be key to the team's fortunes as it looks to bounce back following the shocking reverses in the Test arena

**R. Kaushik**

**I**magine this – Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami sharing the new ball, Mohammed Siraj slotting in as first-change. It's an attack that has sent shivers down the spines of the oppositions in the past, an attack that, had it been in place, could have extended India's lease over the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

There is no place in competitive sport – in anything, for that matter – for ifs and buts. Shami wasn't available for India's five-Test tour of Australia, plain and simple. To second-guess how India would have fared had the 34-year-old quick, who occupied plenty of mind-space within the Australian camp in the lead-up to that face-off, is fantastic, but that's what it will remain – a fantasy.

While India were battling manfully to overcome repeated batting collapses, while Bumrah was running rings around Pat Cummins' men and Siraj was toiling away without commensurate regard, Shami was back in India, taking tentative, gingerly steps towards a comeback to competitive cricket.

Exactly 360 days after turning up for his country in the heart-breaking loss to Australia in the final of the 50-over World Cup in Ahmedabad, the exceptional right-arm quick played his first meaningful outing since November 2023, for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy against Madhya Pradesh.

As Shami got through one game, then another, and a few T20 games for his State in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy tournament, optimism took root that he would join the national team at some stage in the Antipodes, potentially from the Boxing Day Test onwards.

#### No rushing back

Rohit Sharma was asked more than once about Shami's probable link-up with the team, and the captain provided the medical update to the extent he could. The underlying message was that Shami had picked up swelling in the knee, that there was no guarantee that he could survive the rigours of one Test, let alone two, and that India were not going to rush him back into play unless they were more than 100% sure – how's that possible, right? – that he wouldn't pull up short in the middle of a game.

Shami's reintegration with active cricket spilled over to the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy, where he played three games for Bengal. The BCCI's sports science/medical team was satisfied that he was ripe to rejoin the international fray, hence his inclusion in the Indian squad for the five Twenty20 Internationals at home against England starting next week.

The leadership group will be hoping that is just the start of the journey. By and in themselves, these five games don't have serious import from a larger perspective. The next T20 World Cup is more than a year away, this is no audition, there are no statements to make and eyes to catch with an immediate target to meet.

Of course, for those involved in battle – and several of them are primarily T20 specialists – the stakes are huge, the internal pressure to deliver immense, considering the scramble for places and the stiff competition. For the commercial stakeholders, there is the prospect of a terrific financial windfall to target. Oh, and for Shami, there is the small matter of shaking off the cobwebs as larger, longer and more arduous challenges loom.

#### Striking a fear among the Aussies

At the risk of sounding repetitive, Australia were truly worried about Shami, and heaved a collective sigh of huge relief when they realised that he would play no part in any of the five Tests. They rate him almost as highly as Bumrah, which is stratospheric, and were fearful of the potential for damage this new-ball pairing possesses.

Almost every day, players privately sought updates on Shami's status and sported little smiles when they were informed that he was some way away from peak fitness.

In those same private conversations, they spoke of how much of a handful Shami would have been on the spicy pitches that have become the norm in Test cricket in Australia over the last three years or so.

They couldn't stop gushing about his wrist, about his control over the seam, about his ability to make the ball talk at pace. India couldn't afford to do the same in public for reasons of form and propriety, but there is no disputing the



K. MURALI KUMAR

fact that both Rohit and Bumrah, who led in two Tests in the former's absence, missed Shami. Badly.

Internationally, the 20-over game isn't Shami's most successful format, nor has he been in the T20I fray for a long time now. His last such outing for India was in the semifinal of the World Cup in November 2022 against England. He has figured in only 23 games since his international debut more than a decade back, so there is a certain poignancy in the slam-bang version being the vehicle for his international relaunch. But it's also the best format, in a way, to ease back into country vs country battle. Four overs an evening of bowling, another 16 overs on the field, with travel thrown in, should give a clearer picture of how well his body holds up, at what stage the rehabilitation process is.

If everything goes to plan, Shami will automatically be drafted into the ODI team for the three matches against England, leading into the Champions Trophy next month. India's first game is against Bangladesh in Dubai on February 20.

There are question marks over Bumrah's availability for at least the league phase of that competition, if not the entire event itself, as he recovers from the back spasms that struck him down in the Sydney Test. India will need Shami more than ever before in that instance, though having shown enormous patience and placed their faith in the process, they will be in no rush to unleash him if they entertain even the most minuscule of doubts.

Such is the pre-eminent place the Indian Premier League holds in the calendar that Shami's next foray after the Champions Trophy, assuming he gets there and comes out of it unscathed, will be in that tournament for his new franchise, last year's finalists Sunrisers Hyderabad.

But fans of the Indian team will have already earmarked the five-Test series in England as the more relevant episode when India begin their campaign in the next World Test Championship cycle.

If India can have their three top pacers fit and firing for those games in England, with back-up in the form of Akash Deep



and Prasidh Krishna and potentially Nitish Kumar Reddy, they will be in with a shout against an attack-minded English batting line-up emboldened further by the flattening out of pitches at home.

#### Surfaces don't matter

Like Bumrah, Shami is gifted enough to take the surfaces out of the equation. His 229 Test wickets haven't come about by accident, though in England, he hasn't been as effective as one might expect. Twelve Tests against England have produced only 34 wickets at a high average of 42.14; including the two WTC finals against New Zealand (2021) and Australia (2023) respectively, he has 42 wickets in 14 games, average 40.50, strike-rate 69.2. Shami is far, far better than these numbers would indicate and he will be keen to set the record straight in what is certain to be his last Test tour of England.

Some might say Shami hasn't quite delivered on the promise that accompanied his maiden Test series, at home against West Indies in November 2013. He was desperately unlucky not to

be named the Player-of-the-Match on debut when, in an outstanding exhibition of reverse seam (as opposed to reverse swing) bowling, he finished with match figures of nine for 118 at Eden Gardens. That honour went to fellow debutant Rohit, who walked in with India on 82 for four and went on to score a magical 177.

In Shami's defence, though, his has been a career blighted by injuries more than most fast bowlers' have been. Shami won't use that as an excuse. He needn't; after all, 229 wickets from 64 Tests, to go with 195 from 101 ODIs, are far from shabby numbers.

The irony now of fronting up as the potential main man in the Emirates will not be lost on Shami. At the start of the home 50-over World Cup, Shami wasn't in the scheme of things of the team management, which decided that Shardul Thakur's presence in the XI would deepen their batting. It wasn't until Hardik Pandya suffered a tournament-ending ankle injury in the fourth outing, against Bangladesh in Pune, that they turned to Shami. Or rather, they were forced to turn to Shami.

The veteran showed up the folly of benching him in the early games with a wicket with his first ball of the World Cup on his way to the first (against New Zealand) of three five-wicket hauls in seven outings.

Shami was the leading wicket-taker of the World Cup with 24 sticks at the ridiculous average of 10.70 and an economy of 5.26 which was only topped by two others in the list of the top eight wicket-takers - teammates Bumrah (20 wickets) with 4.06 and left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja (16 wickets) with 4.25.

Shami might flirt with the temptation of bowling within himself in the England T20Is, but that won't be to anyone's benefit. India need him to go at full tilt, if only to convince themselves that he will survive a maximum of five 50-over games if they do make it to the final of the Champions Trophy.

They can't afford a wait-and-watch policy because the 15 for the ICC event will have to be named even before the start of the series against England, but it's difficult at this stage to see Shami not featuring in that 15.

#### THE GIST

▼ The pacer, who played his first meaningful outing since November 2023 for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy, is part of the T20I squad set to take on England

▼ If everything goes to plan, Shami should be automatically be drafted into the ODI team for the three matches against England, leading into the Champions Trophy next month

▼ Though his career has been blighted by regular injuries, Shami's tally of 229 wickets from 64 Tests and 195 from 101 ODIs, are far from shabby

## SCIENCE

# Long overdue, short-term regimen for TB set to be a game changer

Shorter regimens have for long been the need of the hour. The most important and obvious advantages of the regimens are the duration of treatment, improved ability to complete treatment, and less economic burden. These were envisaged as all-oral regimens with a low overall pill burden

**Chapal Mehra**  
**Lancelot Pinto**

M ultidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a strain of the TB disease in which the infecting tuberculosis germs are resistant to the effects of rifampicin and isoniazid, two of the most potent drugs available for TB treatment. Being infected with such TB strains carries up to a 30-40% risk of death, making MDR-TB a serious, life-threatening illness. India bears a significant burden of TB and has a growing burden of MDR-TB; of the 1,75,923 persons reported to the World Health Organization in 2023, 27% were from India.

For years, the evolution of such resistant germs was largely attributed to the lack of adherence to TB treatment and misuse of TB drugs, especially through improper drug regimens, both of which aid the selection of mutant strains of the bacterium. This is common in India, and often the duration of treatment (6 months) and the number of drugs (typically 4 at the start of treatment) made treatment adherence for drug-sensitive (DS) TB challenging. It is therefore ironic that until recently, the treatment of DR TB involved even more drugs (at least five), which were far more toxic than drugs used for drug-sensitive TB, for a longer duration (18 months or more). It is not surprising then that TB-affected communities globally have for years been advocating and asking for shorter, less toxic treatments, but were often ignored.

The health research and delivery system systematically deprioritised these demands. Perhaps it was because TB-affected populations lived largely in the Global South. Physicians were taught to advise patients to ignore these side effects and have often gaslighted patients for complaining about these side-effects. Intramuscular injections were prescribed to be taken daily, leading to painful swellings, making even being seated a challenge, making work, school, and leisure constantly painful and often impossible. Hearing loss, a side effect of injectables, was dismissed with "better deaf than dead." Skin discolouration, a common adverse effect of clofazimine added to the TB stigma but was termed a "minor adverse effect," without really appreciating what the affected individual went through.

Menstrual cycles were disrupted, appetites were lost and people suffered dealing with severe depression and suicidal ideation. All were termed secondary to medications, which they



A tuberculosis patient at a hospital in Hyderabad. AP

had to endure for at least 18 months.

#### Shorter regimens

Shorter regimens have for long been the need of the hour. The most important and obvious advantages of the regimens are the duration of treatment, improved ability to complete treatment, and hopefully less economic burden. These were envisaged as all-oral regimens with a low overall pill burden.

Among the most recent of these is the BPaL regimen, which has three oral drugs – bedaquiline, pretomanid and linezolid (BPaL/M has four drugs, along with moxifloxacin) – prescribed for six months. The Nix-TB trial proved the efficacy of the regimen in 109 patients enrolled in three South African centres. The ZeNix trial, conducted across four countries (South Africa, Georgia, Moldova, and Russia,) enrolled 181 participants and found that a lower dose of linezolid (600 mg once a day instead of twice) was better tolerated with similar outcomes.

While these new regimens can be game changers, caveats need to be kept in mind. First, adherence needs to be closely monitored, as bedaquiline resistance has been reported in a high proportion among those failing treatment. Several phone-based and digital devices have been used to improve adherence, in addition to counselling, and these need to be an integral part of treatment. Currently, these are missing in

#### While new regimens can be game changers, adherence must be monitored, as bedaquiline resistance has been reported in a high proportion among those failing treatment

high-burden countries. Second, drug-susceptibility testing needs to be widely accessible to know whether the regimen is appropriate for a given patient. We should not treat these as silver bullets to be used indiscriminately. It only makes sense to prescribe a drug when one is certain that the drug works, and this is likely to get more relevant as treatment is widely prescribed.

There is also the development of antimicrobial resistance that is an inevitable consequence of such use in a subset of patients. Finally, shorter regimens are not devoid of adverse effects. Linezolid is notorious for causing disabling sensory neuropathy in a proportion of patients, and such adverse effects need to be watched for, and alternate regimens clearly defined for those who may not tolerate these regimens. We also must evaluate these regimens on the basis of individual experience and adverse events that affect the quality of the affected individual during and post treatment.

#### Preparedness is key

The other key issue is health system

preparedness, which remains low. Training of physicians in how to manage such situations has to be a part of the rollout. If we truly want to prevent MDR-TB, we must arrest the spread. This can only be achieved by universal molecular diagnostics to detect drug-resistant TB at an early stage.

Since a majority of patients with TB, access private healthcare as their first point of contact, we need large-scale efficient, and reliable private-public partnerships to ensure access to these regimens while preventing their abuse by making them indiscriminately available.

Shorter regimens are likely to be more expensive for the programme. However, continuing inexpensive but toxic regimens would be myopic and will cause patient suffering, which often leads to them giving up.

While the government must be lauded for taking this step forward to roll out the new regimens, even if this move was delayed, preparedness, community education, and supportive services such as counselling and side effects management are key.

While new regimens are critical, it is also important not to forget the critical role of stigma reduction, economic and nutritional support, and better living environments for TB-affected populations.

TB can be cured more quickly, but are we doing enough to prevent it? New regimens with only a focus on pill burden should not make us overlook the structural social, economic, and gender determinants in TB. Nor should we forget what we need is person-centred, high-quality care that informs, engages, and works with the affected individual and their families to address why some groups get TB in larger proportions and why some others give up on treatment.

A shorter regimen is transformative but not the answer to all the issues that persist in TB.

Keeping in mind many such intervening factors, systems need to think of a more person-centred view of care and delivery. Under this, a quick rollout, with systemic preparedness and the above caveats, would help clinicians offer more humane treatment, cure patients faster, and allow them to return to their lives without huge disruptions. The answer to controlling TB, though, is not new regimens alone but a broader systemic transformation that may still be missing.

(Chapal Mehra is an independent public health consultant: chapal@piconsulting.in; Lancelot Pinto is a consultant pulmonologist and an epidemiologist at P.D. Hinduja National Hospital, Mumbai: lance.pinto@gmail.com)

#### THE GIST

The evolution of resistant germs was largely attributed to lack of adherence to TB treatment and misuse of drugs, especially through improper regimens, both of which aid the selection of mutant strains of the bacterium

TB-affected communities have been seeking less toxic treatments. These demands were systematically deprioritised. Physicians were taught to advise patients to ignore side effects. Painful treatments were prescribed to be taken daily, making work, school, and leisure painful and often impossible

Among the most recent of shorter regimens is the BPaL regimen, which has three oral drugs – bedaquiline, pretomanid and linezolid – prescribed for six months. Trials across four countries found that a lower dose of linezolid was better tolerated with similar outcomes

#### HUMERUS



## Costly HPV vaccine needs to be part of national immunisation programme

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**

J anuary is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, and doctors are urging women to get screened for this deadly disease. Cervical cancer develops in the cervix, or the wall of the cervix. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is responsible for 99.7% of cervical cancers worldwide and is among the leading causes of cancer in Indian women. The HPV vaccine is the most effective way to prevent it, as it stimulates the immune system to produce antibodies that neutralise the virus.

In India, HPV vaccines are only available under prescription by private practitioners, even though the National Technical Advisory Group for Immunisation (NTAGI) has recommended that the HPV vaccine be included in the national immunisation programme. A senior Health Ministry official noted that the Ministry was working on the inclusion. The NTAGI recommends a one-time catch-up for girls aged 9-14, followed by routine introduction at 9 years.

#### A vaccine that helps

The HPV vaccine was introduced in India in 2008, but its high cost has limited its use. Some states, such as Punjab and Sikkim, have

introduced the vaccine into their immunisation programmes. The vaccine is most effective when given before exposure to the virus and is recommended for children aged 12 to 13 years old and people at high risk from HPV. The vaccine is safe and well tolerated and can be used in people who are immunocompromised or HIV-infected. Common side effects include mild fever, tenderness, swelling, and redness at the injection site. It doesn't treat existing HPV infections or diseases. However, it can prevent more than 90% of cancers associated with HPV.

It protects against genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer. It protects against cancer of the vagina, vulva, penis, or anus caused by HPV. The HPV vaccine also protects against mouth, throat, head, and neck cancers caused by the virus. India has authorised several HPV vaccines, including Gardasil (a quadrivalent vaccine that protects against HPV-6, 11, 16, and 18), Cervarix (a bivalent vaccine), and Cervavac (an Indian-developed vaccine that targets high-risk HPV types).

In India, cancer of the cervix uteri is the 3rd most common cancer, with an incidence rate of 18.3% (123,907 cases), and the second leading cause of death, with a mortality rate of 9.1%, as per GLOBOCAN 2020. The age stan-

dardised incidence rate per 100,000 population was 18, while the five-year prevalence rate across all ages was 42.82 per 1 lakh population. As per the National Cancer Registry Programme, cancer of the breast and cervix uteri was the most common cancer among females. Cervical cancer accounted for 6.29% of all cancers among women in India. Papumpare district in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India, had the highest incidence rate of cervical cancer (27.7) in Asia.

The majority of the patients with cancer were diagnosed at the locally advanced stage for breast (57%), cervix uteri (60%), head and neck (66.6%), and stomach (50.8%) cancer, whereas in lung cancer, distant metastasis was predominant among males (44%) and females (47.6%).

#### Challenges ahead

Experts note that among the top challenges to the uptake of HPV vaccination in India are the high cost of the vaccine, concerns about its safety and effectiveness due to lack of awareness and cultural perceptions around reproductive health.

Richu Sharma, consultant medical oncologist, Ujala Cygnus Group of Hospitals, speaking about the cost and coverage of the vaccine, notes that Gardasil 9 is

priced at ₹10,850 per dose, Gardasil 4 costs range between ₹2,000 and ₹4,000 per dose, while Cervavac (the first Indian-made HPV vaccine by the Serum Institute of India, effective against HPV types 16 and 18, approved for ages 9 to 26) is priced at ₹2,000 per dose. Vaccines like Gardasil and Cervavac are already approved for use in boys and young men, offering protection against HPV-related conditions such as genital warts and certain cancers, including anal and throat cancers. This marks an essential step towards broader HPV prevention in all genders.

Sowmya Sampurna M., obstetrics and gynaecology, Apollo Cradle and Children Hospital, Hyderabad, said that all males and females aged 9-26 years should get the HPV vaccine. Unvaccinated men and women aged 27-45 years should consider getting vaccinated. The HPV vaccine is most effective if it's given before exposure.

(bindu.p@thehindu.co.in)

#### For feedback and suggestions

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