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ON THE FRONTLINE Trial by the social media

A harassment allegation ends in death, fuelling public fury in Kerala

GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7



SIZZLING CHASE
Suryakumar, Kishan power India to victory

SPORT » PAGE 15

Give decisive mandate to BJP, Modi tells Kerala voters

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Appealing to the people of Kerala to provide a "decisive mandate" to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the State needs an "NDA double-engine government", which would march "shoulder-to-shoulder" with the Union government to achieve overall development.

Though there was expectation that Mr. Modi would announce big-ticket developmental projects for Kerala, including a high-speed rail corridor and Metro line for the capital, he did not mention any project, while saying the State needed a "double-engine government" to derive benefits of developmental efforts at the national level.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

NDA double-engine govt. will be formed in T.N.: PM

Modi launches all-out attack on ruling DMK, saying it promoted corruption and crime, and did not deliver on its promises; AIADMK will form the government with a clear majority, says Palaniswami

N. Sai Charan
MADRANTAKAM

In his first major message in poll-bound Tamil Nadu, BJP leader and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the State needs an "NDA double-engine government", which would march "shoulder-to-shoulder" with the Union government to achieve overall development.

Addressing a public meeting alongside leaders of parties that have joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at Madurantakam near Chennai, Mr. Modi launched a frontal attack on the DMK, saying the massive crowd turnout



Campaign trail: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing a public meeting in Madurantakam on Friday. R. RAGU

sent across a loud message that Tamil Nadu was now ready for change. Tamil Nadu wanted to be liberated from the misrule of the DMK and desired a "BJP-NDA government".

AIADMK leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami, who spoke earlier, proclaimed, "The NDA alliance will win

210 seats. The AIADMK will form the government with a clear majority."

However, Mr. Modi, throughout, spoke of the need to establish an "NDA double-engine government" (as opposed to a single-party rule).

He said the people had given the mandate to the

DMK, but it had broken their trust. While it made several promises, its work was "zero". The people saw the regime as a "CMC government" – a government that promoted corruption, mafia and crime.

"In Tamil Nadu, you have a government which has nothing to do with democracy or accountability. The DMK government is just doing the bidding of a single family. If anyone wants to grow in the DMK, there are only three or four routes for it – dynasty, corruption, abusing women, and abusing our culture... Only such people are progressing. The entire State is bearing the brunt because of this," he said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8
'WON'T SUCCEED IN T.N.'
» PAGE 4

Manipur killing case being given to NIA: Bhalla

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Thursday said the case related to the killing of a Meitei man by suspected Kuki extremists was being handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for a thorough and impartial probe.

A statement issued by the Lok Bhawan in the State capital, Imphal, late on Thursday night said the Governor informed the bereaved family of Mayanglambam Rishikanta Singh of the decision to have the NIA investigate his killing.

Singh, who had gone to visit his Kuki wife at Tuibong in Churachandpur district, was abducted by suspected United Kuki National Army extremists and shot dead on camera. The killing led to tensions in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley, particularly in his home district of Kakching.

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Private schools in city issue first list for nursery admissions

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Around 1,741 private schools in Delhi released their first merit list for nursery admissions for the 2026-27 academic year on Friday.

The schools published the names of shortlisted applicants and those on the waiting list.

Many shared the lists on their websites while others displayed them on notice boards. Nursery admission forms became available in the first week of December.

Schools shared their criteria based on a points system, and the deadline to submit forms was December 27. Schools used criteria such as distance from the school, alumni status, and sibling quotas. Some also gave extra points to single-girl children or orphans.

Principals' reaction
Alka Kapur, principal of Modern Public School, Shalimar Bagh, said that 120 students were included in the first list. Sudha Acharya, principal of ITL Public School, Dwarka, said 97 students were shortlisted, with 43 placed on the waiting list. Bluebells School International, East



The second list will come out on February 9 and the process will end by March 19. FILE PHOTO

of Kailash, released a list of 77 students and put 40 names on the waiting list.

Delhi Public School, East of Kailash, selected 90 candidates and placed 150 on the waiting list while Ambience Public School in Safdarjung Enclave selected 207 students.

The second list will come out on February 9, and the admission process will end by March 19.

A district-level monitoring cell has been set up to ensure compliance and address grievances. Parents who had registered their children for admission can check the lists and visit the schools between January 24 and February 3 to complete admission-related formalities, as per the Directorate of Education.

Season's first rain lowers air pollution, increases hardships for homeless

Mercury drops as city receives 14.5 mm of rainfall; R-Day rehearsal disrupted, fly-past and cultural segments cancelled; some shelter homes in city report space crunch as people try to keep warm

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rain accompanied by gusty winds lashed the Capital on Friday, bringing relief from pollution but worsening conditions for the homeless across the city.

This was the first rainfall of the season, which typically sees multiple western disturbances bringing light showers. The Capital recorded 14.5 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending at 5.30 p.m. The wind and rain positively impacted air quality and the average air quality index (AQI) improved to 282 ('poor') at 4 p.m. Due to overcast skies, the minimum rose from 6.3 degrees Celsius the previous night to 13.7 degrees Celsius. The maximum, which was nearly seven notches above normal at 27.1 degrees Celsius the previous day, settled at 16 degrees Celsius.

The full-dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path



Bucketing down: Spectators taking refuge under plastic sheets in rain at Kartavya Path in New Delhi on Friday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

started late as contingents taking part got completely drenched. The fly-past and cultural segments could not be held due to inclement weather, officials said. Several visitors who had come to watch the rehearsal took cover under the bleachers.

Leaky tents

Several homeless people sought refuge in temporary and permanent shelters run by the Delhi Urban

Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). Anjum Rani, 39, who lives with her husband and three children in a makeshift tent on Lodhi Road, said the sudden rain caught them unprepared. "It started raining early in the morning and we rushed to find shelter because we didn't want the children to get wet and fall sick. With strong winds, the plastic sheet we had put up shifted and most of our blankets got

soaked," she said.

Some staying in temporary tents said rainwater entered through loose zips. Sunny, 31, staying in one such shelter, said, "The mattress got wet because of the winds. My children were sleeping when it poured. We couldn't rest afterwards. What's the point of being inside a shelter if we still get wet?"

'Spoiled in rain'
Saroj Devi, in her 50s, said the lack of space in the tents forces many to keep belongings outside. "My belongings, including clothes, got wet in the rain. We will have to wait for the sun to come out now," she said. A caretaker from the Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses, which manages the pagoda tents, said wet bedding would be replaced. "We have spare blankets and beds and will replace the wet ones by evening," he said, adding that the rain had caused an increase in the number of occupants.

Boy drowns in open drain in Ghaziabad; kin cite civic apathy

Press Trust of India
GHAZIABAD

An 11-year-old boy died after falling into an open drain while playing near his house in Ghaziabad, the police said on Friday.

The incident occurred on Wednesday evening in the village of Mazra Jhundpura. The boy, identified as Ahil, was playing about 50 metres from his house when he fell into a 2.5-feet-deep drain, a senior officer said.

The incident comes close on the heels of the death of a 27-year-old software engineer whose car plunged into a water-filled pit at Sector 150 in Greater Noida on the intervening night of January 16 and 17.

Ahil's family members and neighbours pulled him out and, after cleaning him with warm water, rushed him in an unconscious state to a hospital in Pilkhwa town of neighbouring Hapur district, where he died, the officer added.

After completing legal formalities and conducting the post-mortem, the body was handed over to the family by the Pilkhwa police. Ahil was laid to rest on Thursday.

Additional Deputy Com-

missioner of Police (Masuri) Lipi Nagaich said the local police unit was not informed about the incident immediately.

Angry residents alleged negligence on the part of the local administration, claiming that the drain was neither covered nor secured with a boundary wall despite children frequently playing in the area.

They also claimed that on January 8, a five-month-old boy had died after falling into an open drain in Momin Colony.

Residents to meet DM
The residents said the civic body had made no improvement to the infrastructure despite the earlier incident, adding that they would raise the issue of alleged negligence before the District Magistrate (DM). Ahil's father, Zahid, a plumber by profession, is originally from Soharkha village in Greater Noida and currently lives in Mazra Jhundpura with his wife and children.

'Cryptic and unreasoned': HC sets aside bail of accused in Turkman Gate violence case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Calling the trial court's order "cryptic and unreasoned", the Delhi High Court on Thursday set aside the bail granted to an accused allegedly involved in the violence at Turkman Gate earlier this month.

Justice Prateek Jalan overturned the bail granted to Mohd. Ubedullah, a 25-year-old street vendor, who was arrested along with 25 others in connection with the violence and

alleged stone-pelting during a demolition drive by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi near the Faiz-e-Ilaahi mosque at Turkman Gate on January 6 and 7.

He was granted bail by Additional Sessions Judge Jaginder Prakash Nahar of the Tis Hazari Courts on January 20 on a bond of ₹25,000 with one surety of the like amount.

Stating that courts are extremely cautious in interfering with an order granting liberty to an individual, Justice Jalan termed

Mr. Ubedullah's case an "exception", stating that bail had been granted through a "cryptic and unreasoned" order.

The prosecution opposed the bail, citing CCTV footage. The police also relied on the statement of a co-accused, who acknowledged Mr. Ubedullah's presence in the crowd that allegedly obstructed police personnel, engaged in stone-pelting, and caused damage to public property.

Counsel for the accused, however, argued that the

case against his client was a "fishing expedition".

The High Court noted that relief had been granted without properly addressing the prosecution's arguments.

Trial court to review

It also noted that the bail order lacked an analysis of the factors governing the adjudication of bail. The trial court has been asked to reconsider the case. Proceedings scheduled for Friday, however, could not take place.

Public-private partnerships key to bolster healthcare system: Gupta

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Asserting that collaboration between the government and private sector will play a key role in strengthening the Capital's health system, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday said that providing timely and affordable treatment to every Delhi resident is her administration's priority.

She was speaking at an event to inaugurate a new private hospital in Buddh



Rekha Gupta inaugurating a hospital at Buddha Vihar Phase-1 on Friday. ANI

ern hospitals are being constructed, existing hospitals are being upgraded, and the availability of specialist doctors is being increased," Ms. Gupta said.

The CM said that health services are being strengthened through government initiatives as well as public-private partnerships to deliver effective outcomes. Ms. Gupta also inaugurated a new Department of Medical Genetics at Maulana Azad Medical College, affiliated with Lok Nayak Hospital.

DU teachers decry changes in curriculum

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A teachers' body at Delhi University on Friday wrote to Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh over "significant amendments" to the BSc (Hons) Physics syllabus, stating that changes introduced "midway through the session have disrupted teaching in 25 colleges". Calling the move "ill-considered", the Democratic Teachers' Front has sought a review of the decision.

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File No.RC2/2035/2023/GA

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GENERAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT VACANCY NOTICE

File No.RC2/2035/2023/GA

Dated: 24.01.2026

Chennai Port Authority, an autonomous body under the Government of India, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, invites applications for filling up of (Three) vacancies in the post of Pilot (Class-II) (SC-1, ST-1 & OBC - 1) in Marine Department, in the scale of pay of Rs.70000 - 200000. Eligible candidates have to apply through "Online Application Portal" (OAP) of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (<http://onlinevacancyapp.chennaport.nic.in>). For further details, visit Chennai Port Authority's Website viz., www.chennaport.gov.in. Last date for receipt of applications is 23.02.2026. Candidates already applied for the said posts in the Port's website should apply again.

Chennai - 600001.

Secretary

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Share forensic file on Atishi clip: Gupta to Punjab Police

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijendra Gupta on Friday extended by five days the deadline for the Punjab police to share the forensic report of the video clip that prompted the agency to file an FIR in connection with "disparaging" remarks on Guru Tegh Bahadur by senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi in the Assembly earlier this month. The police force has termed the clip "doctored".

The Speaker also sought a copy of the FIR. The development came a day after the Punjab police submitted a detailed letter to the Delhi Assembly Secretariat, along with comments from the Jalandhar Police Commissioner, in response to Mr. Gupta's notice.

A notice issued by the Delhi Assembly stated that the Speaker has acknowledged the Punjab police's reply, but the key documents sought were still missing. "Your reply has been placed before the Speaker. However, it is observed that the additional information/documents sought have not been provided," the notice read.

The Speaker asked the Punjab police to submit the pending documents, including the Punjab Forensic Science Laboratory report, by January 28.

Amid tight security, prayers offered at disputed site in M.P.

After SC permission and Madhya Pradesh govt's assurance of harmonious conduct, Hindus observe Basant Panchami while Muslims offer *namaz*

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Members of both Hindu and Muslim communities offered prayers at the disputed Bhojshala Saraswati temple-cum-Maulana Kamal Maula mosque in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar town amid heavy security arrangements on Friday.

While the Hindu community performed rituals on the occasion of the Basant Panchami festival, the Muslims offered the Friday *namaz* after the Supreme Court allowed both communities to offer prayers following assurances from the Madhya Pradesh government.

Heightened security
Indore Rural Deputy Inspector General of Police Manoj Kumar Singh told *The Hindu* that more than 8,000 personnel were deployed across the sensitive town as part of security measures.

"The personnel were from the State Police, Central Armed Police Forces, Rapid Action Force and the Special Task Force, and 15 IPS officers were deployed to oversee the arrangements," Mr. Singh said.

The Basant Panchami



Holy day: Devotees at the disputed Bhojshala complex in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, on Friday. PTI

worship, organised by the Bhoj Utsav Samiti, was performed from early morning till sunset while the *namaz* was offered between 1 and 3 p.m. by about 20 members of the local Muslim community.

Muslims not happy'
A district administration official said Muslims were unhappy about the space that had been given to the community to offer prayers.

"The *namaz* was offered in an open space inside the premises. The Muslim community leaders expressed their discontent over it but senior officials spoke to them. The worship was performed inside the building," the official

said, requesting anonymity.

The Supreme Court on January 22 had recorded an assurance given by the Madhya Pradesh government that arrangements would be made at the disputed site for the harmonious conduct of worship by both Muslims and Hindus.

In July 2024, the Archaeological Survey of India conducted a High Court-ordered survey of the disputed complex and submitted its over 2,000-page report, which largely states that the existing structure, which Muslims believe to be the Kamal Maula mosque, was constructed using the remains of a temple that existed at the site.

Shooting coach's anticipatory bail plea in assault case rejected

Press Trust of India
FARIDABAD

The court of Faridabad's Additional District and Sessions Judge Abhishek Phutela has rejected the anticipatory bail plea of shooting coach Ankush Bhardwaj in connection with the alleged sexual assault of a minor national-level shooter at a hotel here, the police said.

An FIR was registered at

the women's police station, NIT Faridabad, on January 6. The coach was suspended by the National Rifle Association of India.

According to the complaint, the incident took place on December 16. The victim said the coach asked her to meet him in the hotel lobby to review her match performance. He later coerced her to come to his room and sexually assaulted her, the police said.



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Shiv Sena (UBT) approaches police over 2 'missing' corporators in Kalyan civic body

Press Trust of India
THANE

The Kalyan unit of the Shiv Sena (UBT) on Friday approached the police claiming that two of its newly elected corporators cannot be contacted despite making enquiries with family members, relatives, and party office-bearers.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led party won 11 seats in the January 15 Kalyan-Dombivli civic polls.

In his complaint at the Kolwadi police station, Shiv Sena (UBT) Kalyan district chief Sharad Shivraj Patil said all efforts to contact newly elected corporators Madhur Umesh Mhatre and Kirti Rajan Dhone have been in vain.

He sought registration of a missing person case and a fair investigation into



Five corporators of the Raj Thackeray-led MNS have pledged support to the Shiv Sena in the Kalyan-Dombivli civic body. FILE PHOTO

the matter.

"The phones of the two corporators are switched off. Their sudden disappearance is not limited to personal security but is related to democratic values, law and order, and public trust. The possibility of pressure, fraud, kidnapping or other criminal nature behind this incident

cannot be ruled out," Mr. Patil said in his complaint. The police said a probe has begun after receiving the complaint.

In the polls held on January 15, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena won 52 seats in the 122-member civic body, followed closely by the BJP with 51 seats. The Shiv Sena (UBT)

came a distant third with 11 seats, while Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) managed to win five, Congress two and NCP (SP) one. Kalyan-Dombivli has seen the Shiv Sena and MNS getting together after ditching their pre-poll allies, the BJP and the Shiv Sena (UBT) respectively.

'Not for personal gain'
Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray on Friday said even if he takes a "slightly flexible stance" in today's

completely transformed politics, it won't be for his personal gain or selfish interests. His statement comes two days after five corporators of his party extended support to the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena in the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation.

Akhlaq case: court defers recording of family's statements

Press Trust of India
NOIDA

A court in Gautam Buddha Nagar on Friday deferred the recording of statements of family members of Mohammad Akhlaq in the 2015 lynching case and scheduled the next hearing for February 5 as the additional district judge of the fast-track court was on leave.

Advocate Yusuf Saifi, who represents Akhlaq's family, said statements, including those of Akhlaq's wife Ikrام, were scheduled to be recorded on Friday but could not take place due to the judge's absence.

On Thursday, the district judge had rejected a transfer plea filed by the accused and ordered that the case be heard by the fast-track court.

Police protection
Earlier, on December 23, the court had dismissed the Uttar Pradesh government's application seeking withdrawal of the case against the accused and directed that it be categorised as 'most important' and heard on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Saifi said the family members were brought to the court under police protection in compliance with the court orders.

Mohammed Iqbal
THE HINDU BUREAU



Congress leader Ashok Gehlot said the BJP aims to 'polarise' the State through the Disturbed Areas Act. FILE PHOTO

by the BJP through the Disturbed Areas Act.

The State government has declared its intention of bringing the Disturbed Areas Bill in the upcoming Budget Session of the Assembly. The Cabinet had approved the Bill earlier this week for addressing what it described as "de-

mographic imbalance, improper clustering of population, and distress sale of land and houses".

Mr. Gehlot said Rajasthan neither faced the situation of confrontation nor was the State's soil fertile for hatred.

"The BJP government is resorting to polarisation to divert attention from its administrative failures," he said in a post on X.

"The difference is clear: our Congress government, promoting Mahatma Gandhi's ideals, established the country's first department of peace and non-violence. The BJP, upon coming to power, first shut down that department and is now imposing this law," Mr. Gehlot added.

TMC MP petitions EC over special revision of electoral rolls in Assam

Press Trust of India
GUWAHATI

The special revision (SR) of electoral rolls in Assam has been done "hurriedly and haphazardly", Trinamool Congress MP Sushmita Dev said on Friday.

In a letter addressed to Chief Election Commissioner Ganesh Kumar, the Rajya Sabha member warned that the electoral process, executed hurriedly, could lead to "large-scale wrongful deletion" of names and "denial of voting rights" to genuine citizens.

'Extend date'
She requested the Election Commission (EC) to extend the date for hearings and disposal by another seven days to ensure that people

get a fair opportunity to defend their right to vote.

"It has been seen that huge amounts of objections have been filed under Form 7 to delete the names of individuals. These Form 7 objections for deletion of names have been filed by persons in bulk, and in most cases, the complainant, who is named in the form, is either untraceable or has denied filing these forms," Ms. Dev wrote.

The names of 10.56 lakh voters were deleted from Assam's draft roll after the SR exercise in December last year.

School bus driver held for mowing down law student

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A school bus driver was arrested on Friday for mowing down a 24-year-old law student in south-east Delhi, a police officer said.

The school bus had hit the motorcycle ridden by Vinamra, 24, a resident of Kotla Mubarakpur, at the Modi Mill flyover on Thursday, around 3.30 p.m.

The third-year LLB student at Chaudhary Charan Singh University was rushed to a hospital but declared dead on arrival. "The body has been sent to AIIMS for the post-mortem examination," the officer said.

An FIR has been registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Sections 281 (rash driving) and 106(1) (death by rash or negligent acts), and a probe is under way, the officer added.

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ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE No: 04 of 2025 (Dated: - 31-12-2025)

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Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Kashmir invites online applications from the eligible candidates for the post of Associate Professor and Assistant Professor in various Departments/Centres of the University.

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Notice Inviting Tender (Two Cover System)

1. Bids are invited for the below work:-

SLNo Work Tender value Rs. (Cr.) Period of completion

1 Improvement of Water Supply System For Harur Municipality 20.00 12 Months

2. The bid documents will be available from Harur Municipality. The bid documents can be downloaded from the website <http://harurmuni.gov.in>, at free of cost.

3. Amount of Earnest Money Deposit will be 1% of the value put to tender for a Work

4. Processing Fees Rs. 10,000/- (Non Refundable)

5. Any additional / further details and conditions related to this tender can be had from the office of the respective Commissioner of Municipality on all working days during office hours.

6. Important dates:

1. Date and time for downloading bid documents : From 23.01.2026 11.00 AM to 20.02.2026 upto 3.00 PM

2. Last Date and time for submission of bid document, including online submission : 20.02.2026 at 3.00 PM

3. Date, Time and Venue for the pre-bid conference: 11.02.2026 @ 11:00 AM in the Office of Harur Municipality.

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IN BRIEF



Punjab Police arrests 5 BKI operatives ahead of R-Day

Punjab Police on Friday claimed to have busted two terror modules ahead of Republic Day with the arrest of five operatives of the proscribed outfit Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and the seizure of a huge cache of arms and ammunition from across the State. The State Special Operations Cell, Amritsar, averted an imminent attack on a security establishment with the arrest of a BKI operative, Sharandeep Singh, the police said. The Hoshiarpur police also arrested four operatives of BKI and seized an "RDX-based" device weighing 2.5 kg and two pistols along with cartridges. PTI

HC gives Punjab 7 days to take call on Amritpal's parole plea

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday directed the Punjab government to decide within seven working days the representation of jailed MP Amritpal Singh seeking temporary release to attend the upcoming Budget Session of Parliament. The Khadoor Sahib MP has been lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail under the National Security Act since April 2023. He has sought parole under provisions of Section 15 of the National Security Act, 1980, (pertaining to the temporary release of persons detained), to allow him to attend the Parliament session. The Budget Session will commence on January 28 and continue till February 13 in the first phase. PTI

Faridabad man arrested for killing daughter over failure to write numbers up to 50

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

A 31-year-old resident of Faridabad in Haryana has been arrested after allegedly beating his four-year-old daughter to death with a rolling pin for failing to write numbers up to 50, the police said on Friday.

The man was arrested based on a complaint lodged by his wife at the Sector 58 police station on Thursday. The woman stated that her husband, Krishna Jaiswal, beat their daughter to death at their rented accommodation in Jhadsaithi village on January 21. The police have registered an FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

During interrogation, the police learnt that the couple worked in private companies. While the wife worked during the day, the

The accused's wife reported the matter to the police after noticing injury marks on the child's body

husband had night shifts.

The police said the couple also have a seven-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter. Mr. Jaiswal took care of the children during the day and made them do their lessons, they added.

On January 21, the accused asked his four-year-old daughter to write numbers from 1 to 50. When she was unable to do so, he grew enraged and beat her to death, the police said.

Habitual drinker'

Inspector Azad, Station House Officer of the Sector 58 police station, told *The Hindu* that the accused was a habitual drinker and

Stalin takes a dig at Modi, says his 'dabba engine' govt. won't succeed in T.N.

Reacting to PM's poll speech that the State needs the NDA's 'double-engine' govt., CM says States such as West Bengal, Kerala, and Karnataka achieved growth because there was no such engine

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Shortly after Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched for an "NDA double-engine *sarkar*" in Tamil Nadu on Friday, DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin mocked it, saying Mr. Modi's "double-engine" was a "dabba engine" and it would not run in the State.



M.K. Stalin alleged that the PM frequently visited T.N. only when polls neared. FILE PHOTO

backs to the NDA.

In the post on social media, Mr. Stalin alleged that Mr. Modi frequently visited Tamil Nadu only when elections approached. He was responding to a post by Mr. Modi that "Tamil Nadu is with the NDA!"

"There is no growth in States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where the NDA's double engine runs," he said in his post on X.

He said even if Mr. Modi suppressed the "betrayal" of Tamil Nadu and its people, the people would not forget it, and that the State would always pose set-

backs to the NDA.

Countering his claim, Mr. Stalin said: "When will the State receive its due of ₹3,458 crore under the Samagra Shiksha programme? When will he [Mr. Modi] assure Tamil Nadu that there will be no reduction in the number of constituencies during delimitation? When will the atrocities of Governor [R.N. Ravi], who functions as the BJP's agent, come to an end? When will his [Mr. Modi's] regime, which projects itself as having greater affinity for the Tamil language than Tamils themselves, allocate the funds due to the Tamils?"

He asked when would there be an assurance that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act will continue and the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), "which passes the burden to States and undermines livelihood opportunities", will be abandoned.

BJP questions T.N. resolution on new rural jobs Act

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday questioned the adoption of a resolution in the Tamil Nadu Assembly opposing several provisions of the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act. The party asked whether a State Assembly has the constitutional authority to do so when the law has been passed by Parliament.

Earlier in the day, the Tamil Nadu Assembly "unanimously" adopted a resolution urging the Union government to ensure that the right to work of people in rural areas was established as per the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.

Sena Minister's son surrenders before police after HC rap

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Vikas Gogawale, the son of Shiv Sena Cabinet Minister Bharat Gogawale, surrendered before the police, the Maharashtra government informed the Bombay High Court on Friday. The move came a day after the court rapped the government over the delay in arresting him in a case.



Vikas Gogawale

voting for the Mahad Municipal Council election on December 2 last year. After the clash between supporters of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP, cross-FIRs were filed by both sides.

In one FIR, Mr. Vikas and his supporters were named as the accused, and in another FIR, Shreeyash Jagtap, the son of former NCP MLA Manik Jagtap, and his supporters were named as the accused.

Bail plea rejected
Mr. Shreeyash withdrew his anticipatory bail application after the court refused to provide any relief.

On Friday evening, he and three of his supporters - Dhananjay Deshmukh, Nilesh Mahadik, and Jagdish Pawar - also surrendered before the police.

Elgar Parishad case: 2 more get bail; only 1 accused in jail now

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

would often beat up his wife and children.

"When the girl could not complete the counting exercise he had assigned, the accused slammed her on to the floor and beat her up with a rolling pin, leading to her death," he said.

Following excessive beating, the child collapsed and the accused took her to a nearby government hospital, where doctors declared her dead, the police said.

Another accused, Father Stan Swamy, an 84-year-old priest and tribal rights activist, died while in custody in July 2021, awaiting trial.

A Bench of Justices A.S. Gadkari and S.C. Chandak ordered the release of Sagar Gorkha and Ramesh Gaichor, who have been in Navi Mumbai's Tajola jail since their arrest in September 2020, and directed them to furnish a bail bond of ₹1 lakh each.

The two, alleged to be the activists of the banned CPI (Maoist) outfit, have been asked to visit the National Investigation Agency (NIA)'s office once a month.

With this order, 14 of the 16 people arrested in the

more than eight-year-old case have now been granted bail, leaving only one accused, Surendra Gaikwad, behind bars as his matter is pending before the Supreme Court.

Another accused, Father Stan Swamy, an 84-year-old priest and tribal rights activist, died while in custody in July 2021, awaiting trial.

Provocative speeches'

At least 16 people, including prominent lawyers, activists, and academics, were booked in connection with allegedly provocative speeches that were delivered at the Elgar Parishad conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017. According to the police, the speeches triggered violence at Koregaon-Bhima, on the outskirts of Pune city, the next day.

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MLA's supporters lay siege to BJD office, insist on knowing reason behind his suspension

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Hundreds of supporters of Arvind Mohapatra, a first-time MLA from Patkura in Kendrapara district, who were protesting against his suspension by the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) for a "variety of reasons", laid siege to the party's regional office on Friday, demanding that party chief Naveen Patnaik spell out the "exact" grounds for the action.

The BJD, which governed Odisha for years with an absolute majority, has rarely witnessed such open and sustained resistance to a suspension as it is currently facing from the Patkura MLA's supporters.

The party brass had suspended Mr. Mohapatra, along with Champua MLA Sanatan Mahakud, on January 15 without specifying the reasons for the ac-

tion. The party issued only a brief statement, accusing the two legislators of engaging in "anti-party activities". He added that voters in the constituency had faced difficulties, making the suspension necessary.

"The fact that the former Chief Minister was compelled to issue an explanation in response to sustained pressure from a young first-time MLA sends a message that the BJD is no longer the tightly controlled unit it once was," said veteran journalist Rabindra Das.



BJD chief Naveen Patnaik

ments and traitors". He later alleged that Mr. Mohapatra was part of a "larger conspiracy to destabilise the BJD". The Patkura legislator, however, denied all the allegations.

Subsequently, Mr. Patnaik, who is known for maintaining silence after taking action against party members, issued a statement, accusing the Patkura MLA of "failing to live up to expectations". He added that voters in the constituency had faced difficulties, making the suspension necessary.

"The fact that the former Chief Minister was compelled to issue an explanation in response to sustained pressure from a young first-time MLA sends a message that the BJD is no longer the tightly controlled unit it once was," said veteran journalist Rabindra Das.

Nine hospitalised after falling ill due to water contamination in M.P.

Press Trust of India
INDORE

At least nine persons have fallen ill after consuming contaminated drinking water in Mhow tehsil of Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, officials said on Friday. Cases of water-borne diseases were reported from the Patti Bazaar and Chander Marg areas on Thursday night, they said.

Indore Collector Shivam Verma arrived in Mhow late at night and visited patients undergoing treatment at a hospital, and spoke to residents of the affected areas, an official said.

Nine residents have been hospitalised while a few others are recuperating at home, he said.

The official added that personnel from the Health Department have been on site since Friday morning under the direction of Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr. Madhav Hasani. A team from the Indore Medical College and other specialist doctors are also being dispatched, he said.

Mhow MLA Usha Thakur also visited the hospital to meet the affected persons.

Water quality check
Mr. Verma directed the Health Department personnel to ensure proper and effective treatment for all patients and instructed the Mhow Cantonment Board to check water quality and maintain proper cleanliness in the area.

Chhattisgarh factory blast: kiln sealed at steel plant after probe finds safety lapses

Press Trust of India
RAIPUR

The steel plant in Balodabazar where six persons were killed and five injured following an explosion on Thursday. ANI

ter a preliminary probe revealed serious lapses, read a government statement.

According to the statement, the explosion took place on the second floor of the dust-settling chamber of kiln no. 1 during maintenance work. The sudden blast, followed by a shower of hot ash - at

temperatures ranging between 850 and 900 degrees Celsius - killed six workers on the spot and seriously injured five others.

A joint team of deputy directors and officers from the Industrial Health and Safety Department inspected the factory, took photos and videos of the

accident site in the presence of representatives of the factory management, it said. The preliminary investigation suggested that standard operating procedures were not followed.

No safety gear
"Workers were made to carry out high-risk operations without shutting down the kiln, the hydraulic slide gate of the dust-settling chamber was not closed, proper work

ED conducts raids in Goa, Delhi, Haryana in nightclub fire case

Press Trust of India
PANAJI/ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted raids in Goa, Delhi and Haryana after it filed a money laundering case against the owners of a Goa-based nightclub where 25 people were killed in a devastating fire in December last year, officials said.

At least nine premises, including the offices and residential locations of brothers Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra and co-owner Ajay Gupta located at Kingsway Camp in the national capital, Tatvam Villas in Gurugram (Haryana), apart from that of former sarpanch of Arpora-Nagoa

Roshan Redkar and panchayat secretary Raghuveer Bagkar in Goa are being searched.

Mr. Redkar and Mr. Bagkar are alleged to have facilitated and issued illegal trade licences and NOCs for the club, as per the ED.

Agency officials are also present on the premises of Surinder Kumar Khosla, a British national and also one of the owners of the club, to examine the money laundering angle arising from the illegal conversion of 'khazan (salt pan)' land on which the nightclub was located.

The Goa police have got a Red Notice issued from Interpol against Mr. Khosla as he is not present in the country.

IN BRIEF



Ex-Kerala BJP chief cleared in 2016 case over threat to DySP

The Magistrate Court in Kannur has acquitted former Kerala BJP president K. Surendran in a case related to allegedly threatening a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) through a Facebook post in 2016. Mr. Surendran was accused of issuing threats against then Kannur DySP P.P. Sadanandan through the Facebook post in connection with the investigation in a murder case. The court found no grounds to convict Mr. Surendran and acquitted him.

K.T. Rama Rao questioned by SIT in phone-tapping case

Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president K.T. Rama Rao appeared before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Friday for questioning in connection with the alleged illegal phone tapping case. He arrived at the Jubilee Hills Assistant Commissioner of Police office at 11 a.m. The questioning followed summons issued by the SIT, which stated that its probe had indicated the former Minister was aware of certain facts and circumstances about the case.

Janardhana Reddy's model house set on fire in Ballari

Even as the January 1 clash in Karnataka's Ballari continues to simmer, unidentified men on Friday evening set fire to a model house located in a private residential layout, triggering fresh tension in the city. The incident occurred at a model house, said to be owned by Gangavati MLA Gali Janardhana Reddy and his close associate B. Sriramulu. The structure, built to showcase the layout to prospective buyers, was unoccupied at the time, police said. No injuries were reported.

Karnataka High Court revokes bike taxi ban

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Declaring that the blanket ban imposed by the State government on the use of two-wheelers as bike taxis, is contrary to the provisions of the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act, the High Court of Karnataka on Friday directed the State transport authorities to register two-wheelers as 'transport vehicles' and grant 'contract carriage' permits as per the law to operate them as bike taxis.

"When the MV Act expressly contemplates the inclusion of two-wheelers as 'transport vehicles', plainly, it would not be open for the State government to exclude them from registration as 'transport vehicles,'" the Court ruled.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakru and Justice C.M. Joshi delivered the judgement while setting aside the April 2, 2025 verdict of a single judge, who had refused to issue directions to the State transport authorities to register two-wheelers as transport vehicles and had directed withdrawal of bike taxi services offered through the platforms of the transport technology aggregators till the Government framed rule for operation of bike taxis.

The Bench passed the order while allowing the appeals filed by Uber India Systems Private Limited, Ropponen Transportation Services Private Limited, which operates Rapido services, and ANI Technology Private Limited, which operates Ola services, and Bike Taxi Owners' Welfare Association, Varikruti Mahendra Reddy and others.

PM launches projects, flags off train services in Kerala

Modi inaugurates new Amrit Bharat Express trains and a passenger train allotted for Kerala, and unveils PM SVANidhi Card; Pinarayi expresses hope that State's 'genuine demands' would be met

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A developed Kerala is essential for realising the dream of a developed India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

He flagged off three new Amrit Bharat Express trains and one passenger train allotted for Kerala, in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday, and launched developmental projects in various sectors.

Addressing a gathering, Mr. Modi said Kerala's rail connectivity had been strengthened with the flagging-off of Amrit Bharat Express trains. The new passenger train between Guruvayur and Thrissur



Narendra Modi, along with Governor Rajendra Arlekar and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. PTI

would make travel easier for pilgrims. New initiatives have been undertaken to transform Thiruvananthapuram into a major start-up hub, he added.

Launching the PM SVANidhi Credit Card on the

occasion, he said a nationwide initiative for the welfare of the poor had begun from Kerala.

Mr. Modi said the condition of street vendors, who earlier struggled to borrow even a few

hundred rupees due to high interest rates, has been transformed through the PM SVANidhi Scheme.

The Centre has undertaken projects for poor families living in cities, the Prime Minister said. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, more than 4 crore houses have been provided to the poor. In Kerala, nearly 1.25 lakh urban poor families have received permanent houses, he added.

Expressing gratitude to the Prime Minister for clearing the projects, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said he hoped the other 'genuine demands of Kerala' would also be met in due course.



Standstill: A farmer clearing snow from an apple tree in central Kashmir's Budgam district on Friday. IMRAN NISSAR

Heavy rain, snow pound north India; CMs monitor rescue and repair works

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Torrential rain, hailstorms, and gusty winds in the plains and heavy snow in the upper reaches of north India disrupted normal life across several States over the past two days.

The inclement weather caused power outages in many regions and forced the cancellation of all flights at Srinagar airport.

Emergency response teams were pressed into action to rescue people stranded by low visibility and snow that accumulated to as much as two feet in some areas. More than 80% of electricity supply was restored in Kashmir by evening, officials said.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu issued directions to officials to work on a war footing to restore essential services in the areas that had been disrupted due to heavy snowfall. Snowfall has led to the closure of 565 roads, including two National Highways (NH-3 NH-505), and disrupted nearly 4,800 power trans-

formers, officials said.

J&K CM Omar Abdullah said efforts were on to restore the power supply in the Valley, which was severely hit by the gusty winds and heavy snow. "Damage assessment is under way but would take some time owing to prevailing weather conditions," said Mr. Omar.

Surinder Paul, director at India Meteorological Department, Chandigarh, said, "There was widespread rain accompanied by winds during the past 24 hours in parts of Punjab and Haryana."

Hailstorms were reported in Jalandhar district and adjoining areas. Temperatures are likely to stay below normal in the next few days."

An 18-year-old student reportedly died from electrocution in Punjab's Nabha city on Friday when he walked into a puddle of rainwater near his home.

A Jammu and Kashmir police officer said 70 people stranded at Totagali in Mendar area of Poonch district were rescued.

(With inputs from PTI)

AICC holds meet on Kerala poll strategy

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) on Friday got down to the brass tacks of strategising and planning for the Assembly elections in Kerala.

AICC national president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi held a detailed round-table discussion in New Delhi with the Con-

gress top brass from Kerala, including Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president Sunny Joseph, MLA; Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan; United Democratic Front (UDF) convener Adoor Prakash; and senior Congress leaders Ramesh Chennithala and M.M. Hassan.

A Congress insider said several issues were on the table, including the first phase of candidate selection.

Chargesheet filed in synthetic ghee case

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUPATI

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed under the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has concluded its probe into the sensational ghee adulteration case that rocked the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) administration last year.

The SIT authorities submitted their final chargesheet before the ACB Court

in Nellore.

The chargesheet named the Uttarakhand-based Bhole Baba Dairy of having connived with some employees of the TTD, as well as external dairy experts, in getting orders to supply synthetic (fake) ghee (that was later allegedly used in the preparation of laddu prasadam) to the tune of 68 lakh kg to the Tirumala temple management during 2021-2024, estimated to be worth ₹250 crore.

Livestock fair



Market day: Cattle traders gathering at the annual Pashu Jatara, held on the first Friday after Sankranti, to buy and sell livestock in Hyderabad on Friday. SIDDHANT THAKUR

Ex-TDB official Murari Babu gets bail in Sabarimala gold theft case

The Hindu Bureau
KOLAM

The Kollam Vigilance Court on Friday granted bail to Murari Babu, former administrative officer of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), in both cases registered in connection with the Sabarimala gold theft. The court awarded statutory bail in the cases involving the theft of gold from the Dwarapala idols and the sanctum sanctorum door frame after considering the defendant's plea that the accused was entitled to bail as the Special Investigation Team (SIT) had failed to file a chargesheet even 92 days after his arrest. With this ruling, Mr. Babu becomes the first accused in the

More photographs of UDF convener and Potti emerge

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

UDF convener Adoor Prakash found himself caught in the crosshairs of the Sabarimala gold theft scandal again on Friday.

The latest controversy is around photographs of

him accepting a cover and two 'goodie bags' from Unnikrishnan Potti, the prime accused in the case.

The photographs were of unknown provenance and date. Mr. Prakash told reporters in Delhi that he was the victim of a political witch hunt.

to Mr. Babu under stringent conditions following strong arguments from the prosecution.

Meanwhile, the remand period for senior Tantri Kandararu Rajeevaru has been extended for another 14 days.

Cong., BJP spar over ruckus during Karnataka Governor's address

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The ruling Congress and the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) continued to trade accusations on Friday over the ruckus that erupted in the Karnataka Legislature during Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's truncated address to the joint session.

The BJP demanded the suspension of members involved in what it described as 'disrespect to the Governor' and sought a resolution condemning the incident. The Congress, on the other hand, demanded an apology from Mr. Gehlot to the citizens of the State and the Legislature for refusing to read the full text of the

address prepared by the government and for 'insulting' the national anthem by walking out immediately after the address.

Raising the issue as soon as the House met on Friday, Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok accused the government of showing disrespect to the head of the State by shouting slogans and gheraoing the Governor as he was leaving the House. He demanded the suspension of members involved in the unruly scenes and a unanimous resolution condemning Thursday's incident.

"Tomorrow, members may even attack the Governor. What will the government do then?" Mr. Ashok

A day after joining NDA, rifts surface in corporate-backed Twenty20 party

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Fissures have begun to appear in Twenty20, the Kite group-backed political outfit, just a day after it joined the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with both the Congress and the CPI(M) claiming that disillusioned party workers and leaders, including elected representatives, are set to defect to their ranks in the coming days.

At a press conference held alongside Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) vice-president V.P. Sajeendran, Twenty20's former Vadavucode block panchayat member Raseena Pareeth announced the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting Twenty20 Kerala president Sabu M. Jacob in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday. ANI

exit of a group of members from the party.

She accused the leadership of turning the outfit into a recruitment agency for the BJP. "All along, it was said that the party would neither join the

Right nor the Left, but would dissolve if forced into such a situation. There will be mass resignations and an exodus from the party, including elected representatives, in the coming days," Ms. Pareeth

warned.

Mr. Sajeendran described the decision to join the NDA as the "end game" for Twenty20 State president Sabu M. Jacob. He alleged that consultations with the BJP's national leadership had taken place even before the local body polls, betraying the trust of voters. The BJP is using Twenty20 as a shortcut to breach the Kunnamkulam constituency, which has a significant population of minorities and Scheduled Castes, he alleged.

Twenty20 vice-president V. Gopakumar dismissed the resignations as inconsequential, asserting that all members remain firmly with the party.



Mindless killing

Manipur is still reeling from the mishandling of the 2023 protests

In multi-ethnic Manipur, the divide between communities continues to grow and spill over into violence. With people still trying to rebuild lives upended by two years of mindless hostility that began on May 3, 2023, another senseless killing has led to fresh tension. On Wednesday night, a 29-year-old Meitei man was killed by unidentified assailants. Mayanglambam Rishikant Singh was visiting his wife, who is from the Kuki-Zo community, in Churachandpur district, when the couple was picked up from home by masked gunmen. While she was allowed to walk away, Singh was shot dead, which was recorded on camera. There were demonstrations in Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley, and at Kakching, from where Singh hailed, people blocked the Indo-Myanmar Sgnui Road to seek justice for his family. According to security officials, on Wednesday night, a video of the killing was shared on WhatsApp from a Guwahati IP address with the title, 'No peace no popular governments'. A joint action committee, set up in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley, demanded that the case be handed over to the National Investigation Agency. The acute trust deficit among the people in a State which has been under President's rule since last February is palpable. The faultlines between the hills, dominated by the tribes, and the Valley, home to the Meiteis, have sharpened.

Manipur, which became a State in 1972, has 33 recognised tribes. Each tribe, including the Kuki-Zo and Nagas, and several non-tribal communities such as the Meiteis have their unique identity and culture, which the political leadership has to be mindful of. Despite witnessing waves of insurrections and ethnic conflict since 1972, people of different tribes and non-tribal communities did work and live together without fear of reprisal. That has become almost impossible now, and the killing of a Meitei in a Kuki-dominated area will only add to the mistrust. The present cycle of violence began after the Manipur High Court gave the go-ahead to the State government to grant Scheduled Tribe status to the Meiteis, an old demand. Tribal groups vociferously protested, saying this would give the Meiteis unprecedented advantages. Things soon got out of control after the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo tribes clashed. The Biren Singh government may have resigned in February 2025, but the State is still reeling under the consequences of the manner in which the Centre and State leaders handled the situation. To find permanent peace, civil society and political leaders need to continue to work tirelessly to bring all stakeholders on board and resolve underlying issues of identity and marginalisation.

Right to dignity

Governments must ensure equitable pay for ASHA workers

The ongoing protests by ASHA and anganwadi workers in West Bengal demanding their wages be increased to ₹15,000 a month is a sour reminder of efforts to deny them permanent employee status despite their centrality to many national and State welfare schemes. The Indira Gandhi government denied the first of many of these workers 'worker' status under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), laying a foundation that India has continued to build on to bypass labour laws. As the workload increased, the formation of a national union followed in 1989, but even in the liberalisation era, the state created the category of 'scheme workers' and expanded social schemes but not permanent government jobs. The *State of Karnataka vs Ameeri* (1996) – tribunal decision – further excluded anganwadi workers from the set of government employees even as the top court expanded the right to food, and thus the need for these workers, in 2004. The ASHA programme took root in the mid-2000s and followed a similar trajectory, with the government framing them as 'activists'. Worse, in the 2010s, when the government, employers, and workers' unions recommended job regularisation, minimum wages, and pension and gratuity for ASHA workers at the 45th Labour Conference, successive UPA and NDA governments chose not to implement this. In 2015, the NDA government slashed the ICDS budget, and these workers have been protesting since at regular intervals just to make ends meet.

The Centre also froze its contribution to these workers' pay in 2018, in effect leaving ASHA and anganwadi personnel to absorb fiscal shocks. Together with the lack of a guarantee of better working conditions for gig workers in the new labour codes, the state has effectively exited the social contract for many of its most vulnerable labourers in favour of promoting business metrics and more fiscal headroom at the Centre. States do wield more power in hiring and dispute resolution and are also more vulnerable to electoral pressure, which unions have taken advantage of, but there is also considerable disparity between States. As central honoraria stagnated, States were compelled to top up payments from their own budgets. Predictably, wealthier States and those facing sustained Union pressure have been able to offer more or additional benefits than fiscally constrained ones. Nonetheless, it is unconscionable that the practice of denying these workers their due still continues to be knowingly exploitative. The Centre must legally reclassify these 'volunteers' as statutory employees under the Code on Social Security, guaranteeing minimum wages and pension coverage. The Centre and States must also bridge fiscal gaps to ensure equitable pay across regions. Only by institutionalising these protections can India grant these essential workers their rightful dignity.

Delimitation after 2027, redrawing power in India

Every democracy must periodically redraw its electoral map to reflect population change. In India, this process is known as delimitation. On paper, it is a routine constitutional adjustment. In reality, the next delimitation exercise – due after Census 2027 – will be the most consequential redrawing of political power since Independence. It will redefine how seats are distributed in the Lok Sabha and how India understands fairness, federalism and regional balance.

The Constitution required delimitation after every Census. But this principle has been suspended for nearly half a century. Inter-State distribution of Lok Sabha seats has remained unchanged since 1976, frozen at 1971 Census figures so that States would not be penalised for controlling population growth. The 84th Amendment in 2001 specified that redistribution would remain suspended until "the first census taken after the year 2026".

That suspension effectively expires with Census 2027. At present, representation still rests on an India of 548 million people (1971), not today's 1.47 billion reality.

Delimitation is time consuming. India's four previous Commissions took between three and five-and-a-half years – and the last one (2002–08) only redrew internal constituency boundaries without reallocating seats among States. The next Commission would probably reallocate seats among States for the first time since 1976, redraw all constituencies, and create reserved constituencies for women's 33% quota. Even if Census 2027 data is published in 2028, completing delimitation before 2031–32 seems impossible. As a result, women's reservation cannot be implemented before the 2034 elections. But we cannot rule out surprises.

The complexity around numbers
In the 1970s, fertility rates across States were similar. Today, they have sharply diverged. The southern and western States achieved below-replacement fertility through investments in education, health and women's empowerment. Northern States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continue recording higher population growth. If population alone determines representation, States that controlled growth will lose political weight, while those that did not will gain significantly.

The numbers are stark. According to delimitation projections, if seats were allocated purely by population in an expanded Lok Sabha of approximately 888 members, Uttar Pradesh would rise from 80 to 151 seats and Bihar from 40 to 82 – just over 26% combined. Tamil Nadu would have 53 seats (from 39) and Kerala 23 (from 20). Though their absolute numbers rise, their share in the total Lok Sabha strength would fall from 7.2% to 6.0% and 3.7% to 2.6%, respectively, as the northern States gain



S.Y. Quraishi
is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and is the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder: The Making of the Great Indian Election'

disproportionately. This creates a moral paradox. Why should States be punished for good governance? For 50 years, India urged States to implement population control. Those who succeeded now stand to lose representation. The logic which forced the freeze in 1976 and 2001 is still valid.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated in 2025 that "not even one seat will be reduced" for any southern State. But this promise cannot offset the imbalance if northern States gain massively – or it may require suspending constitutionally mandated redistribution altogether, inviting legal challenge.

The arithmetic reveals a deeper complexity. Even if southern States retain their current seat numbers in an expanded House, their influence diminishes significantly. Parliament functions on absolute numbers, not proportions. When the combined strength of U.P. and Bihar rises to over a quarter of the House, the bargaining power of other regions inevitably declines – despite the promise being kept technically.

Options worth pondering over

There are six options that merit debate.

First, extend the current freeze beyond 2026, delaying redistribution until fertility rates converge. This preserves current balances but denies fast-growing States fair representation (a legitimate concern) and risks constitutional challenge under Article 14, as unequal representation based on 50-year-old data undermines the principle of equal suffrage.

Second, expand the Lok Sabha from 543 to, say, 750 or 888 seats, ensuring that no State loses seats; some gain more. However, proportional distribution means that larger States still get bigger shares, leaving southern concerns unaddressed.

Third, adopt a weighted formula: 80% weight for population, 20% for development indicators such as literacy, health, or sustained fertility control – analogous to how the Finance Commission uses composite indicators for tax devolution. This rewards governance outcomes, not just population size. The ratio could be 70:30.

Fourth, strengthen the Rajya Sabha as a genuinely federal chamber. Earlier, domicile requirements ensured that Members represented the States from which they were elected. Now, anyone can be elected from anywhere, weakening that link. The domicile condition must be restored. Additionally, Rajya Sabha seats remain distributed largely by population – Uttar Pradesh has 31 seats while Sikkim has one – blunting its federal purpose. Consider adopting the American system of equal seats a State, irrespective of size (California 39 million, Wyoming 0.5 million both have two Senators). An Indian model could be evolved which could have three tiers: largest States (15 seats each), medium States (10 seats), smallest States (five seats).

Within each tier, States would have equal representation regardless of population, balancing federalism and restoring the Rajya Sabha's moderating role.

Fifth, bifurcate Uttar Pradesh into three or four States to neutralise its excessive weight. U.P. was already divided in 2000 to create Uttarakhand, and movements for Bundelkhand and Purvanchal Statehood have persisted for decades. If U.P.'s projected 151 seats were divided among four States (about 38 seats each), no single State would dominate – making this a federalism solution, not just an administrative one.

Sixth, implement phased redistribution across two election cycles. Reallocate half the adjusted seats in 2034, the remainder in 2039, giving States and parties time to adapt. This reduces political shock while honouring constitutional requirements.

The need for careful navigation
Delimitation will reshape coalition politics fundamentally. If two States command a quarter of Lok Sabha seats, the mathematics of government formation changes entirely. Regional parties that historically provided parliamentary balance would find their leverage reduced, regardless of absolute seat numbers. The choice between constitutional fairness and political stability requires navigating this structural tension carefully.

Beyond formulas, procedure matters. The Delimitation Commission should include experts in demography, constitutional law and federal studies, with meaningful State representation. Transparency, extensive public hearings and robust oversight are essential.

The next delimitation will also redraw internal constituency boundaries – considering geography, administrative convenience, and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) representation. While the number of SC and ST reserved constituencies is determined by strict population proportion, the location of specific SC constituencies involves Commission discretion, potentially creating scope for manipulation." The ST formula should apply to both.

Delimitation is a national milestone that will redistribute political voice and shape coalition politics for decades. Done well, it can reaffirm India's unity and modernise representation. Done poorly, it can deepen distrust and injure the federal spirit.

The Census will measure India's population; delimitation will measure its democracy. Once Census data is released, positions will harden and consensus will fade – making now the moment for dialogue.

If guided by transparency, empathy and shared justice, the exercise can renew faith in federalism and democracy. But if driven by political arithmetic alone, it may redraw the moral balance of the Republic itself.

If done poorly, driven by political arithmetic alone, it can deepen distrust and injure India's federal spirit

In geopolitics, clarity is rare. But when it arrives, it demands action. Both are now embodied within the deepening relationship between the European Union (EU) and India as the two sides prepare for the upcoming visit of the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of the European Council, António Luís Santos da Costa, New Delhi. As chief guests at India's 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, and co-chairs of the 16th India-EU Summit on January 27, their presence is more than ceremonial. It is an alignment of intent. The optics of EU leaders standing alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi at India's most symbolic national celebration will underscore the urgency of this moment.

India, once confident of its rapport with United States President Donald Trump, now finds itself in the crosshairs of America – hit with punitive tariffs and disparaging rhetoric, including being accused with the farcical charge of 'Modi's War' in Ukraine over Indian purchases of Russian oil. New Delhi has rejected this inflammatory rhetoric as "inaccurate and misleading", cautioning against "double standards", even as it insists that the partnership has survived many challenging transitions and will press forward on the basis of mutual respect and shared interests. Europe understands this rupture all too well. Today, the message is clear: alliances no longer guarantee protection, and strategic autonomy must take precedence over strategic patience.

A relationship with potential
For too long, the India-EU relationship has simmered with unrealised potential. The two sides have committed to strengthening the relationship but progress has remained episodic. It is often derailed by narrative wars over Russia and China, and by the simple reality that the two



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The two sides have the potential to write a new chapter in multilateralism

sides were more focused on their respective relationships with the U.S. But the new urgency behind this specific visit means that it could now result in relationship-defining outcomes.

What the FTA can deliver

First, India and the EU are in the final stages of negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that has been sputtering along since 2007. It should be viewed as a geopolitical insurance policy. If realised to its full potential, the agreement could unlock major opportunities in textiles and apparel, where India seeks tariff reductions to boost exports to Europe; pharmaceuticals and chemicals, sectors where India's competitive edge can meet EU demand; automobiles and machinery, where Europe wants greater access to India's growing market; and digital and services trade, where India's IT sector could gain from regulatory harmonisation.

For India, the FTA is also about climate equity. One sticking point continues to be the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which levies a 20%-35% effective carbon charge on materials such as steel, aluminium, cement and fertilizers from India. India sees it as a non-tariff barrier that has the potential to erase the gains an FTA would provide. In the interest of both sides, Europe should be able to offer some relief to India on this front, while still ensuring that climate remains a top policy priority.

Second, while maximising cooperation in issues of trade and technology remains vital, perhaps the hardest and most necessary conversations lie in defence. Ms. Von der Leyen has called for a Security and Defence Partnership with India, on a par with Japan and South Korea. And while it is not headline-grabbing like the FTA, it is almost just as important. For the EU, it would offer access to India's defence market, and

the opportunity for co-production of defence equipment.

For India, it complements Mr. Modi's 'Make in India' initiative, which aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub. It would also offer access to European technology and a framework for more joint exercises and coordination in the Indian Ocean.

As a template for the world

Finally, on a strategic level, the EU-India partnership could be a model for other nations as they recalibrate and search for new partners. With America's unpredictability and China's continued assertiveness, India and the EU could offer a model of relationship building that respects internal domestic sensitivities, while recognising the need for flexibility and pragmatism. At the heart of this alignment is a shared belief that sovereign choices must remain sovereign, and that neither Beijing, Moscow nor Washington should hold veto power over India or Europe's strategic decisions. India and the EU have paid the price of over-dependence – whether on Russian gas, Chinese markets or American security guarantees. Both also recognise the need for strategic autonomy, which is about enhancing flexibility, reducing over-exposure to or over-dependence on certain countries, and amplifying each other's voices on the global stage.

India and the EU have the credibility, the capability and the capital to co-create a new chapter in multilateralism. If they choose to seize this moment and avoid the trappings of internal bureaucracy, the two sides could help realise a multipolar order that is resilient, equitable and sovereign.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Now, the third Governor

The Karnataka Governor's walkout from the State Assembly (Front page, January 23), can only be seen as an act of shirking duty. A Governor's role is to serve as a constitutional functionary, but this episode is another instance of the dangers of gubernatorial politicisation. That such problems arise with a troika of Governors,

in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka – also non-BJP ruled States – shows that there needs to be deep introspection. Governors, in the words of Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava, Member of Constituent Assembly, "... shall be a guide, philosopher and friend of the Ministry as well as the people in general... He will be a man above party and he will look at the Minister

and government from a detached standpoint. He will be able to influence the Ministers and Members of the Legislature in such a manner that the administration will run smoothly."

Divyanshi Soni,
New Delhi

The ostensible reason for these worthies throwing tantrums is that they are only acting on the dictates

of the dispensation at the Centre which mandates that they cause maximum discomfort and inconvenience to the State governments. Such events never occur in States ruled by the BJP or its allies.

C.V. Aravind,
Bengaluru

The Governors of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are supposed to read out the address, through the

legislature, as it reflects the vision and the aspirations of people's elected government. It is time that the gubernatorial role is redefined to ensure the stature of the office.

Dr. D.V.G. Sankara Rao,
Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh

Tension in Manipur
The killing of a 29-year-old man in Churachandpur district and the circulation of the video of his murder

by the perpetrators points to a premeditated attempt to not just end innocent lives but to also cause disorder in the State. These criminals must not be allowed to succeed and the community at large must see through the motivations of such evil individuals.

Anany Mishra,
Bhilai, Chhattisgarh

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

GROUND ZERO



Shimjitha Musthafa accused U. Deepak of sexually harassing her on a bus in Kerala. In buses across India, people are often crammed together. This is a representational image. RAGESH K.

Trial by social media

A day after a woman posted a video on social media alleging sexual harassment by a man on a bus, he died by suicide. The episode sparked outrage across Kerala and led to heated discussions on the use of social media, the possible consequences of public shaming, and mental health. **Mini Muringatheri** reports on an episode that has divided society

Trigger warning: This article contains references to sexual abuse and suicide. Please use your discretion in deciding if, when, and where to read.

It was U. Deepak's birthday on January 17. The 42-year-old sales executive, who worked at a garment company, lived with his parents in a two-storey house in Govindapuram, a couple of kilometres from Kozhikode city in Kerala. He had promised his father, Choyi Ullattuthodi, and mother, K. Kanyakka, that he would take them to Guruvayur temple, an ancient Hindu site dedicated to Lord Krishna and popular among pilgrims. For the closely knit family of three, whose lives were rooted in routine, such pilgrimages were not rare, Kanyakka says.

Deepak had instructed his parents to be ready by the afternoon for the journey that would take about 2 hours. He said they would leave once he returned from work. But when he came home, his parents realised that he was not himself.

"He was very upset," Kanyakka recalls. "He didn't eat. Without any explanation, he said, 'Amma, we will go to Guruvayur later.' Kanyakka kept asking him what had happened, but Deepak did not respond. He shut himself inside his room.

That night, citing incidents of theft in the area, Deepak asked his parents to close their bedroom door. They did as they were told. The next morning, they found Deepak dead in his room.

For Ullattuthodi and Kanyakka, the discovery was shocking especially since they saw no warning and no visible signs of despair. "We couldn't understand why he took his own life," says Kanyakka, her voice cracking.

A day earlier, unbeknownst to his parents, Deepak had struggled to process a video in the public domain that featured him. The circumstances surrounding his death have sent shockwaves across Kerala, sparking widespread discussion and outrage. His death highlights the complex intersection of social media, public shaming, sexual abuse, and mental health.

The incident on the bus

The previous day, 35-year-old Shimjitha Musthafa from Vadakara, who describes herself on Instagram as a "trained psychologist", posted a video. She alleged that Deepak sexually harassed her on a bus in Payyanur, Kannur district. She claimed that Deepak, who had been travelling in the private bus from Payyanur railway station to the bus stand, deliberately elbowed her breast.

The video struck a nerve. Sexual harassment in crowded public transport is a lived reality for countless women across India. The clip went viral, reaching more than 2 million people within a few hours. When some people in the comments section questioned her intent and the framing of the video, Musthafa deleted the clip. Later, she posted a follow-up video. She said that her aim



When I spoke to him on the night of his birthday, he was very distressed. He feared public humiliation. ASGAR ALI
Deepak's friend

was not to target an individual, but to highlight a "serious social and mental health issue."

It was Asgar Ali, a friend of Deepak, who informed him about the video. "Deepak was introverted," Ali says. "He was recovering from the trauma of a divorce. When I spoke to him on the night of his birthday, he was very distressed. He feared public humiliation. He told me he would take legal measures against the woman."

For Kanyakka, the memory of that night is unbearable. "Though he was 42, he was like a child," she says. "He was very delicate. He would not do anything without asking me. To take such a step, he must have been broken inside. How much my son must have cried all night..."

Deepak's cousin, U. Jayaprakash, and his wife Sini are in a state of disbelief. "Nobody who knew Deepak would ever believe that he could sexually harass someone," says Jayaprakash. "He was very attached to his mother. He must have worried about how such an allegation would affect her."

The family accused Musthafa of using the video to gain fame and followers. Public anger swelled rapidly. Soon, Deepak's death was no longer a private tragedy; it became a public flashpoint. While several women's rights activists urged people to stay calm and not lose sight of the complexity of the issue, many men were angry. A series of videos showed men travelling in buses with cardboard boxes covering their bodies. One of the most widely shared clips featured a bus conductor wearing a cardboard box over his upper body, bearing a message demanding the formation of a men's commission.

Complaints and inquiries

On January 19, Kanyakka filed a complaint against Musthafa with the Kozhikode City Police Commissioner. The Kozhikode Medical College police registered a case and invoked Section 109 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. This is a non-bailable offence relating to abetment to suicide. The police arrested Musthafa from her relative's house in Vadakara and remanded her to judicial



Deepak's parents, Choyi Ullattuthodi and K. Kanyakka, discovered his body in his room the morning after his birthday. RAGESH K.

custody for 14 days. The State Human Rights Commission directed the police to submit a report within a week.

In its remand report before the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court, Kunnamangalam, the police stated that Deepak had died by suicide due to the humiliation caused by the videos filmed and shared by Musthafa.

The investigation, the police said, included a review of CCTV footage from the bus in which Musthafa and Deepak had travelled. "There was nothing abnormal or objectionable [in it]," they wrote in the remand report. "The footage does not show any inappropriate or unusual behaviour." Statements from the bus staff and fellow passengers also reportedly confirmed that no incident of harassment or misconduct took place during the journey, the remand report said.

The police also said that Musthafa recorded multiple videos of the alleged sexual harassment in the bus and deleted some of them. Her phone has been sent for forensic analysis. "We have sought police custody of the accused for further questioning," says a police source.

The police added in the report that Musthafa, who holds a postgraduate degree and is former ward member of the Areacode Grama Panchayat, was aware of the legal requirement to approach the police if she had experienced harassment.

Meanwhile, from Manjeri jail, Musthafa filed a complaint through her brother with the Payyanur police, reiterating that she was sexually harassed on the bus on January 16. The Payyanur police have initiated a preliminary inquiry.

A battleground

As legal processes unfolded, public discourse exploded. Almost overnight, the public perception of Musthafa shifted. Initially seen as a victim of sexual harassment, she came to be seen as an abettor of suicide. Social media turned into a battleground. Many people questioned the authenticity of the video, arguing that the contact between Deepak and her could have been accidental as the bus was crowded. Some influencers and YouTubers branded the video "fake."

Deepak's death altered the narrative entirely. What was once a conversation about women's safety in public transport turned into a bitter debate on false allegations, public shaming, and the destructive power of social media. The case raised uncomfortable questions about accountability, justice, and empathy in the digital age.

Feminists themselves appeared divided. "When a woman says she was sexually harassed and shows video evidence of it, how does that automatically become abetment to suicide?" someone wondered. Some women argued that suicide cannot invalidate an allegation, especially when the woman continues to stand by her claim even after the man's death. Others asked whether the video should have been made public before an investigation. Should social media influencers assume the role of arbiters of justice? Should public opinion be allowed to determine guilt?

Cyber crime investigator Pattathil Dhanya Menon points to legal grey zones. "Technically speaking, in a public space, you cannot shoot another person without consent," she says. "If it was recorded as evidence against violence, it should have been submitted to the police. It should not have been edited or tampered with." She stresses the urgent need for awareness about the legitimate use of social media.

As the debate raged on, Musthafa became the target of vicious online abuse. She received rape and murder threats. Ajay Unni, from the Bharati-

ya Janata Party, who contested the recent Thodupuzha Municipality elections, said women who create such videos should be raped first.

Seeing the firestorm, many women came out in support of Musthafa. They said that there are barely any women who have not experienced harassment in crowded buses or public spaces in India. Detailing their own experiences, women also spoke of how they are routinely shamed and isolated when they speak up.

Data from the National Crime Records Bureau show that India's crime rate against women increased in 2022 by 4% points compared to 2021. The national average stood at 66.4 cases per lakh women, driven by high rates in Delhi (144.4), Haryana (118.7), and Telangana (117.6). States such as Kerala (82) and Madhya Pradesh (78.8) were closer to the national average.

"School and college students are the most frequent victims," says Radhika P., a 53-year-old sales staff member in Kozhikode. "My daughter often complains to me. Even at my age, I'm not spared. Women always travel with fear. We have to remain alert in crowded buses."

Musthafa's supporters also pointed to the apathy of the police and the judicial system in handling harassment complaints. This, they argued, pushes women to post videos online as a form of self-defence, a way of reclaiming agency and deterring potential perpetrators. They cited the 2023 case of Savad Sha, who was arrested for masturbating inside a Kerala State transport bus while sitting next to a woman. She uploaded a video of the act online. The woman, an actor and model, faced severe attacks online from men's groups. Some of them even received the accused after he obtained bail. In 2025, Savad Sha was booked again for molesting another woman in another bus, validating the earlier complaint.

"If the promptness shown in arresting Musthafa had been shown in acting on complaints of harassment in buses, things would be different," says screenwriter and feminist activist Didi Damodharan. "There is hardly a woman who has not had a bad experience in public transport. That is what Musthafa tried to say through her video. Whether this specific case is true or not should be decided by the police and courts."

She adds, "Mobile phones can be effective tools of self defence. The very awareness that one might be under watch can make public spaces safer for women." At the same time, she cautions against the oversimplification of Deepak's suicide. "There may be many reasons behind this



If the promptness shown in arresting Musthafa had been shown in acting on complaints of harassment in buses, things would be different.

DIDI DAMODHARAN
Activist

death. The video could be one factor, but it may not be the sole reason."

Damodharan is blunt about how the narrative has been weaponised. "The tears of the mother are being used to attack the women's liberation movement. Instead of emphasising that suicide is never a solution, all anger has been directed at the woman and the video. There appears to be a deliberate effort to crush even the smallest possibility of women's empowerment," she says.

She also points to deeper anxieties at play. "The accessibility of social media and phones for women disrupts power equations in a patriarchal society. That is why the issue is framed as a problem of women using social media," she says.

Drawing lines

As Musthafa was brought to the Medical College police station, people blocked traffic and shouted abuses. Similar scenes were reported outside Manjeri jail. People posted Reels on social media, attacking women and feminist activists. Political parties and their cyber warriors jumped in, each pushing their own agenda.

In the 2017 case involving the abduction and sexual assault of a Malayalam actor, the court took the ages of the accused into account while determining the sentence. In another instance of sexual misconduct, the court showed consideration to the accused, filmmaker P.T. Kunju Muhammed, because of his age. "What, then, is the 'right' age for a man to be punished adequately in a case of harassment?" asks Damodharan.

Women activists also point out that the gravity of the allegation against Musthafa is far less severe than crimes such as rape and gang rape. They question the disproportionate response and the intensity of the punitive action in her case.

On the other hand, men's rights activists claim that Deepak's death is not an isolated incident. They argue that men are increasingly victims of public humiliation and reputational damage without evidence. Activist Rahul Easwar announced a 24x7 helpline for men facing mental harassment and declared January 17 as 'Men's Rights Day'. He gave Deepak's parents "initial aid" of ₹3.17 lakh.

Psychiatrist Dr. Shaju George, who is from Thrissur and works in Dubai, says, "Ending one's life is almost normalised as a response to mental trauma. What is tragic is that neither he nor his friends or family sought professional psychological or legal help."

Deepak's death has left behind grieving parents, a woman in jail, and a society deeply divided. It is the story not just of one man and one video, but of a social contract stretched thin by technology, patriarchy, fear, and grief. It forces Kerala, a State that has just declared itself 100% digitally literate, to confront an uncomfortable truth: in the age of social media, justice is seen as everyone's business, delivered in quick, reckless shorts. And the cost is often paid in lives.

Suicide Prevention Helpline: Disha - 1056, 0471-2552056

mini.mk@thehindu.co.in

From Page One**NDA government will be formed in T.N., says PM**

"We need to free Tamil Nadu from the clutches of the DMK," he said underlining the pace of the State's development and the overall progress of the country were interlinked.

The DMK government, he alleged, had handed over the youth to the drug mafia. Men associated with the DMK were being accused of drug racketeering, which was a big challenge for the future of the State, he said.

Contending that India was the first port of call for global investors, Mr. Modi said the country was firming up big ties with every region in the world. To benefit from this, "it is very important that an NDA double-engine government is formed in Tamil Nadu. When there is a government here, which works harmoniously with the Union government, it will be easier for investors to place their money here."

Claiming that crime was under control during the late Jayalalithaa's regime, Mr. Modi said women and girls felt unsafe now. "I appeal to the mothers, sisters and daughters to (help) form an NDA government here," he said.

Referring to the Thirupparankundram Karthigai Deepam row, Mr. Modi said the BJP stood with devotees for their rights, but the DMK and allies indulged in vote bank politics. The party did not even spare the court, he alleged, claiming DMK was the "biggest enemy" of Tamil culture.

Mr. Modi outlined the extensive funding the Union government had given to Tamil Nadu over the past 11 years. The NDA government had released ₹3 lakh crore to Tamil Nadu in terms of devolution, which was three times more than the amount released during the UPA regime, he said. The funding for railway projects in the State was also seven times higher now, he said.

Give BJP clear mandate, Modi tells Kerala voters

Mr. Modi accused the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government of "denying the benefits" of Centrally sponsored schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana urban housing project and the PM SHRI project for schools.

In his first visit to the Kerala capital after the BJP captured power in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation in the recently concluded local body elections, he said the win was "historic and a harbinger of change across the State."

"Whenever I have come to Kerala, you have given me your love. But, this time, I can sense a new hope here... Before 1987, the BJP was inconsequential in Gujarat. But that year, we won the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, just like how it now won in Thiruvananthapuram. People saw our work there and gave us power in the entire State. Just like that, in Kerala, our journey has started from a city," he said.

He alleged that the capital had been "kept backward in development" as the LDF and the Congress-led UDF had indulged in corruption. "The BJP's team has now started working with a vision for Thiruvananthapuram... it will become a model city for the entire country," he said.

Mr. Modi said the upcoming Assembly elections will change Kerala's direction. "The people of the State have till now witnessed only corruption, bad governance and appeasement, but the BJP's arrival will change that," he said.

He alleged that gold theft had happened at the Sabarimala temple under the LDF government. "This is Modi's guarantee that those involved will be punished if the BJP comes to power," he said.

Tejashwi's security row: RJD slams Bihar govt.

Amit Bhelari

PATNA

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Friday targeted the ruling government in Bihar a day after the security cover of party leader and Leader of Opposition in State Assembly Tejashwi Yadav was downgraded from Z to Y+.

The security cover of several Opposition leaders in Bihar have been withdrawn, including Bihar Congress chief Rajesh Ram whereas the security cover of several National Democratic Alliance leaders have been upgraded, including newly elected BJP national president Nitin Nabi from Y+ to Z category.

RJD spokesperson Ejaz Ahmed expressed serious objection over curtailing the security of Bihar's Leader of the Opposition. "This kind of action by the ruling party is a conspiracy to suppress the voice of the Opposition," he said.

71 fugitives wanted by India located abroad in 2024-25, highest in 12 years**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

As many as 71 fugitives wanted by India were located in a foreign country in 2024-25, the highest in the last 12 years, government data shows.

According to the 2024-25 annual report of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) located 71 people wanted by India in foreign countries, while 27 fugitives returned to India in the last financial year.

The CBI processed and gave comments on more than 22,200 applications for renunciation of Indian citizenship on the Ministry of Home Affairs portal. At a CBI conference last year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had underscored the need for a ruthless approach to ensure the extradition of fugitives.

Over the previous decade, the number of fugitives traced to foreign

Jurisdictional changes not allowed ahead of Census'**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan on Friday asked the Chief Secretaries to not effect any jurisdictional changes in States till March 31, 2027 due to the forthcoming Population Census 2027.

Mr. Mohan addressed the Conference of Chief Secretaries of States/Union Territories, State Census Nodal Officers, senior officers from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and Directors of Census Operations.

He asked the States to ensure timely appointment and training of Census functionaries; republishing of notifications; effective use of digital tools, including self-enumeration; and a focused publicity and communication approach to build public awareness, trust and participation to achieve the objectives of Census 2027.

The conference was attended by the Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India (RG&CCI) Mritunjay Kumar Narayan; Additional Registrar Generals Sunil Kumar and Sanjeev Kumar; Deputy Director General Biswajit Das and other senior officers.

Mr. Mohan sought cooperation from the Chief Secretaries to regularly review the Census activities.

NEWS ANALYSIS**Krishnadas Rajagopal**

NEW DELHI

The walkouts of Governors from the inaugural State Legislative Assembly sessions in Opposition-ruled Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala mark a departure from the "limited freewheeling" allowed to them under the Constitution.

Article 176 (1) mandates that Governors, at the commencement of each year, "shall" address the Legislative Assembly or, in the case of a State having a Legislative Council, both Houses assembled together and inform the Legislature of the causes of its summons.

The Constituent Assembly Debates quoted Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on the role of the Governor in Parliamentary democracy, "The Governor under the Constitu-

SC seeks report on probe against Anil Ambani group

CBI and ED asked to submit status reports; top court calls for fresh notices to the group and the promoter over allegations of bank fraud; Solicitor-General says audit revealed 'siphoning of funds'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday sought status reports from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on their probe into alleged bank fraud involving the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) and promoter Anil Ambani.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant directed fresh notices to be served on the ADAG and Mr. Ambani. The Bench noted in its order that neither parties had entered appearance through their counsel in court "for reasons best known to them". The court emphasised that fresh notices were being issued as a "last opportunity" and in the "interest of justice".

The hearing was based on a petition filed by E.A.S. Sarma, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, seeking a court-monitored and extensive investigation with emphasis on the role of bank officials.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre, the CBI and the ED, clarified that he was not opposing Mr. Bhushan. He submitted

orally that a forensic audit revealed that there was "siphoning of funds". Based on the audit report, the State Bank of India (SBI) had registered a First Information Report with the CBI in compliance with a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) circular.

He clarified, however, that there was no pending challenge to the "fraud declaration" by the SBI.

Noting that Mr. Mehta's clients had no opposition to the petition, the court said it must now hear what the ADAG and Mr. Ambani had to say.

Mr. Bhushan submitted that debts worth ₹1.5 lakh crore were written off in bankruptcy proceedings. He said the web of transactions was fraudulent with several shell companies formed in tax havens and money siphoned out. He submitted that the alleged illegal activities were detected by the Bank of Baroda as early as 2020. The period of review was between the years 2016 and 2019, yet the CBI had registered an FIR only in June 2025 based on the audit report the Bank of Baroda had received in 2020.

The petition urged the

The five-year unexplained delay by the complainant bank and the inertia displayed by institutions like the RBI and ED clearly indicate deeper institutional complicity that the investigating agencies have entirely ignored

E.A.S. SARMA

Petitioner

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The five-year

Mamata says 110 dead due to SIR; blames EC, Centre

Bengal CM asks why FIR should not be registered against Election Commission for the deaths; she says attempts are being made to disrespect national icons and change the country's history

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said that three to four people were dying by suicide every day in the State due to anxiety over the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. She said the Election Commission and the Union government should take responsibility for the deaths.



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during an event marking the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Kolkata on Friday.

anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

There have been instances where people have registered police complaints against the poll body in the State.

Ms. Banerjee has been critical of the SIR since the start of the process and has written five letters to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar since November 2025.

The Chief Minister said attempts were being made to disrespect national icons from Rabindranath Tagore to Bose and change the country's history. "There is an attempt to change the history of India. Scholars are being disrespected. There is disrespect for the language and our culture," she said.

Hitting out at Ms. Banerjee, West Bengal BJP presi-

Congress flags EC's arbitrary threshold setting

KOLKATA
West Bengal Congress chief Subhankar Sarkar flagged the "arbitrary" threshold set by the Election Commission, pointing out that the number of electors with six or more voters linked to them as children stood at 2,06,056. However, if the threshold is raised to 10, the number drops to 8,682.

dent Samik Bhattacharya said that "those who are in politics banking on the legacy of Congress, they should not comment on treatment of national icons". Mr. Bhattacharya said the BJP was indeed "changing the history" of the country by getting rid of the "colonial hangover".

(For those in distress, counselling is available at *Tele MANAS 14416*.)

Stir against new rural jobs Act will be decentralised, says NREGA Morcha

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI

The campaign against the new rural employment guarantee legislation, The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025, will be decentralised unlike the 13-month-long farmers' agitation, which was stationed at Delhi's border, according to the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha.



A gathering during the national convention of MGNREGA workers in Delhi on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

law makes the rural employment programme like any other centrally sponsored scheme where decisions are top down," Nikhil Dey, one of the founding architects of MGNREGA and founder member of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, told *The Hindu*.

The first round of protests will be held on Republic Day across the country. It is one of the four days in a year that gram panchayats have to be mandatorily held. The NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, a coalition of NGOs and unions working with MGNREGA workers, has given a call to ensure that during this meeting, the gram panchayats move a resolution against the new law. "The new legislation has diluted powers of gram panchayats in many ways, including having a say in what work should be done and where. The new

chayat by December 26 last year to discuss the salient features of the Act.

The NREGA Morcha has also called for a Mahapanchayat in State capitals on February 2, coinciding with what would have been the 20th anniversary of the launch of MGNREGA. Mr. Dey said the campaign to restore MGNREGA has the potential to be the "largest decentralised agitation" in the world.

"The campaign to restore MGNREGA is going to be unlike the farmers' agitation or even the protests against the labour codes. It will be far more decentralised

ised and widespread because the workers are spread across the country," he added.

On Thursday, the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha in close coordination with the Congress had organised a national convention of workers, which was addressed by both Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi. More than 300 workers participated in the event.

An NREGA Sangharsh Morcha activist said that the two movements cannot be compared because the MGNREGA workers and farmers belong to two distinct economic classes.

"For the half-a-day national convention, many workers travelled for the very first time to Delhi, many of them reaching directly to the venue since their trains were delayed, many travelling by metro for the first time. Even crossing the turnstile at Metro station was a novel experience for them," the activist said.

'Strategic vision of Netaji has lessons for contemporary India'

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI



General Anil Chauhan

Anita Bose seeks support for return of Netaji's ashes

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's daughter, Anita Bose Pfaff, marked the 129th birth anniversary of the late freedom fighter by urging all Indians to support the demand for his remains to be brought to India from Tokyo, Japan.

In a statement on Thursday, she said Netaji would have been distressed that his remains were kept outside his motherland more than 80 years after his death and 78 years after India became free.

Emphasising Netaji's foresight, General Chauhan pointed to Bose's vision for indigenous arms production as early as 1944, likening it to today's emphasis on *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance). He cited the negotiation with Japan to secure the Andaman and Nicobar Islands – renamed Shaheed and Swaraj – as India's first sovereign territory as a classic example of strategic realism.

On future warfare, he cautioned: "There are no permanent friends or allies." He stressed the need for innovation rooted in Indian strategic culture rather than Western models.

General Chauhan noted that much of the military history studied by Indian officers was written from a

Act against perpetrators of 'barbaric' attack on pastor in Odisha, Congress requests Shah

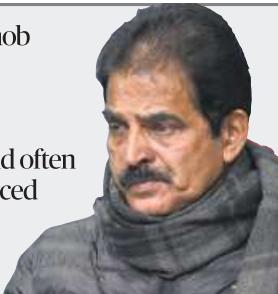
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Expressing "deep shock" over the alleged assault on a Christian pastor and members of the community in Odisha's Dhenkanal district, Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking immediate action against those responsible.

In his letter, Mr. Venugopal referred to the January 4 incident in Parjang village, where Pastor Bipin Bihari Naik was attacked while conducting Sunday prayers at his residence.

QQ Vigilantism and mob justice cannot be tolerated, especially when directed against religious minorities on unverified and often malicious allegations of forced conversion'

K.C. VENUGOPAL
Congress general secretary



According to him, a mob of around 40 people, "reportedly consisting of Bajrang Dal activists", surrounded the house and assaulted those present, including the pastor's family and seven Christian families.

Describing the incident as "despicable and barbaric", Mr. Venugopal said the pastor had been detained, beaten, and publicly humiliated. "His face was smeared with sindoor, a garland of sandals was placed around his neck,

and he was paraded publicly," the letter said, adding that the pastor was later tied near a local temple, forced to eat cow dung, made to chant religious slogans, and compelled to drink water from a sewer.

"This was not merely an assault; it was a humiliating public lynching and an act of forced religious coercion, aimed at stripping a citizen of his dignity and faith," he wrote. "Vigilantism and mob justice cannot be tolerated, especially when directed against religious minorities on unverified and often malicious al-

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE
Bengalore - 560012
IISc/CCMD/Tenders/2025-26 Date: 21.01.2026
Tender Notification- IISc/ Tender-CIV-18/2025-26

Indian Institute of Science invites bids in two cover system through e-procurement platform <https://eprocure.gov.in>. Any specialized firms company registered under KPWD / CPWD / railways / MES / central PSUs/ or any Government Department of Class I / Class A Civil Contractors are eligible to apply for the work of "Transvaahan shed construction, road access refurbishment including the Supply and Installation of an additional split AC in the battery room of F&A Department, IISc." Estimated Cost of Project is Rs. 21,69,776/- Last date of receipt of application is 10th Feb 2026 at 15:30 Hrs. Any other details can be obtained from the office of the Centre for Campus Management & Development, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on all working days or e-mail office.ccmd@iisc.ac.in

Sd/-, Registrar

Office of the Director, Department of Animal Husbandry, Uttarakhand, Dehradun
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
No: 5797-5802 / Purchase Cell/ 2025-26/ Dated 23-01-2026
The Chairman, State Purchase Committee, Department of Animal Husbandry, Uttarakhand, on behalf of the Government of Uttarakhand, invites separate e-tenders for Rate Contract for the supply of Veterinary Allopathic Medicines, Ayurvedic Medicines, Feed Supplements and Mineral Mixtures, Veterinary Equipment, Chemicals, and Surgical Consumable Articles for Veterinary Hospitals/ Indenting Officers of Uttarakhand. Tender documents shall be available for download on uktenders.gov.in from January 25, 2026, at 9:00 AM. Online bid submission shall close on February 27, 2026, at 5:00 PM.
Director/ Chairman State Purchase Committee
Department of Animal Husbandry,
Uttarakhand, Dehradun.

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY & DRAINAGE BOARD
Office Of The Chief Engineer, Dharwad
Sir. M. Vishvesvaraya Road,
Jalmandali Compound, DHARWAD - 580 001, Karnataka
Ph. No.: 0836-2447090, Email: kwbew@gmail.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER CALL-2 (Through e-Procurement Portal only)

Tender for the following work is invited (two tender document system) through e-Procurement portal (<https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>) from the eligible Agency / contractors who satisfy the Technical & Financial eligibility criteria. This office Tender Notification No: 2127 Dated: 23-01-2026. Name of Work:- Providing Manpower Services through Outsource for Operation and Maintenance of Bulk Water Supply System of Karwar-Ankola towns for a period of Twelve (12) months under M & R to Karwar-Ankola Water Supply Scheme for the year 2025-26. INDENT NO. KUWSDB/2025-26/SE0111/CALL-2. For further information visit e-procurement portal or the Office of the Chief Engineer, K.U.W.S & D. Board, Dharwad may be contacted.

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER,
KUWS & D BOARD, DHARWAD.

DPR/DWD/1141/
2025-26/DESHPANDEPUBLICITY

KARNATAKA STATE NATURAL DISASTER MONITORING CENTRE (KSNDMC)
(A Regd. Society of Govt. of Karnataka)
Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan, Road, Near Yelaha-Altur Layout,
Bengaluru - 560 064. Ph.: 080-67355000
No. KSNDMC/ACT/13/2020 Date: 22.01.2026
E-TENDER NOTIFICATION

KSNDMC invites tenders for the following through e-procurement portal on "<https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>". Tenders are invited for (a) Supply, Installation and Comprehensive Annual maintenance for five years of Telemetric Rain gauge stations in 1530 locations in Karnataka vide Tender No. KSNDMC/2025-26/IND0003. Last date for submission of bid is 21.02.2026, pre bid meeting is on 02.02.2026 at 11.00AM and (b) Tender No. KSNDMC/2025-26/IND0004 for Supply, installation, refurbishment and Comprehensive annual maintenance of Telemetric Rain gauge stations in 429 locations in Karnataka. Last date for submission of bid is 23.02.2026, pre bid meeting is on 02.02.2026 at 11.00AM at KSNDMC. Further the tender document details can be obtained through e-procurement portal of GoK.

Sd/- Director

KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(RAICHUR THERMAL POWER STATION)
CIN : U85110KA1970SC001919
ABSTRACT/SHORT TERM e-BID NOTIFICATION (Through KPP Portal Only)

Tenders are invited through KPP Portal: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> for the following works.

1. KPCL/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT3887, Date: 20.01.2026 Providing CVT foundations at ODY area and other improvement works at HRD Canteen at RTPS. Amount put to tender: Rs. 8.86 Lakhs(Excluding GST). Work completion period: Two (02) Months. Further details contact: Executive Engineer (PCM-2), Mobile: 94495 96582.
2. KPCL/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT3875, Date: 16.01.2026, Supply, erection, testing & commissioning of AMF panel and alternator servicing for 750 KVA Cummins-Kerala Electric unit -8 DG set. EMD: Rs. 21,018/- Last Date and time for On-line submission of tenders: 02.02.2026, 16:30Hrs. Further details contact: Executive Engineer (ODY), Mobile: 94495 99139. E-mail: eeodyp@rtps@gmail.com.
3. KPCL/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT3713/CALL-2, Date: 20.01.2026 Design, Engineering, Manufacture, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of 2 sets of 220V, 2000Ah capacity Lead acid Tubular in Transparent SAN container battery Bank (Each set consists of 108 No. of 2V, 2000Ah capacity Lead acid Tubular cells) with all accessories and necessary spares to retrofit the existing 2 sets of sets of 220V, 2000Ah capacity Lead acid Tubular in Transparent container (OPzS) battery banks of Unit 7 with buy back arrangement of RTPS. Last Date for submission of bid(both cover 1 & 2): 02.02.2026 upto 17:30Hrs.
4. KPCL/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT3879, Date: 19.01.2026 Design, Engineering, Manufacture, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of 2 sets of 220V, 600Ah capacity Lead acid Tubular in Transparent SAN container(OPzS) battery Bank (Each set consists of 108 No. of 2V, 600Ah capacity Lead acid Tubular cells) with all accessories and necessary spares to retrofit the existing 2 sets of sets of 220V, 600Ah capacity Lead acid Tubular in Transparent SAN container (OPzS) battery banks of 400KV switchyard with buy back arrangement of RTPS. Last Date for submission of bid(both cover 1 & 2): 30.01.2026 upto 17:30Hrs. Further details contact: For Sl. No. 3 & 4, Executive Engineer (GM-2), Mobile: 94495 96536. E-mail: eegm2rtspkpc1@karnataka.gov.in / eegm2.rtps@gmail.com. RTPS, KPCL, Shaktinagar - 584170, Raichur District.

MAHTANSCO
Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd
**INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)
(LOCAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)**
SRM e-Tender No. T-2564 /MSETCL/CO/Projects/Pre Tender (RFx No. 6000001479)
MSETCL invites offers by SRM e-tendering in TWO bid system (Techno-Commercial Bid and Price Bid) from the eligible registered bidders for the following work as detailed below.
"Construction of LILLO on 132kV Dahani-Ambesari line at 132kV Dapcheri Substation (Route Length-12.536km) alongwith 2x132kV Line bays at 132kV Dapcheri Substation, Dist. Palghar on turcky basis under Vashi Zone, MSETCL."
Interested bidders may obtain further information available on the website: <https://srmetender.mahatransco.in>
The date of downloading of Bid documents available on the website is from 21.01.2026.
Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Project), MSETCL

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IN BRIEF



Murmu inaugurates 'Granth Kutir' at Rashtrapati Bhavan

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated 'Granth Kutir' at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Friday. The Granth Kutir is a library and archival space with a rich collection of manuscripts and books in 11 classical languages of India, including Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali. According to a release issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Granth Kutir showcases India's rich and diverse cultural, philosophical, literary and intellectual heritage. This facility has a collection of about 2,300 books. Around 50 manuscripts are also part of the collection.

Delhi Police files FIR against Khalistani activist over threats

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police on Friday registered an FIR against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, general counsel of the Khalistani activist group Sikhs for Justice and a designated terrorist, for allegedly issuing threats to create unrest and disrupt peace in the national capital ahead of Republic Day celebrations. According to the police, the case was registered after Pannun released a video on social media, in which he allegedly threatened to disturb peace in Delhi. In the video, he claimed that his "sleeper cells" had pasted pro-Khalistani posters in various parts of the city, including Rohini and Dabri. No pro-Khalistan posters or related material were found during a verification drive, the police said.

Diversify your fish basket, Union govt. advises States

Fisheries Ministry also pushes for cultivation of a wider variety of species to reduce the risk of disease wiping out a single species; urges States to find new markets, adopt new technologies

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

Given recent challenges in seafood exports due to tariff uncertainty and the impact of climate change, the Union Fisheries Ministry is advising States and the fishing industry to diversify their markets and their produce, to reduce the risk of disease and appeal to global customers.

In a recent meeting with State fisheries departments, farmers, fish workers, processors and exporters, the Ministry urged them to cultivate a wider range of species and adopt the latest farming practices, such as the integrated multi-trophic aquaculture to cultivate more fish in the same space, in order to access new global markets.

In fact, Union Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh recently chaired a meeting with envoys from countries seen as potential new markets.

Though invited, the United States was absent from the meeting, which was attended by representatives from more than 40 countries, including China, Rus-



To avoid farmers' dependency on whiteleg shrimp, scientists are working on improving two indigenous varieties. KOMMURI SRINIVAS

sia, Iran, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia.

Reducing risk

A senior Ministry official said that a farmer dependent on one species faces a huge risk. If it is affected by disease, seeds of that particular species could spread from State to State.

In 2006-2007, for instance, the white spot syndrome virus destroyed the farming of black tiger shrimp, the popular brackish water species *penaeus monodon*.

"We have been asking farmers to diversify their species. We have a lot of species with us, which have both domestic and international demand," the

official said. "We have asked States to promote species diversification in inland aquaculture by promoting scampi, tilapia, pangasius in place of varieties such as rohu (*Labeo rohita*) and catla (*Catla catla*) which do not have a global market presence. We will help States to create production and processing clusters where production, processing, value addition, and export could be done for the benefit of farmers and can create jobs locally," the official added.

To avoid farmers' dependency on *Litopenaeus vannamei* (whiteleg shrimp) and to ensure disease-free species, govern-

ment scientists are now working on improving two indigenous varieties – *Penaeus indicus* (Indian white prawn) and *Penaeus japonicus* (giant tiger prawn).

"Both have good export markets. We are exporting these species to over 100 countries," the official said.

Global demand

The official said that there is huge international demand for certain finfish like seabass as its meat quality is good. Kerala's popular *karimeen*, or pearl spot, also has an international appeal.

"Both can be cultivated in brackish waters. We are now trying to develop this variety particularly in States such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan where in many parts, groundwater is saline. We want to turn the waste land into wealth land," the official added.

The Centre has also decided to help States in promoting seaweed marine cage culture, a common practice in China and Norway.

"... Each State has its own fish eating culture. We will cultivate fish according to these culinary traditions," the official said.

Rahul demands PM's intervention to save tariff-hit textile sector

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Friday flagged what he called a "deepening crisis" in India's textile sector due to the high U.S. tariffs and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene, saying the issue was threatening jobs and small businesses.



He says, units are closing, procurement is decreasing, and there is widespread turmoil in the sector

India secures a U.S. trade deal that puts Indian businesses and Indian workers first," he said.

Sharing a video on X from his recent visit to a garment factory in Haryana, Mr. Gandhi said that "50% U.S. tariffs and uncertainty are badly hurting India's textile exporters". "Job losses, factory shutdowns and reduced orders are a reality of our 'Dead Economy,'" he said.

Accusing the Prime Minister of inaction, Mr. Gandhi said, "Mr. Modi has offered no relief or even spoken about tariffs, even though more than 4.5 crore jobs and lakhs of businesses are at stake. Modi ji, you are accountable; please direct your attention to this matter!"

Trade deal urgent
The Congress leader stressed that India must urgently secure a trade agreement with the U.S. that prioritises domestic interests. "It is imperative that

Poll bodies of 42 nations to work together on key issues

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The election management bodies of 42 countries on Friday resolved to work together on five key issues, including purity of electoral rolls, conduct of polls, and use of technology.

As part of the Delhi Declaration adopted on the concluding day of the three-day International Conference on Democracy and Election Management 2026 here, the EBMs also resolved to work together on research and publications, use of technology, and capacity-building.

The declaration was read out by Chief Election Commissioner of India, Ganesh Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

Webinar on careers in biotechnology to be held tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

As industries move towards more human-centric, sustainable, and technology-integrated modes under Industry 5.0, biotechnology is gradually emerging as a critical driver powering innovations in various fields.

Because none of the three companies have started selling batteries, zero incentives have been disbursed against the targeted ₹2,900 crore by October 2025.

The first webinar on the topic "Careers in Biotechnology: What you need to know" will be held at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday. The session will feature G. Jayaraman, professor and dean, School of Bio Sciences and Technology, VIT Chennai; P.R. Yashavant, assistant professor, School of Bio Sciences and

Technology, VIT Chennai; J.N. Nidhya, alumni and entrepreneur, SpotDot Bioinnovations, IIT Madras Research Park; and Venkata Krishna B., senior researcher and lead, Prayoga Institute of Education Research, Bengaluru. The session will be moderated by Athira Elissa Johnson, senior reporter, *The Hindu*.

Those interested may register on newsth.live/THVITBTE. A QR code is available on page 14.

Ambitious scheme to spur next-generation battery manufacturing in India hits hurdle

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI



Losing steam: While several companies flocked to bid for 50 GWh capacity at auctions, only 30 GWh was effectively allotted. FILE PHOTO

Delays in visa approvals for Chinese technical specialists, requirements that mandate local manufacturing, and the lack of critical technologies threaten the government's ambitious Advanced Chemistry Cell Production Linked Incentive (ACC-PLI) scheme, says a report by research firms Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis and JMK Research and Analytics released earlier this week. The scheme was launched in October 2021 to catalyse domestic, next-generation battery manufacturing.

As of October 2025, however, only 1.4 gigawatt-hour (GWh) worth of battery cells have been commissioned on time while 8.6 GWh is under development, but delayed. The 2021 plan had envisaged

cells and one of the aims of the scheme is to reduce India's dependence on the country. With an outlay of ₹18,100 crore (\$2.08 billion), the ACC-PLI sought to attract large companies by mandating a minimum investment of ₹1,000 crore (\$129.3 million). In return, companies would receive maximum subsidy of ₹2,000 per kWh. Another mandate was that the companies should ensure 25% of the manufacturing was local within two years, and 60% within five years.

Huge interest
While several companies flocked to bid for 50 GWh capacity in the initial round of auctions, only 30 GWh was effectively allotted.

Ola Electric, Reliance New Energy, Hyundai Global, and Rajesh Exports emerged as the selected beneficiaries, though Hyundai eventually

dropped out. None of the selected companies actually had expertise in battery manufacturing. Companies that had such experience – Amara Raja and Exide Industries – though in traditional lead-acid ones, were priced out of the auction. "The high net-worth requirement (a minimum of ₹2.25 billion per GWh) further restricted participation to large corporates," the report notes.

Because none of the three companies have started selling batteries, zero incentives have been disbursed against the targeted ₹2,900 crore by October 2025.

"India lacks a mature cell manufacturing ecosystem, including critical mineral refining and cell component production, which leaves the industry almost entirely dependent on imports from China," the report underlines.

The session will feature G. Jayaraman, professor and dean, School of Bio Sciences and Technology, VIT Chennai; P.R. Yashavant, assistant professor, School of Bio Sciences and

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at <https://thehindu.com/crosswords>



- 1 Some delay included in a kind of test results in harrowing situation (6)
 17 Cricketer starting to take terrific interest in criminal group (7)
 19 Vole is running in part of garden, deer (7)
 22 Type of letter hidden in hospital icepacks (6)
 24 They may have pipe dreams... (8)
 26 Broken knee lost in bony structure (8)
 28 Goes in and puts in cell (6)
 30 Animal from Kamareddy (4)
 31 Where birds may reside in cleanest surroundings (5)
 32 Sisters sauntering around without gaiters endlessly (4)
- Down**
- 1 Place to sleep with one bowler (4)
 2 Deed produced by guide covering university monument in the beginning (8)
 3 Port does as arranged (6)
 4 Permitted flying owl to be caged in crooked deal (7)
 5 Cover endless envy and run away to marry (8)
 6 Polished editor chasing fan (6)
 7 Short general leaving dungeon may reverse action (4)
 14 Endless taste, including egg and roasted bread (5)
 16 In absence of host, cook horse meat for ruler (5)
 18 Notice wrongly displayed covering a new chemical (8)
 20 Small part inside O ring is going around (8)
 21 Bridge is hot from Spain (7)
 23 Flowers from lake on one extraordinary isle (6)
 25 Discomfort from wild sea in university navigation expedition, for starters (6)
 27 Katy counterfeited our neighbour's currency (4)
 29 Used a bell in Srirangapatna (4)

Across

8 In absence of wife, owner goes bonkers in city (4)
 9 Lady dancing with new singer (5)
 10 Runs around vessels to keep the Ashes? (4)
 11 Little dogs going around India in attractive posters (3-3)
 12 Spillage from intoxicated lover of women (8)
 13 Gets irritated about period at end of voyage in cheap accommodation (8)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

OUTSTANDING
C P A O O O O E
Q A T H S W O M A N I S E R
R E T E I S S R
R E D H E R R I N G K I W I
A L S E P N
L I S L E T E M P I T I N G
P S A N
D R E S S I N G T I G E R
A E A Z A O
N U D E L I V I N G R O O M
U T W U N O I M
B A R B A R I A N N U D G E
E A R N I I I I
P O M E G R A N A T E

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Do good, earn grace

Human nature seeks comfort and instinctively avoids hardship. Yet, often against our wishes, we are destined to face difficulties in life. The root cause of such experiences lies in our *punya* (merit) and *papa* (demerit). It is not easy for an individual to precisely define what constitutes a good deed or a sinful one; hence, the *Sastras* provide this guidance. Acharya Sri Kurathazhan beautifully explains that any act which pleases the Lord is *punya*, while any act that displeases Him is *papa*. Thus, divine pleasure and displeasure become the true measures of merit and sin.

In a discourse, Velukkudi Sri Krishnan swami explained that actions that purify us, remove our afflictions, erase the effects of past misdeeds, bring about inner and outer well-being, and expand *subha-mangala*, while invoking the Lord's love and compassion towards us, are known as *punya*. On the other hand, sinful deeds are those that lead to one's downfall, cause sorrow and distress, destroy accumulated good, become the root cause of adverse consequences, and arouse the displeasure of the Lord.

Our actions should be directed not merely towards our own good, but towards the good of others as well. The fruits of our deeds – virtuous or sinful – may manifest immediately, later in this very life, or even in lives yet to come. The timing and manner of these results are known to God alone.

How do we determine whether an act is virtuous or sinful? A simple self-test is this: whatever causes us pain or grief should not be inflicted upon others. Conversely, actions that bring us happiness and joy, when extended to others, become acts of *punya* (merit).



CROSSWORD
14699
(set by Incognito)

Across
8 In absence of wife, owner goes bonkers in city (4)
 9 Lady dancing with new singer (5)
 10 Runs around vessels to keep the Ashes? (4)
 11 Little dogs going around India in attractive posters (3-3)
 12 Spillage from intoxicated lover of women (8)
 13 Gets irritated about period at end of voyage in cheap accommodation (8)

IN BRIEF



Rupee hits an all-time low of 92/U.S. Dollar; settles at 91.90

The rupee hit a historic low of 92-a-dollar on Friday and gained marginally to settle at 91.90 against the American currency, amid selling pressure from foreign funds and risk-off sentiment in global markets. Forex traders said the rupee gave up early gains and hit a record low of 92 per U.S. dollar in intraday trade due to weak domestic markets and persistent foreign fund outflows. Gains in crude prices and a surge in U.S. treasury yields weighed on the rupee. PTI

IndusInd Q3 net slumps 88.5% on net interest income decline

IndusInd Bank's standalone net profit declined 88.5% to ₹61 crore in the quarter ended December 2025 as against ₹1,401 crore in the same period last year. The bank's net interest income (NII) reduced 13% to ₹4,562 crore as against ₹5,228 crore in the year-ago period. Net interest margin dipped to 3.5% from 3.9% in the year earlier. Gross NPAs as a share of total advances increased to 3.6% in the reporting quarter as against 2.2% in the year-ago period.

Zoho Corporation unveils resource planning software

Zoho Corporation has launched an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution for business houses. Co-founder of Zoho Corporation Sridhar Vembu and CEO of Zoho Payment Technologies Sivaramakrishnan Iswaran said Zoho ERP is an alternative to the enterprise resource planning solutions available globally. The product, offered on monthly or annual subscription, brings together management of finance, billing, spending, supply chain and payroll management.

BPCL to boost oil supply from Brazil's Petrobras

Saptaparno Ghosh

NEW DELHI

As India seeks to diversify their avenues for oil import, State-owned refiner, Bharat Petroleum, would

enhance the term contract to procure crude oil from Brazil's Petrobras, as per a government statement-government release issued on Friday evening.

This would result in

BPCL procuring 12 million barrels of Brazilian crude from Petrobras for \$780 million in the upcoming financial year. The quantum is twice that under the previous deal inked by the two

majors in February last year which was for six million barrels over one year.

Indian Oil also maintains a commercial agreement with the Brazilian firm to procure crude.

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DIPR 4764PP/CL, Dt: 23/01/2026

Estimated Contract Value Rs.4996 Crores (Excluding GST)

Schedule Available Date & Time 22-01-2026, 17:00 Hrs onwards

Pre-Bid meeting Date & Time 05-02-2026, 11:00 Hrs

Bid Submission closing Date & Time 20-02-2026, 15:00 Hrs

Pre-Qualification / Technical Bid Opening Date & Time 23-02-2026, 12:00 Hrs

Price Bid Opening Date & Time 16-03-2026, 12:00 Hrs

For details, visit www.apgenco.gov.in (or) <https://etender.apgenco.gov.in>

DIPR 4764PP/CL, Dt: 23/01/2026

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Vijaypur, Jammu invites applications for the following Non-Faculty (Group A) posts on deputation basis.

S.No.	Name of Post	No. of Vacancy
a)	Medical Superintendent	01
b)	Superintending Engineer	01
c)	Executive Engineer (Civil)	01
d)	Executive Engineer (Electrical)	01
e)	Assistant Controller of Examination	01
f)	Nursing Superintendent	02
Total		07

Important:- For further details like Essential Qualification, Experience, Upper Age limit, Terms & Conditions etc., please visit AIIMS Jammu website www.aiimsjammu.edu.in under Recruitment > Open Job.

Sd/-
Registrar
For & on behalf of ED & CEO,
AIIMS, Vijaypur, Jammu

Website: [https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app](http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app).

Sd/-, Director

DIPR/C/835/2026

M N D NDE

SEBI accuses PwC, EY executives of insider trading, notice shows

Markets regulator alleges insider trading in Yes Bank deal; also accuses Carlyle, Advent officials of sharing unpublished price sensitive details

Reuters
MUMBAI

India's securities regulator has accused current and former executives at the local units of PwC and EY, among others, of breaching insider trading rules involving a 2022 share sale by Yes Bank, according to a regulatory notice.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) also accused executives at U.S. private equity firms Carlyle Group and Advent International of sharing unpublished price sensitive information related to the deal, in violation of insider trading rules, according to the notice, which was reviewed by Reuters.

Advent, Carlyle, EY, PwC, Yes Bank and SEBI did not respond to requests for comment.

Issued in November, the notice, which has not been reported previously and is not public, alleges two executives at PwC and EY



Action reply: The accused individuals and their firms are said to be in the process of drafting their responses to SEBI's notice. REUTERS

and five other family members and friends made unlawful gains by trading in shares of Yes Bank ahead of its 2022 share offering.

Most of the accused individuals are still serving at their respective firms.

SEBI's notice showed India executives of Carlyle, Advent, PwC, and EY shared unpublished price sensitive information, enabling others to trade on the information. It also accused a former Yes Bank board member of sharing price sensitive information enabling others to trade.

The notice from the reg-

ulator followed an investigation into movements in Yes Bank's shares ahead of a July 2022, share offering, in which Carlyle and Advent bought a combined 10% stake for \$1.1 billion.

The shares of the bank opened 6% higher a day after the deal was announced on July 29, 2022. The accused individuals, along with their companies, are in the process of drafting their responses to SEBI's notice, according to two people familiar with the investigation, who declined to be named due to sensitivity of the matter.

The second, sent in September 2025, was also re-

Adani shares tank after SEC seeks to bypass India on summons

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Shares of Adani Enterprises Ltd. tanked 10.76% to ₹1,861.80 a share after the U.S. Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) moved a U.S. court to bypass India and send summons to the conglomerate on bribery cases. The stock, which opened at ₹2,080, went on a free fall to hit the day's high of ₹2,082, before dropping to ₹1,848 and settling at the day's close.

Adani Green tanked the most, crashing 13.8% to ₹779.4 a share. Adani Power, Adani Total Gas and Ambuja Cements fell about 5% each. ACC Cements fell 3%, while New Delhi Television (NDTV) declined 4.5% on the NSE.

India, the SEC said, has previously refused two requests to serve the summons. The Law Ministry had turned down the first one sent in April 2025, on May 1, 2025, citing the absence of an "ink signature" on the SEC's cover letter and a seal on the documents, neither of which is required under the Hague Convention.

The second, sent in September 2025, was also re-

jected by the ministry, stating that the law did not explicitly mention "summons." The Ministry appeared to suggest that the SEC lacks authority to invoke the Hague Convention or seek service of the summonses."

In its filing with the New York Eastern District Court, the SEC said, "Facts confirm that defendants [Adani] are fully aware of the litigation and are actively managing their response. Accordingly, service by delivery of the summons and complaint to defendants' attorneys and by email directly to defendants is not only permissible under Rule 4(F) (3), but also fully consistent with the notice required by due process... For these reasons, the SEC respectfully requests an order, in the form filed here-with, authorising alternative methods of service by delivery of the summons and complaint.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	81,538	-0.94
US Dollar	91.90	-0.34
Gold	1,58,700	0.95
Brent oil	65.82	2.41

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	1864.20	-22.20
Adani Ports	1308.40	-105.80
Apollo Hosp.	6803.00	6.00
Asian Paints	2703.70	-0.10
Axis Bank	1258.00	-36.80
Bajaj Auto	9413.50	-43.50
Bajaj Finance	939.00	-44.10
Bharti Airtel	1984.70	-17.50
Cipla	1315.00	-55.40
Coal India	418.40	-4.80
Dr Reddy's Lab.	1235.60	-18.10
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	-DE*
Eicher Motors	6973.00	-76.00
Etihad Corp.	258.70	-17.20
Grasim Ind.	2759.00	-28.60
HCL Tech	1707.00	3.90
HDFC Bank	916.10	-2.60
HDFC Life	712.10	-13.00
Hindalco	950.30	5.85
Hindustan Unilever	2409.50	18.90
ICICI Bank	1343.40	-2.10
InterglobeAvi.	4704.00	-204.50
Infosys	1670.80	7.30
ITC	323.40	-1.45
Jio Financial Servic- es Ltd.	252.90	-9.70
JSW Steel	1170.00	-14.40
Kotak Bank	422.80	-3.20
L&T	3743.80	-50.00
M&M	3543.40	-30.30
Maruti Suzuki	15469.00	-296.00
Max Healthcare	991.40	-7.40
NestleIndia	1293.80	-12.20
NTPC	336.70	-5.75
ONGC	245.47	1.46
PowerGrid Corp	254.15	-5.10
Reliance Ind.	1386.10	-16.40
SBI Life	2002.60	-19.40
State Bank	1029.50	-18.85
Shriram Finance	1003.55	-1.95
TataConsumerPro- duct	1153.50	-21.70
Tata Steel	187.61	-1.49
TCS	3162.50	12.10
Tech Mahindra	1701.10	-13.70
Titan	4021.80	3.20
Tata Motors PV	344.45	-2.85
Trent Corp	3755.90	-47.90
UltraTech Cement	1236.90	5.00
Wipro	238.40	-2.25

DE: Demerged Entity

Granules Q3 net profit rises 28%

Granules India posted 28% higher net profit for the third quarter ended December at ₹150.2 crore compared with ₹117.6 crore a year earlier.

SAT grants partial relief to Avadhut Sathe, orders ₹100 cr. deposit

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

sit ₹100 crore, granting partial relief in its appeal challenging the market regulator's interim order that had asked the academy and its owners to pay ₹546 crore for alleged illegal gains.

The court also ordered that the paras in the interim order freezing the bank accounts and barring appellants from trading shall cease to apply on pay-

ment of the amount.

"In view of the fact that fixed assets are worth ₹100 crore, taking into consideration the tax component of ₹166 crore, in our view, ends of justice would be

met by directing the appellants to deposit a sum of ₹100 crore in the bank and restraining them from alienating the fixed assets," Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar wrote in the order.

met by directing the appellants to deposit a sum of ₹100 crore in the bank and restraining them from alienating the fixed assets," Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar wrote in the order.

HCL to buy Finergic for 19 mn Singapore Dollars

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

HCLTech, a global technology firm, has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Finergic Solutions

Pte. Ltd., a boutique wealth consulting firm headquartered

BANGKOK

'Myanmar military strike on village sheltering displaced people kills 21'



A military air strike this week on Htein village in Myanmar, sheltering displaced people from the northern township of Bhamo, where a final round of the country's three-phase election is to be held this weekend, killed 21 people and left 28 people wounded, an ethnic rebel group and local media said on Friday. AP

WASHINGTON

U.S. 'armada' headed toward Gulf, Washington watching Iran: Trump



President Donald Trump said a U.S. "armada" was heading toward the Gulf and that Washington was watching Iran closely, even after downplaying the prospect of imminent military action. "We're watching Iran," he said. "I'd rather not see anything happen but we're watching them very closely." AP

TOKYO

Japan's Takaichi dissolves lower house, setting up early election



Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi dissolved the lower house of parliament on Friday, paving the way for an early election on February 8. The move is an attempt to capitalise on her popularity to help the governing party regain ground, but it will delay parliamentary approval for a Budget. AP

WASHINGTON

TikTok finalises deal to form U.S.-based entity, ending uncertainty



TikTok has finalised a deal to create a U.S.-based entity with investors Oracle, Silver Lake and MGX, securing data and algorithm protections to avoid a ban. Former operations head Adam Presser will lead the venture as its CEO. President Donald Trump praised the deal, ending years of uncertainty over TikTok's U.S. future. AP

India, EU will upgrade ties; trade deal still in the works

The trade agreement would be announced next week during the India-EU summit in Delhi; a new Defence and Security partnership and a deal on information security are also on the agenda

Sriram Lakshman

LONDON

India and the EU are continuing to hammer out the details of a trade agreement less than 72 hours before European leaders arrive in India for the 16th EU-India Summit. The summit, scheduled for January 27, is centred around a 'free trade' agreement (FTA), which has been in the works for more than two decades and is proving difficult to negotiate with "sensitivities" around agriculture, carbon border taxes, service delivery and non-tariff barriers.

Other agreements on the agenda for the next week are a new Defence and Security partnership, an agreement on information security and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on a mobility framework.

A joint statement will lay out a new strategic roadmap, outlined in the joint statement, setting the course of the India-EU partnership for the next five years. Deeper cooperation is expected to be announced across various dimensions, including climate change, supply chains and critical minerals, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, as well as cooperation at multilateral forums.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal had confirmed on January 15 that a "sensitive agricultural is-



Strategic ties: Narendra Modi attends the India-EU Virtual Summit 2020 with Ursula von der Leyen, bottom, in New Delhi. AFP

sues on both sides" were off the table. EU officials in Brussels briefing the media on Friday declined to provide details of the trade deal, including agricultural trade. They, however, did confirm that it would be announced – but not signed – next week.

"I can just confirm that it is our objective to complete the negotiations. Of course, that's the first step. We're not talking about signature in Delhi, but we're talking about conclusion of the negotiations," an EU official said on Friday. A recent deal between the EU and Mercosur countries of South America has run into trouble around agricultural and other concerns. The European Parliament on January 21 referred the deal to the highest EU court, potentially delaying its implementation.

Apart from trade, the fact that a Defence and Security agreement that would be signed next week

ledged that New Delhi and Brussels have very different approaches to Russia even as the EU objected to India's participation in the Zapad 2025 military exercises in Russia and Belarus, and has repeatedly taken issue with India's oil trade with Russia. New Delhi has accused Brussels of singling it out in these matters and pointed to the EU's own trade with Russia.

On Friday, officials acknowledged that India and the EU had different histories with Russia. India was "far away" geographically from the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A dialogue on security threats was therefore all the more important to understand the concerns of both sides so the "optimum" level of cooperation can be determined, an official said.

The sides are also planning to conclude an MoU on mobility that will address the movement of four categories of workers – highly skilled workers, students, researchers and seasonal workers – whose movement is already addressed by the bloc's legislation. The number of individuals admitted to each EU country will be up to the country, an official said.

The security partnership also raises the question of Russia – a core issue on which India and the EU have glaring differences. European officials have more recently acknowledged

that the defence agreement would address technology transfer from the EU to India, one EU official said: "It does, but of course, it remains, even after the agreement, subject to the discretion of the companies and also of the countries allowing for these exports."

The security partnership also raises the question of Russia – a core issue on which India and the EU have glaring differences. European officials have more recently acknowledged

U.K. hits back after Trump comment on NATO troops

Agence France-Presse
ABU DHABI
LONDON

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Friday denounced as "insulting" Donald Trump's claim that British troops avoided the front line in Afghanistan, amid widespread anger at the U.S. President's remarks.

In an interview with Fox News aired on Thursday, Mr. Trump appeared unaware that 457 British soldiers were among NATO troops who died during the conflict in the South Asian country following the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Troops from other NATO ally countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Denmark and others also died.

High-level teams from the three countries were headed for Abu Dhabi for the negotiations – a day after Mr. Trump met with Mr.

Russia demands Ukraine's Donbas region before talks

Agence France-Presse

ABU DHABI



Zelenskyy in Davos and hours after U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff held late-night talks with Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin.

While a diplomatic push to end Europe's worst conflict since the Second World War has gained pace in recent weeks, Moscow and Kyiv remain at odds over the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement.

Russia, which launched

its invasion in 2022, said on Friday it was not dropping its maximalist demand that Kyiv withdraw from the eastern Donbas region – a term deemed unacceptable to Ukraine.

"Russia's position is well known on the fact that Ukraine, Ukrainian armed forces, have to leave the territory of the Donbas. They must be withdrawn from there," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

"This is a very important condition," he added.

"The Donbas is a key issue," Mr. Zelenskyy told pressers on Friday, ahead of the talks.

Kyiv has warned that ceding ground will embolden Moscow and says it will not sign a peace deal that fails to deter Russia from launching a renewed assault.

Allow Awami League to contest election, says Hasina

Kallop Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI



The deposed Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, on Friday demanded that the interim government in Dhaka, led by Chief Adviser Mohammed Yunus, allow her party, the Awami League, to participate in the upcoming February 12 election. Ms. Hasina's recorded audio message was played at a press conference organised by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia, marking the first time Ms. Hasina had addressed a collective media platform since arriving in India on August 5, 2024, after a student-led uprising toppled her government.

Ms. Hasina was sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Dhaka for her role in the July-August 2024 crackdown against protesters who demanded her resignation following a movement that began over government quota in education and employment. Along with Ms. Hasina, former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal was also sentenced to death in a verdict delivered by the ICT on November 17, 2025. The interim government has banned the Awami League and its student wing, the Chhatra League.

In her speech, Ms. Hasina highlighted the plight of minority communities in Bangladesh, saying they "face continuous persecution under the interim government". She added that Bangladesh faces "mob terror", noting, "The frenzy of militant extremists has cast a pall of fear across the nation."

Bangladesh is preparing for elections scheduled for February 12, and the same day a referendum will be held on the 'July Charter', a set of proposed principles intended to bring changes to Bangladesh's Constitution.

Uganda detains 2,000 Opposition supporters

Reuters
NAIROBI

Uganda's military chief said on Friday that authorities had detained 2,000 Opposition supporters, killed 30 and were hunting for more following a disputed presidential election in which his father Yoweri Museveni, won a seventh term.

Mr. Museveni, 81, who has led the East African nation for nearly four decades, was declared to have resoundingly defeated Bobi Wine, Leader of the Opposition National Unity Platform party in the Jan. 15 vote, held during an Internet blackout.

In a series of overnight social media posts, military chief Muhozo Kainerugaba, Museveni's son, gave the details of the arrests and killings of NUP supporters, describing them as hooligans and terrorists.

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Competing with Nicola [Olysagers], it's so cool. If someone jumps well, I get the feeling that I am ready to fight and jump higher and higher

No-limits Mahuchikh looks to reassert her aerial dominance

The Ukrainian high jumper has begun 2026 with her best clearance since setting the world record in 2024. This bodes well for the reigning Olympic champion, who had a disappointing end to 2025, losing her World title and being outshone by rival Nicola Olysagers. Mahuchikh's eyes this year are set firmly on making March's World Indoor Championships her own

Reuters
Agence France-Presse

Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh, the reigning high jump Olympic champion and world record holder, opened her season last weekend, clearing 2.03m at the Demyanyuk Memorial on home soil. It's an early world-leading mark as well as the fifth-highest winning jump of her career.

But, perhaps most significantly, it's both her best clearance since breaking the world record a year and a half ago and one centimetre higher than her top jump in 2025. To be in such good nick so early in the season suggests that Mahuchikh could be close to regaining her best – she struggled in the second half of last season, judged by her own lofty standards, that is.

Stunning run

Ahead of last June's Stockholm Diamond League meet, Mahuchikh had won 14 of 15 competitions, a stunning run that included Olympic and World crowns, and the historic breaking of Stefka Kostadinova's 37-year-old mark with a jump of 2.10m in July 2024. She then suffered five defeats in eight events, starting in Stockholm and culminating in

I want to improve myself and jump higher than 2.10. I think it's possible. I can do it... there are definitely no limits

the loss of her World title at Tokyo last September. She was on the podium in all but one of these losses. For generational talents like her, however, nothing short of victory will do; everything else is seen as failure.

Pursuing a gold-laden 2026, the 24-year-old will be especially keen to set the record straight at March's World Indoor Championships. She hasn't been on the top step of the podium at the prestigious event since her triumph at Belgrade in 2022.

Mahuchikh is planning her indoor season carefully: on the road to the World Indoors, she will compete at the Springer-Meeting in Cottbus (Germany) next week and the Tipos Bansko-Bystrica latka in Banska Bystrica (Slovakia) in late February. She is also scheduled to feature in the Ukrainian Championships, an important part of her return to home base this year.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Mahuchikh piled as much as she could into her car and left Dnipro, her hometown of almost one million, located only about 100 kilometres from the front lines of the war. On her way out, she heard gunfire and could, at times, see shells raining down miles away. Since then, she has been forced to train abroad, away from her family. Her success



over the last four years is astonishing, seen in isolation. When you consider the emotional turmoil and the lack of stability in her life, her deeds are elevated even further.

But the years of constant travel have extracted a psychological toll, she told Ukrainian media after beginning 2026 at the Demyanyuk Memorial with a win.

"Why did I decide to start in Ukraine? After almost four years of travelling back and forth, I missed home, so this year I am training at home. That's why I'm opening the season at home. I will compete in the Ukrainian Championships in February," she said. "We've constantly moved from one city to another to prepare for competitions and achieve top results. But it's mentally exhausting. Here are my people, my friends, my apartment, my cat who's always nearby."

Extreme circumstances

Sebastian Coe, World Athletics president and double Olympic champion, offered a sense of just how challenging Mahuchikh's journey has been. "I was able to prepare in the safety and security of my home city. I was able, when I needed to, to travel abroad," he said. "I cannot imagine what it must be like for athletes in Ukraine. It's an intolerable situation."

The risks Mahuchikh faces, training in Ukraine, are considerable. "I try not to focus on the shelling and instead prepare mentally for training. We monitor threats, including ballistic missile risks. In Dnipro, they've done a very good job dividing air raid alerts by city districts, which helps assess the situation," she said, adding that training is suspended during air raid alerts.

Mahuchikh's life story only adds to her growing legend, which began during her years as a teenage prodigy. She broke through in stunning fashion at the 2019 Worlds in Doha, where she lost the gold on countback to the great Mariya Lasitskene, an Olympic and three-time World champion. Just 18 then, Mahuchikh began to build an empire to rival Lasitskene's.

But the Ukrainian's dominance has been challenged by Australia's Nicola Olysagers, who beat Mahuchikh in the three biggest events of 2025: the Worlds, the World Indoors, and the Diamond League Final. Although Mahuchikh leads Olysagers 27-11 in finals overall, she trailed her rival 4-5 in 2025. It's a trend she will want to reverse in 2026, as she looks to add to her collections of big titles (IxOlympics, IxWorlds, IxWorld Indoors, 3xDiamond League Final).

Although the competition between the two is fierce, their relationship is one of camaraderie and mutual respect. "Competing with Nicola, it's interesting to watch, and it just gets me ready for my next competition," Mahuchikh told Olympics.com. "We all get on well and help one another along. When someone else is jumping really well, it can give you this energy. If someone jumps well, I get the feeling that I am ready to fight and jump higher and higher. It's so cool. I like this atmosphere, because I think you should be competitors on the track but stay friendly off it."

Olysagers, five years older than her rival, agreed with Mahuchikh's assessment. "I enjoy jumping with Yaroslava as I know that when she jumps high, I jump high," she said.

Main-event storyline

The Mahuchikh-Olysagers storyline is expected to be one of the main events of the athletics season, and their duels have the potential to push both athletes to sustained excellence. But while Mahuchikh is thankful for the competitive stimulus the rivalry supplies, she is powered by more than that. Her love for jumping, her ambition, her imagination and her resilience make her both a serial winner and a compelling watch.

"I am ready to fly like a swallow," she once said. "Your body takes off for several seconds, you fly ... it is really fantastic those seconds. I want to improve myself and jump higher than 2.10, I think it's possible. I feel that I can do it... there are definitely no limits."

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15					
#	Player	Age	Points	Events	
1	Carlos Alcaraz	22	12,050	19	
2	Jannik Sinner	24	11,500	18	
3	Alexander Zverev	28	5,105	24	
4	Novak Djokovic	38	4,780	19	
5	Lorenzo Musetti	23	4,105	23	
6	Alex de Minaur	26	4,080	23	
7	Ben Shetton	23	4,000	23	
8	Felix Auger-Aliassime	25	3,990	27	
9	Taylor Fritz	28	3,840	23	
10	Alexander Bublik	28	3,065	29	
11	Jack Draper	24	2,990	17	
12	Daniil Medvedev	29	2,910	25	
13	Casper Ruud	27	2,795	22	
14	A. Davidovich Fokina	26	2,635	26	
15	Andrey Rublev	28	2,600	26	



English Premier League Standings									
#	Team	GP	W	D	GF	GA	GD	PTS	
1	Arsenal	22	15	5	2	40	14	26	50
2	Man. City	22	13	4	5	45	21	24	43
3	Aston Villa	22	13	4	5	33	29	8	43
4	Liverpool	22	10	6	3	33	29	4	36
5	Man. United	22	9	8	5	38	32	6	35
6	Chelsea	22	9	7	6	36	24	12	34
7	Brentford	22	10	3	9	35	30	5	33
8	Newcastle	22	9	6	7	32	27	5	33
9	Sunderland	22	8	9	5	23	23	0	33
10	Everton	22	9	5	8	24	25	-1	32
11	Fulham	22	9	4	9	30	31	-1	31
12	Brighton	22	7	9	6	32	29	3	30
13	Crystal Palace	22	7	7	8	23	25	-2	28
14	Tottenham	22	7	6	9	31	29	2	27
15	Bournemouth	22	6	9	7	35	41	-6	27
16	Leeds United	22	6	7	9	30	37	-7	25
17	N. Forest	22	6	4	12	21	34	-13	22
18	West Ham	22	4	5	13	24	44	-20	17
19	Burnley	22	3	5	14	23	42	-19	14
20	Wolves	22	1	5	16	15	41	-26	8



Top Indians ▶					
	Player	Rank	Spots		
Sumit Nagal		281	▼ 2 spots		
Aryan Shah		400	▼ 6 spots		



WTA Women's Top 15					
#	Player	Age	Points	Events	
1	Aryna Sabalenka	27	10,990	20	
2	Iga Swiatek	24	8,328	20	
3	Coco Gauff	21	6,423	20	
4	Amanda Anisimova	24	6,320	21	
5	Elena Rybakina	26	5,850	23	
6	Jessica Pegula	31	5,453	23	
7	Mirra Andreeva	18	4,731	20	
8	Jasmine Paolini	30	4,267	19	
9	Madison Keys	30	4,111	19	
10	Belinda Bencic	28	3,512	20	
11	Ekateryna Alexandrova	31	3,375	26	
12	Elina Svitolina	31	2,856	17	
13	Linda Noskova	21	2,541	24	
14	Clara Tauson	23	2,530	24	
15	Emma Navarro	24	2,515	25	

Top Indians ▶			
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At four, I watched Kosteniuk become World champion; I felt I needed that crown

The youngest woman to claim the World Blitz Championship, Bibisara Assaubayeva has ambitions of winning the prestigious classical title. In this chat, she talks about her beginnings in chess, what achieving the GM title meant to her, why she enjoys playing in India, what she thinks of D. Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi, and where Kazakhstan chess is headed



Arjun Erigaisi and I are friends. He is a nice guy, and I like playing with him in Bughouse chess. He is an amazing partner

GETTY IMAGES

INTERVIEW

Bibisara Assaubayeva

P.K. Ajith Kumar

As a little girl learning chess from her grandfather, Bibisara Assaubayeva would always cry whenever her opponent captured her queen on the board. It is not easy to take her queen easily these days. And she is now the queen of the fastest format in chess. In Doha last month, she won her third World Blitz Championship in five years. In 2021, when she won her first World blitz title, she was also the runner-up in the World Rapid Championship. She was just 17 then. Last year, Assaubayeva became a Grandmaster, only the 43rd woman in history to earn the most coveted title in chess. Excerpts from an interview she gave *The Hindu* in Mumbai, where she played for American Gambits in the Global Chess League:

This was your second GCL.

I like this tournament. It is a league you can enjoy playing. And it is really nice to play before so many



The GM title means a lot to me, I was getting a bit tired being just an IM

my chess fans. I like this format. It is very interesting. Every opponent is very strong and the team is mixed; apart from the world's top male players, we have strong female and junior players. Last year's league was in London. It is great that this edition came to India. I like to play in India. Here a lot of people like chess, and it is amazing. I think across the world, chess is most popular in India. You see a lot of children playing chess here. And you can feel the excitement.

When did you first play in India?

My first tournament in India was the World Junior Championship in New Delhi. It was in 2019, I was 15 then. Then I played the Chess Olympiad in Chennai, in 2022. My last tournament in India was the FIDE Women's Grand Prix in 2023.

How do you look back at finishing second in the women's event in the last Olympiad at Budapest? Not many expected to see Kazakhstan in the runner-up position.

We actually had a chance to be the champion. In the final round, I won on the first board in our match against the United States. And if we had some draws, we could have finished first. Unfortunately, at some important moments, one of the girls lost a game, but we also had a good match against India.

But, okay, India [which went on to win the gold] is a strong team and I am happy that finally we took some medals from the Olympiad.

Kazakhstan had started as the 10th seed.

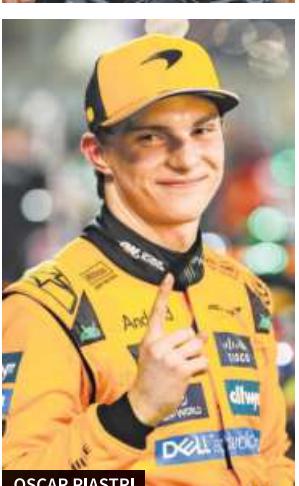
Our team is still young and very strong. And we have a good future. In our team, I am now the oldest one, but I am only 21. We will try to win the gold at the next Olympiad. But it could be tough, though we don't know for sure if



GAME THEORY

F1's best: consistent winners and pole converters

As the world of Formula One prepares for a new season — the teams are participating in private shakedown events ahead of testing — we list the sport's most successful drivers in two less-commonly-cited performance categories:



MOST CONSECUTIVE SEASONS WITH AT LEAST ONE WIN

Driver	Seasons	Total
Michael Schumacher	1992–2006	15
Lewis Hamilton	2007–2021	15
Alain Prost	1981–1990	10
Max Verstappen	2016–2025 (ongoing)	10
Ayrton Senna	1985–1993	9
Nelson Piquet	1980–1987	8
Stirling Moss	1955–1961	7
Jim Clark	1962–1968	7
David Coulthard	1997–2003	7
Jackie Stewart	1968–1973	6
Sebastian Vettel	2008–2013	6

Driver	Poles	Wins	Conversion%
Max Verstappen	48	37	77.08%
Oscar Piastri	6	4	66.67%
Emerson Fittipaldi	6	4	66.67%
Alberto Ascari	14	9	64.29%
Fernando Alonso	22	14	63.64%
Jenson Button	8	5	62.50%
Michael Schumacher	68	40	58.82%
Lewis Hamilton	104	61	58.65%
Alain Prost	33	18	54.55%
Sebastian Vettel	57	31	54.39%

SOURCE: F1 AUTOSPORT, STATS F1

PICTURE THIS



Mid-air scuffle

American football — or football in the US and Canada, and gridiron in other English-speaking countries — is a hybrid of association football and rugby.

And so it's no surprise that it's often derided by football

and rugby fans as 'derivative'. But even harsh critics of the sport can't deny the bone-crunching physicality and airborne athleticism that gridiron can showcase.

Both these facets are often evident in tackles and touchdowns, especially when a tackle thwarts a touchdown, as

is the case in this photograph from this month's NFL Wild Card game.

The touchdown is a means of scoring by advancing the ball into the opposition's end zone; the tackle is employed to disrupt the progress of a player with the ball. So it's only natural that these two actions are

frequently in opposition.

The term 'tackle' reportedly comes from 'tacken' in Middle Dutch, the word for 'grab' or 'handle'. Its usage in American football can be traced back to rugby, which originated earlier. Strict, detailed rules govern the tackle because of the possibility of serious injury.

Russia will play in it. And we don't know if China will be fielding their best team. If China comes with their strongest players, it will be impossible to take the gold. But somehow China doesn't send their best teams for the Olympiad, maybe because they have won so many medals from the previous events.

How much did completing the Grandmaster title mean to you?

I completed my GM title at the Sharjah Masters in May. I felt really good because now there was no pressure of having to score that final norm. I got my first norm when I was 17 and the second when I was 19. I was missing the final norm, getting close to it on several occasions. Finally I got my norm and also crossed the other requirement of crossing the 2500 Elo rating during the Sharjah Masters. The GM title means a lot to me, I was getting a bit tired being just an IM [International Master]. Even now, we have only two women in Kazakhstan with GM titles.

You still hold the record of being the youngest women's World blitz champion. That year, 2021, you were runner-up to Alexandra Kosteniuk, who won the World rapid title. You have spoken of how watching Kosteniuk becoming World champion in 2008, when you were little, inspired you.

I had watched on television Kosteniuk being crowned the World champion by the then FIDE president [Kirsan Ilyumzhinov]. I felt I also needed that crown. I was four years old then. And that was how I became a chess player. I have played with Kosteniuk several times. I haven't told her directly how her winning the World Championship inspired me, but I think she may know it. Winning my first World Blitz Championship was really special. I had won age-group events before, but it felt really, really good, because it was my first big achievement at the senior level. Then I met our President for the first time, so it was amazing. And I felt happy when I defended my title in my home country.

Now the classical World Championship must be a goal?

Yes, and I also want to increase my rating.

How competitive is women's chess at the moment, with World No. 1 Hou Yifan playing very rarely?

It is always tough at the top level. We have a lot of strong players. In men's chess, yes it may be tougher, but in the women's game, too, there are a lot of strong players. Even older players, like Koneru Humpy and Kosteniuk, are still strong.

India has a bunch of strong young male players.

I don't know D. Gukesh well, but we talked a little bit in Mumbai during the GCL, and he is a very nice person. I think it is important to be good, even if your achievements are something big, and his achievements are amazing; he is the youngest World champion ever. I think he is very disciplined, and he doesn't show a lot of emotions, and that is very important in chess. I don't know R. Praggnanandha well, but I know his sister Vaishali and she is nice. Arjun Erigaisi and I are friends. And he is a nice guy. I like playing with him in Bughouse chess [a variant, played by two two-member teams on two boards], and he is an amazing partner.

What are your earliest memories of chess?

I remember how I went to my grandfather and told him, 'Please teach me chess'. I would always cry when my opponents captured my queen.

IDEAL BATTER

I thought it was incredible, says Suryakumar on Kishan's innings



EMMANUEL YOGINI

I don't know what Ishan (Kishan) had for lunch in the afternoon, but I've never seen anyone bat at six for two in that manner and still end the PowerPlay around 67 or 70. I thought it was incredible. When we are chasing 210 (sic), this is what we want from batters – to go out there, and express themselves — Suryakumar Yadav.

GOING PAST KOHLI

Hardik becomes Team India's second-most capped T20I player



EMMANUEL YOGINI

Hardik Pandya (126 matches) has surpassed Virat Kohli (125) to become India's second-most capped player in T20 Internationals, achieving the milestone during the second match against New Zealand. The all-rounder is second only to former India skipper Rohit Sharma (159).

REPLACEMENT

Kiwis pick Jamieson in place of injured Milne in T20 WC squad



K.R. DEEPAK

New Zealand has drafted travelling reserve Kyle Jamieson into its T20 World Cup squad after fellow-pacer Adam Milne was ruled out of the marquee event with a torn left hamstring. Milne suffered the injury in the first over of the SA20 clash between Sunrisers Eastern Cape and MI Cape Town last Sunday.

AGONISING WAIT

Fear of failure might have crept in: Rohit on 13-year WC title drought



FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Fear of failure among batters may have contributed to India's ICC World Cup title drought between 2011 and 2024, said former captain Rohit Sharma. "I felt it might have been a fear of failure creeping into all of us, maybe yes, maybe not, I don't know, but that was my feeling," Rohit said in a JioHotstar show.

Kishan, Suryakumar make it a cakewalk for India

The two add 122 off just 48 balls after the early dismissals of the openers to take the game away from the Kiwis; Dube chips in with a cameo as the host chases down 209 with consummate ease

NZ IN INDIA**C. Shyam Sundar**

RAIPUR

Ishan Kishan always looks like a man in a hurry. Back in the national set-up, the flashy southpaw didn't let the early dismissal of the openers curb his natural attacking instincts as he flayed a 32-ball 76 (11x4, 4x6) to power India to a dominant seven-wicket win in the second T20I against New Zealand at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium here on Friday.

After Kishan's pyrotechnics, captain Suryakumar Yadav (82 n.o., 37b, 9x4, 4x6) unfurled some brilliant shots. He took the team home in the company of Shivam Dube (36 n.o., 18b, 1x4, 3x6) with 28 balls to spare as India made it 2-0.

After Sanju Samson fell for six and Abhishek Sharma departed for a golden duck, the Jharkhand batter wasted no time in wading into the opposition bowlers. His blistering 122-run stand for the third wicket from just 48 deliveries with Suryakumar made it a walk



Demolition job: Suryakumar and Kishan made a mockery of the target as India romped home with 28 balls to spare. EMMANUEL YOGINI



in the park for the Men in Blue while chasing a target of 209. It was a forgettable night for Mitchell Santner

& Co. with the ball as Kishan and Suryakumar hardly put a foot wrong. The two peppered the boundary repeatedly, coming up with delightful shots.

Pacer Zak Foulkes bore the brunt of Kishan and Suryakumar's thrilling strokplay as he conceded 49 runs in his first two overs.

Earlier, Santner's un-beaten 27-ball 47 (6x4, 1x6) enabled New Zealand make 208 for six in 20 overs in an effort which saw

SCOREBOARD

NEW ZEALAND
Devon Conway c Hardik b Harshit 19 (9b, 3x4, 1x6), Tim Seifert c Kishan b Varun 24 (13b, 5x4), Rachin Ravindra c Arshdeep b Kuldeep 44 (26b, 2x4, 4x6), Glenn Phillips c Hardik b Kuldeep 19 (13b, 2x4, 1x6), Daryl Mitchell c Hardik b Dube 18 (11b, 3x4), Mark Chapman c Abhishek b Hardik 10 (13b), Mitchell Santner (not out) 47 (27b, 6x4, 1x6), Zak Foulkes (not out) 15 (8b, 2x4, 1x6); Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-6); Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 208.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-6 (Samson, 0.5), 2-6 (Abhishek, 1.1), 3-128 (Kishan, 9.1). **INDIA**
Sanju Samson c Rachin b Henry 6 (5b, 1x6), Abhishek Sharma c Conway b Duffy 0 (1b), Ishan Kishan c Henry b Hodhi 7 (32b, 11x4, 4x6), Suryakumar Yadav (not out) 82 (37b, 9x4, 4x6), Shivam Dube (not out) 36 (18b, 1x4, 3x6); Extras (nb-1, w-8); Total (for three wkts. in 15.2 overs): 209.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-43 (Conway, 3.2), 2-43 (Seifert, 4.2), 3-98 (Phillips, 8.5), 4-125 (Mitchell, 11.3), 5-129 (Ravindra, 12.3), 6-161 (Chapman, 16.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Arshdeep 4-0-53-0, Hardik 3-0-25-1, Harshit 3-1-35-1, Varun 4-0-35-1, Kuldeep 4-0-35-2, Abhishek 1-0-12-0, Dube 1-0-7-1.

NEW ZEALAND BOWLING

Henry 3-0-41-1, Duffy 4-0-38-1, Foulkes 3-0-67-0, Santner 2-0-27-0, Hodhi 3-0-34-1, Mitchell 0-2-0-2.

Toss: India; **POM:** Kishan.

India won by seven wickets with 28 balls remaining to lead five-match series 2-0.

Third T20: January 25, Guwahati, 7 p.m.

them fail to seize the initiative when presented with the chance.

Sent in to bat, the Kiwis appeared to fritter away a flying start provided by Devon Conway (19, 9b, 3x4, 1x6) and Tim Seifert (24, 13b, 5x4). They kept losing wickets when poised for the push with only Rachin Ravindra (44, 26b, 2x4, 4x6) and Santner being able to force the pace.

Up against an attack missing the rested Jasprit Bumrah and the injured Axar Patel, Conway picked up 18 runs in the opening over from Arshdeep Singh. The left-arm pacer conceded an equal number of runs in the third over as Seifert hit four consecutive boundaries.

Spinner Kuldeep Yadav signalled a return to form, picking up two wickets, while the other bowlers made sure that the visitor didn't run away with the contest after a rapid start.

Our batters have to adapt to lower bounce: Lanning

WPL-4**Vivek Krishnan**

VADODARA

Of the 11 matches that were held at the D.Y. Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai in the Women's Premier League this year, there were six instances of the team batting first amassing a total in excess of 180. Though the Vadodara-leg has a small sample size, the highest total registered in the three matches at the Kotambli Stadium so far is Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 178 for six against Gujarat Giants on January 19.

The last two games here have witnessed scores of 154 for five and 153 for eight by the teams batting first. In Thursday's contest, Giants managed to clinch a comprehensive 45-run victory as UP Warriorz provided a meek riposte to a target of 154 and was bundled out for 108.

While Warriorz skipper Meg Lanning has pointed to the lower bounce vis-a-vis the pitches in Navi Mumbai as a challenge, she wants the batting unit to work out a solution.

"I think it's more the bounce than anything else. The ball is just not bouncing as much as it did in Navi Mumbai. There was still a bit of pace in the pitch.



In vain: Litchfield tried hard in the loss to Giants. X@WPLT20

Points table

	M	W	L	Pts	NRR
Royal Challengers (Q)	5	5	0	10	1.882
Gujarat Giants	6	3	3	6	-0.341
Mumbai Indians	6	2	4	4	0.046
Delhi Capitals	5	2	3	4	-0.586
UP Warriorz	6	2	4	4	-0.769

Q: Qualified

Today's match

Vadodara, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 8

RCB 3 | DC 5

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

We've seen batters be successful, perhaps sort of working out the conditions first and then accelerating

from there. That seems to be the trend. You've just got to adapt and assess the conditions really quickly. You've just got to find a different way," Lanning said in the post-match interaction.

Lanning rued the lack of effective partnerships on Thursday. "Even tonight, we started to build some partnerships, but then we just lost wickets at crucial times. We haven't been able to put the opposition under pressure for longer periods," she assessed.

Bangladesh appeals to the DRC hoping to overturn ICC's decision

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

A desperate Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has written to the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) of ICC requesting it to overturn the governing body's decision to hold the national men's team's T20 World Cup games in India, but its appeal won't be heard as it is outside the remit of the sub-committee.

Even as the ICC has kept Scotland on stand-by, BCB under Aminul Islam Bulbul, after being completely cornered, decided to use its last resort – to approach the DRC headed by Michael Beloff (Kings Coun-

sel). "BCB has approached the DRC of ICC as it wants to exhaust all its options. If DRC rules against BCB, then the only body that can be approached is Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) in Switzerland," a BCB source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

While the ICC Board of Directors emphatically voted 14-2 in favour of keeping Bangladesh's matches in India after an independent security assessment which cited security threat being "low to moderate", Nazrul maintained that it wasn't the BCB but the government which is mandated to take the decision.

IN PERFECT SYNC

Golden pair: Manush Shah and Diya Chitale, the third seeds, combined well to clinch their third WTT title. They edged out the fourth-seeded Huang Youzheng and Shi Xunyao of China 11-5, 5-11, 11-5, 5-11, 13-11 in the Contender event in Muscat on Friday. X@WTT

Lancers book final berth; Royals and Toofans to fight for the other spot

HIL - MEN**Y.B. Sarangi**

BHUBANESWAR

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers relied on Alex Hendrickx's brilliant brace to edge past Ranchi Royals 2-1 in the keenly-fought Qualifier 1 and book a spot in the Hockey India League final at the Kalinga Stadium here on Friday.

Lancers will wait for their next opponent, while Royals will take on Hyderabad Toofans in Qualifier 2 on Sunday to explore another opportunity to reach the summit clash.

Toofans rode on their lively forward Shilanand Lakra's double strike to beat HIL GC 2-0 in the eliminator.

Royals threatened the host citadel early and came close to scoring when Araijeet Singh Hundal passed inside the circle and Mandeep Singh shot over the bar.

After that, Lancers dominated the first quarter and went 1-0 up in the 12th minute. The home side predominantly used the left flank to keep the Royals' defence busy. They earned three penalty corners, out of which Hendrickx con-



The saviour: Lancers relied on Hendrickx, centre, to get the better of Royals in Qualifier 1. BISWARANJAN ROUT

verted the second one with a powerful low flick that got deflected into the goal off a postman's stick.

Royals' persistence helped them close the gap by converting their fifth short corner with a beautiful variation. Mandeep spectacularly dived forward to deflect Lane's shot.

Even though Royals built the pressure in search of an equaliser, Lancers' defenders blunted the moves in closing minutes to delight the home fans.

The results:

Qualifier 1: Vedanta Kalinga Lancers 2 (Alex Hendrickx 12-pc, 32-pc) bt Ranchi Royals 1 (Mandeep Singh 40-pc);

Eliminator: Hyderabad Toofans 2 (Shilanand Lakra 16, 39-pc) bt HIL GC 0.

IN BRIEF



Pakistan includes Afridi for Australia T20Is

Pakistan selectors, on Friday, included fast bowler Shaheen Afridi in the national T20 squad for the home series against Australia. Australia is set to arrive in the country on January 28 and will play three T20Is at the Gaddafi Stadium (Jan. 29, Jan. 31, Feb. 1).

The squad: Salman Ali Agha (Capt.), Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Khawaja Mohammad Nafay (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Salmaan Mirza, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Sahibzada Farhan (wk), Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Usman Khan (wk) and Usman Tariq.

Springer's hat-trick denies Afghanistan a clean sweep

Shamar Springer's hat-trick in the 19th over helped the West Indies secure a 15-run win to deny Afghanistan a three-match T20 series sweep on Thursday. The 28-year-old Springer became the third West Indian to take a hat-trick in T20Is after Jason Holder and Romario Shepherd.

The scores: West Indies 151/7 in 20 overs (Brandon King 47) bt Afghanistan 136/8 in 20 overs (Gurbaz 71, Springer 4/20).

Sindhu and Lakshya lose in the quarterfinals

P.V. Sindhu and Lakshya Sen suffered straight-game losses in the women's and men's singles quarterfinals, marking the end of the Indian challenge in the \$500,000 Indonesia Masters badminton in Jakarta on Friday.

The results (quarterfinals): Women: Chen Yu Fei (Chn) bt P.V. Sindhu 21-13, 21-17.

Men: Panitchaphon Teeraratksul (Tha) bt Lakshya Sen 21-18, 22-20.

Casemiro to leave Manchester United at the end of season

Casemiro will leave Manchester United at the end of the season following the expiry of his contract, the Premier League club announced on Thursday. "I will carry Manchester United with me throughout my entire life," said the midfielder. "From the first day that I walked out at this beautiful stadium, I felt the passion of Old Trafford and the love that I now share with our supporters for this special club. It is not time to say goodbye -- there are many more memories to create during the next four months."



Cardiac issue led to chess GM Naroditsky's demise

American Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky passed away after suffering an abnormal heartbeat and had multiple drugs in his system at the time, according to a toxicology report that ruled the 29-year-old's demise an accident. In October, Naroditsky was found dead at his home in Charlotte, with police saying at the time that his death was being investigated as a potential overdose or suicide. The report from the North Carolina medical examiner's office said that Naroditsky died from "probable cardiac arrhythmia" caused by an inflammatory disease impacting the organs. According to the findings, Naroditsky had methamphetamine, amphetamine and plant-based supplement kratom in his system.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: JioHotstar, 8.45 a.m.
Men's U-19 World Cup: India vs New Zealand, SS Select 2 & JioHotstar, 1 p.m.
Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, & LIV, 1.30 p.m. & 5.30 a.m. (Sunday)
Sri Lanka vs England: 2nd ODI, Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 2.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 6.30, 8.30 & 11 p.m.
LaLiga: FanCode, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)
WPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: DAZN, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 8 & 11 p.m.

Saurashtra drubs Punjab inside two days

Valuable contributions from the lower-order, led by Jadeja and Prerak, put the target beyond the visitor's reach before home spinners Dharmendra and Bhut claim five each to bundle out Gill & Co. for 125 in just 39 overs; left-arm tweaker Harpreet's 11-wicket match haul goes in vain

RANJI TROPHY

Amol Karhadkar
RAJKOT

Saurashtra's lower-order, led by Prerak Mankad and Ravinder Jadeja, rose to the occasion, while left-arm spinners Dharmendra Jadeja and Parth Bhut outshone their more celebrated senior to script a crushing 194-run win over Punjab and keep the home side's Ranji Trophy campaign alive.

Powered by a remarkable 211 runs added by the last five wickets on a turning track, Saurashtra set Punjab a daunting target of 320 at the Niranjan Shah Stadium 'C' ground.

The visitors then capitulated for the second time in as many days, folding up for 125 against the accurate spin of Dharmendra (five for 55) and Bhut (five for eight). The match ended with 25 minutes to spare on the second day.

Resuming the morning at 24 for three in its second innings, nightwatcher Dharmendra and Vasavada, playing his 100th First Class match, negotiated the first hour before both perished in quick succession.

At 75 for five, Punjab sensed an opening. However, Prerak and Jadeja turned the game on its



Left is right: Bhut and Dharmendra shared all 10 wickets between them in the second innings. VIJAY SONEJI

head with a counter-attacking 92-run stand off just 73 balls. While Jadeja (46, 44b, 4x4) rotated the strike with ease, Prerak (56, 41b, 10x4) found gaps at will. His three fours in a Harpreet Brar over – a sweep followed by two reverse-

sweeps – underlined the shift in momentum.

Even after the stand was broken, useful contributions from Hetvik Kotak, Parth Bhut and captain Jaydev Unadkat swelled the lead beyond Punjab's reach.



Punjab's response with the bat lacked composure. Apart from Uday Saharan, none of the visitors showed the patience required on a wearing surface. The pitch was far from unplayable; yet Punjab's batters repeatedly fell to ill-judged sweep shots. Half the side – including opener Prabhsimran Singh and captain Shubman Gill – were either bowled or trapped lbw after missing the horizontal bat shot.

Gill's dismissal on the stroke of tea triggered a ra-

pid collapse. Dharmendra and Bhut then ran through the lower-order, claiming six wickets for just 15 runs, to seal an emphatic victory for Saurashtra.

The scores: Saurashtra – 1st innings: 172.

Punjab – 1st innings: 139.

Saurashtra – 2nd innings: Harvik Desai c Anmolpreet b Harpreet 6, Chirag Jani c Harnoor b Harpreet 27, Jay Goril b Jass 8, Arpit Vasavada c Sanvir b Jass 23, Ravinder Jadeja lbw b Jass 46, Prerak Mankad 56, Sammar Gajjar b Dutta 17, Hetvik Kotak b Dutta 39, Parth Bhut (not out) 37, Jaydev Unadkat c Anmolpreet b Harpreet 14; Total (in 58.5 overs): 286.

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-15, 3-24, 4-69, 5-75, 6-167, 7-191, 8-193, 9-247.

Punjab bowling: Harpreet 25.5-2-104-5, Dutta 15.1-86-2, Jass 16.2-84-3, Wadhera 2-0-4-0.

Punjab – 2nd innings: Harnoor Singh c Harvik b Dharmendra 18, Prabhsimran Singh b Dharmendra 17, Uday Saharan st. (sub) b Bhut 31, Shubman Gill lbw b Bhut 14, Nehal Wadhwa c Vasavada b Bhut 8, Anmolpreet Singh 1, Krish Bhagat (not out) 17, Sanvir Singh c Unadkat b Bhut 0, Harpreet Brar b Bhut 0, Prerit Dutta c Vasavada b Dharmendra 7, Jass Inder c Jadeja b Dharmendra 12; Total (in 39 overs): 125.

Fall of wickets: 1-27, 2-48, 3-78, 4-86, 5-87, 6-91, 7-91, 9-113.

Saurashtra bowling: Unadkat 2-0-9-0, Jadeja 10-0-41-0, Dharmendra 15.3-55-5, Bhut 10-4-8-5, Gajjar 2-0-12-0.

It wasn't a two-day pitch, says Saurashtra coach Odedra

Amol Karhadkar
RAJKOT



Niraj Odedra.
FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

The scoreboard may suggest a rank turner – even an underprepared pitch – on offer at the Niranjan Shah Stadium C ground for Saurashtra's final home league game against Punjab.

But Saurashtra head coach Niraj Odedra underlined that batters from both sides were more culpable for the two-day finish than the 22-yard strip.

"It was not at all a two-day pitch," Odedra told *The Hindu* after Saurashtra won by 194 runs on the second day of the game. "Most of the young batters nowadays are used to playing too aggressively and as a result, very few could apply themselves. We needed

two good partnerships and once we had them, our job was done."

The match was over with 25 minutes remaining in the second day's play. A total of 722 runs were

scored, with 40 wickets falling in just 185.1 overs.

Saurashtra, with 19 points from six games, thus has an outside chance of making it to the quarterfinals as it waits for the fate of the other Group B games.

"We are still in contention. We have to repeat our performance in Chandigarh next week (against Chandigarh) and then hope for the best," Odedra said.

He also confirmed that Ravindra Jadeja, the veteran allrounder, will be unavailable for Saurashtra's last league game.

"He has promised to rejoin the team should we qualify for the quarterfinal. That is an added motivation for the whole group," Odedra said.

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Keynote address by
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Hon'ble Minister for Public Works
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