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IN BRIEF



SC: take a call on prosecuting Vijay Shah in 2 weeks

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Monday gave the Madhya Pradesh government two weeks to decide on a request for sanction to prosecute State Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah, accused of making disparaging remarks against Army officer Colonel Sofiya Qureshi. » Page 10

Nitin Nabin set to take over as BJP president

NEW DELHI
Nitin Nabin, 45, five-time MLA from Bihar, is the new national president of the BJP, the party announced after a day-long nomination process on Monday. He was the only candidate in the fray. » Page 11

SC flags 'stress and strain' by SIR to Bengal's people

Top court asks poll body to display names of voters coming under 'logical discrepancies' category; it takes note of notices being sent to around 1.3 crore people under the category during the SIR

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI



Burden of proof: People wait in queues during hearings under the ongoing SIR in Birbhum district, West Bengal, on Monday. PTI

The Supreme Court on Monday urged the Election Commission to avert causing "stress and strain" through its ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) exercise to the ordinary people of West Bengal, where approximately 1.36 crore people, almost 20% of the population, have received notices from the poll body to explain "logical discrepancies" in their names and family backgrounds.

The "logical discrepancies" include having more than six "progenies", a mismatch in the spelling of names, only a 15-year age gap between children and parents, and a difference in age with grandparents being less than 40 years.

"Look at the strain and stress being caused to ordinary people. Over one crore people have been issued notice," Justice Joymalya Bagchi, a member of the three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, addressed the poll body, represented by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi.

Justice Bagchi asked how a 15-year gap between a parent and child would defy logic, asking whether "we live in a country where there is no child marriage".

In a series of directions to ameliorate the sufferings of the people of the State, the top court or-

Trinamool welcomes SC direction on SIR

KOLKATA
The Trinamool Congress has welcomed the Supreme Court's intervention on notices sent to voters citing "logical discrepancies" in the forms submitted by them during the special intensive revision (SIR) in West Bengal. » PAGE 11

dered that the names of persons coming under the "logical discrepancies" category be displayed at gram panchayat bhavans and block offices in rural areas and ward offices in the urban centres.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Include digital currency link on BRICS agenda: RBI to govt.

Reuters

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recommended to the Centre that a proposal connecting the central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) of BRICS countries be included on the agenda for the 2026 summit of the grouping, two sources have said. They requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak publicly.

The proposal seeks to make cross-border payments easier, in a move that could reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar as geopolitical tensions rise. The RBI's recommendation builds on a 2025 declaration at the BRICS summit in Brazil, which pushed for interoperability between members' payment systems to make cross-border transactions more efficient.

The RBI has publicly expressed interest in linking India's digital rupee with

Ease of payment

If the proposal is accepted, a plan to link digital currencies will be put forward at the 2026 BRICS summit in India

- The move could reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar as geopolitical tensions rise
- While none of the BRICS members have fully launched their digital currencies, all five main members have been running pilot projects



other nations' CBDCs to expedite cross-border transactions and bolster its currency's global usage. It has, however, said its efforts to promote the rupee's global use are not aimed at promoting de-dollarisation.

India will host the next BRICS summit later this year. If the RBI's recommendation is accepted, a proposal to link the digital currencies of BRICS members would be put forward for the first time. The BRICS includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, among oth-

ers. The initiative could irritate the U.S., which has warned against any moves to bypass the dollar. U.S. President Donald Trump has previously said the BRICS alliance is "anti-American" and he threatened to impose tariffs on its members.

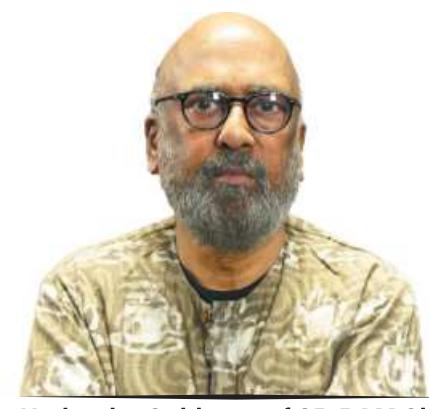
While none of the BRICS members have fully launched their digital currencies, all five main members have been running pilot projects.

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» PAGE 10

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CRPF constable, wife arrested in Noida for 'assaulting' 10-year-old

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) constable and his wife have been arrested for allegedly assaulting a 10-year-old girl at their government accommodation in Greater Noida, the police said on Monday.

The accused, identified as Tarik Anwar and Rimpaa Khatun, were arrested on Sunday and booked under Section 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita while the minor remains on ventilator support at a private hospital, the police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Noida) Shakti Mohan Awasthi said the victim, who is a relative of Ms. Khatun, was brought in to help the couple with household chores and childcare.

'Severely battered'

"We have learnt that the two accused would hit the minor over trivial issues and, on the intervening night of January 14 and 15, the couple assaulted the minor and left her severely battered," said Mr. Awasthi. He added that the minor was first taken to Sarvodaya Hospital in Greater Noida.

However, Mr. Anwar discharged her from there on January 15 citing financial issues, even as the hospital

The victim is in ICU, being treated for multiple fractures, scars, torn nails and low haemoglobin

authorities recommended that she be shifted to the intensive care unit.

She is currently being treated at Max Hospital in Noida Sector 128.

An officer said the victim is being treated for multiple rib fractures and scars, torn nails, and swelling around the eyes.

Her haemoglobin level is quite low, indicating prolonged negligence, the officer added.

The issue came to light when the constable's supervising officer approached the police and wrote to the district child welfare committee, seeking the registration of an FIR for various offences, including grievous abuse, child labour, and trafficking of a minor.

As per the FIR registered at the Ecotech police station, the victim was taken to Sarvodaya Hospital in an unconscious condition and put on ventilator support due to injuries "all over the body". It also notes that the accused did not take the victim to the CRPF camp hospital for first aid or any treatment, and failed to provide a satisfactory response regarding the minor's condition.

Central panel flags 'wide gaps' in pollution control measures

Failure to implement emergency measures compromises efforts against air pollution, says CAQM; it directs govt. of Delhi and neighbouring States to act against officers responsible for negligence

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) on Monday criticised the governments of Delhi and neighbouring States for "serious deficiencies" and "wide gaps" in the implementation of various pollution control measures. It also directed the governments to act against officers responsible for the negligence.

The remarks by the Central air pollution watchdog came even as the air quality in the national capital remained in the 'severe' category. It is likely to improve marginally on Tuesday, as per official data.

'Non-compliance'

The panel highlighted "non-compliance" by the pollution control boards of the NCR States and the agencies concerned in enforcing curbs under Stages III and IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) – a set of temporary and emergency measures to reduce air pollution. It pointed out shortcomings in the deployment of mechanical road-sweeping machines, inspection of construction and demolition sites, and



A women's contingent of the CRPF rehearsing for the Republic Day parade against a hazy backdrop, on Monday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

resolution of complaints received on social media.

"Such recurring gaps and failure in the implementation of actions under the extant GRAP, particularly during periods of 'severe' and 'severe+' air quality in the region, seriously compromise the collective efforts towards abatement of air pollution in Delhi-NCR," it stated in a release.

On January 17, as air quality in Delhi-NCR turned 'severe', the CAQM enforced the most stringent pollution control measures under GRAP-IV, including a ban on the entry of trucks except those carrying essential commodities. It also directed schools in the region to shift to hybrid mode.

The review of actions taken during GRAP Stages III and IV reveals serious

deficiencies and wide gaps in implementation, with shortfalls ranging from 7% to 99.6% across key mandated actions," read the release.

'High pendency'

It noted "high pendency of unresolved complaints, ranging from 47% to 100%, indicating weak enforcement and grievance redressal mechanisms".

Citing an instance, the commission stated that earlier this month, when Stage III was in force, the NCR States were supposed to conduct physical inspections of construction and demolition spread over 500 sq. m or more. In this respect, it said that Delhi had missed its target by 87%, Haryana by 99.6%, Rajasthan by 84%, and Uttar Pradesh by 96%.

The Directorate of Education had on Saturday asked schools to conduct classes in hybrid mode (physically and online) for all students, except those in Grades 10 and 12.

This is the second time this season, which also included a three-week winter break that ended on January 16, that schools have shifted to hybrid mode.

Sarita Agarwal said, "Knowing how severely children are impacted by air pollution, we constantly have to weigh the pros and cons of sending them to school."

One of these factors, said Ms. Agarwal, is the lack of concentration during online classes.

Parents rue disruption as classes go 'hybrid' again

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

On Monday, as many students across the city skipped physical classes and attended classes online, parents *The Hindu* spoke to expressed unease over the frequent disruptions caused by air pollution-related restrictions.

The Directorate of Education had on Saturday asked schools to conduct classes in hybrid mode (physically and online) for all students, except those in Grades 10 and 12.

The Sikhs gurus, particularly Guru Tegh Bahadurji, represent the highest ideals of sacrifice, courage, and protection of human dignity. I am morally incapable of uttering any words that could be construed as disrespectful towards them," read the letter. The LoP added that she has not received any communication from Speaker Vijender Gupta on attending the House to clarify the allegations, as stated in the notice sent to her. She

'Never made derogatory comment': Atishi on Sikh guru remark allegations

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Delhi Assembly Atishi on Monday said she had never made any derogatory remarks against Sikh gurus and sought the unedited video of the House proceedings.



Senior Aam Aadmi Party leader and Delhi LoP Atishi

sought copies of the written communication that had been sent to her in this regard.

There was no response from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The ruling BJP and AAP have been locking horns over purported comments by the LoP in the Assembly about Guru Tegh Bahadur and an alleged video of the incident posted by Law Minister Kapil Mishra on X, which the Punjab police have termed doctored.

'Police inaction'

Meanwhile, Ms. Atishi wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking a meeting to discuss "deterring" law and order in the Capital. "Serious public complaints have emerged regarding police delay, inaction and lack of accountability. Despite Delhi Police being under the Union Home Ministry, control over crime does not appear to be established," wrote the former Delhi Chief Minister.

Gurugram doctor runs SUV over delivery agent multiple times; arrested

Press Trust of India
GURUGRAM

four-wheeler. Holding a grudge against him, he ran over him with his car multiple times, a Gurugram Police spokesperson said, adding that the accused is being questioned.

The incident took place on Sunday night at around 10.30 p.m. when the accused doctor, while driving his car, crushed the delivery agent standing on the roadside. The victim sustained severe injuries, while other gig workers standing nearby escaped unhurt.

The accused - Naveen, 41, resident of Hayatpur village in Gurugram - has a Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery degree and works as an Ayurveda doctor at the Primary Health Centre in Daulatabad.

During interrogation, the accused revealed that he lives in Bhagat Singh Colony. The delivery agent would often park his bike on the road, causing him difficulty in moving his

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR
AT- CHANDIKHOL, PO-SUNGUDA, JAIPUR - 754256, Tel.No.0671-2444468; Email - serv_kpd@yahoo.com
Letter No. 123 / Date:- 13.01.26

2nd Corrigendum Notice

2nd Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Tender Online RCK-23/25 invited by this office vide Letter No.-4208, Dt-08.12.2025. The changes as detailed below are hereby made in the above N.I.T.: 1. Clause no.-06 of NIT Modified below

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Last date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender					
Chief Construction Engineer, R.W. Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur	Tender RCK-23/25	Previously fixed on From 03.01.2026 At 11.00 A.M. To 7.01.2026 Up to 05.00 P.M.	Presently Modified on From 17.01.2026 Up to 02.00 P.M. To 30.01.2026 Up to 05.00 P.M.	Previously fixed on From 30.01.2026 Up to 02.00 P.M. To 19.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	Previously modified on From 31.01.2026 Up to 11.00 A.M.	Financial Bid Will be Intimated later	Presently Modified on From 31.01.2026 Up to 11.00 A.M.	Previously fixed on From 31.01.2026 Up to 11.00 A.M.	Presently Modified on From 31.01.2026 Up to 11.00 A.M.

All other conditions of NIT remain unaltered.

O-2101: Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur.

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Email:dhk-kashmir@jk.gov.in

E-NIT No: 72 of 2025-26, Dated:- 13/01/2026

Note: All the Bidding Process will be done on www.jktenders.gov.in.

Subject: -National Tender invited vide E-NIT No.72 of 2005-26 Tender ID (2026_HPD_300523_1), dated 13-01-2026 for Import of rootstocks of different fruit crops under the Project "Production of Designer Plants for Promotion of High-Density Plantation and Rejuvenation of Orchards" for Public Sector Nurseries under Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP).

For and on behalf of the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Director Horticulture, Kashmir invites bids/offers from reputed/registered fruit plant Nursery Growers/Suppliers/Importers for supply of imported Rootstock of Almond, as detailed in Table-A.

Table-A (Root Stock)

S. No	Kind of fruit crop	Rootstock Required	Nos. to be imported	Location where to be supplied/ Multiplied/ quarantined	Remarks
1	Almond	Garnet, GF-677, Rootpac-20, Rootpac-R	60000 (total); (15000 of each)	ACHD Zainapora	Preferably all the rootstocks are required, however if any of the rootstocks is not available. The whole quantity may be supplied of the available one(s)

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility Criteria, specifications, Bill of Quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the Tender Website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below in Table B:-

Date of issue of Tender Notice	13-01-2026
Date of downloading of bidding documents	13-01-2026
Date of pre-bid meeting for clarification of queries, if any.	-01-2026
Bid Submission Start Date	16-01-2026
Bid submission End Date	02-02-2026
Deadline for receiving the Hard Copy of the documents uploaded on the website along with Demand Draft of Rs.1000/- only in original (No financial bid to be submitted)	02-02-2026
Date & time of opening of technical bids (online)	03-02-2026

Sd/
(J. A. BHAT)
Dy. Director (Central)

DIP/K-10183/25

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA

ECS (Works) DIVISION, AHILYANAGAR

Addrs :- Bandhakam Bhawan, Nagar-Chh. Sambhajinagar Road, Ahilyanagar

E-mail:- egshaomednagar.ee@mahapwd.gov.in Phone/Fax No. 0241-2422938

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 11 for 2025-26

Online E-Tenders in B-1 Form for the following works invited by Executive Engineer E.G.S. (Works) Division, Ahilyanagar Registered Contractors in appropriate only Class with Government of Maharashtra, Public Works Department. Competent and Interested contractors fulfilling all the terms and conditions of tender Global Company having its Indian/Sub Company can also Participate in Tender. Tender Document can be Downloaded from Government web site mahatenders.gov.in, Executive Engineer, E.G.S. (Works) Division, Ahilyanagar who reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason therefore. Conditional tender will not be accepted.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost put to tender Lakh	Registration Class of Contractor
1	Improvement of Shevgaon - Akhegaon-Koradgaon- Bhagwanged Road (MDR 38) Km 0/0 to 12/300 Tal. Shevgaon, Dist. Ahilyanagar (Proposed in Shevgaon City) (5.60 Km length up to the exit road including widening to 10 meters widths)	1200.00	Competent and Interested contractors fulfilling all the terms and conditions of tender Global Company having its Indian/Sub Company can also Participate in Tender.

E-Tender Available period :- Date 20/01/2026 to Date 27/01/2026

Pre Bid Meeting :- Dt. 29/01/2026 at 15.00 hours in the Office of the Chief Engineer Public/ Works Region Nashik

Opening of E-Tender :- Date 28/01/2026

The details of works are provided in the websites as below

1. www.mahapwd.com

Noida techie death: U.P. govt. orders SIT probe

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Two days after a 27-year-old software engineer plunged into a water-filled pit at a construction site in Greater Noida's Sector 150, the Uttar Pradesh government on Monday removed the Noida Authority Chief Executive Officer and ordered an SIT probe into the incident.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed the SIT to submit a report on circumstances leading to the accident within five days.

Meanwhile, several locals alleged such accidents are "waiting to happen" as there are no barricades or signboards in the area to guide motorists on foggy days. Sushil Chaudhary, a businessman and a resident of Sector 150, said, "It is quite disturbing that a young man lost his life because the authorities failed to even put up barricades around a potentially hazardous area," he said.

Ram Gopal, a labourer, said many such accidents have occurred in the past few days. "Sitting beside the road, we see many vehicles lose their way. There are no traffic personnel to guide the vehicles in the area," he said.

Nine GBS patients discharged from hospital in Neemuch

Mehul Malpani
Bhopal

Six patients suffering from the Gullian Barré Syndrome (GBS) are still in the hospital while nine have been discharged in the past two days in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district, where an outbreak has claimed two lives so far.

According to officials, no new case has been reported in the district since the last case on January 17 and that the six persons in hospital are also in a stable condition.

Two deaths

The outbreak had been reported in Neemuch's Manasa town with the death of a child on January 11 and a teenager on January 13. Apart from this, 18 people have been reported infected so far.

"After the second death on January 13, we got alerted and started tracing people. Manasa has a population of about 30,000 and one round of screening of everyone has been done; the second is currently under way. We have also listed people with any kind of illness and checking their symptoms," Neemuch Collector Himanshi Chandra

No new case since January 17, six persons in hospital are stable: officials

told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Chandra also said no bacteria like E-coli has been found in any of the water samples collected from the area so far. "The samples, however, have been sent for further testing while some test reports are also awaited from NIV, Pune, and other cities," he said.

The Collector also said that preventive measures are being taken across the district and water sources are being checked in all towns and villages.

This is the second such outbreak in Madhya Pradesh in the past one month with a diarrhoea outbreak in a locality in Indore already having claimed more than 15 deaths due to contaminated water supply by the Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC).

The then IMC Commissioner Dileep Kumar Yadav, who had been transferred following public anger against the civic body, was made the Managing Director of the State Tourism Development Corporation within 20 days.

SC questions Delhi's 'hurried' rollout of new school fees law

Court says it is in favour of the legislation but implementing it midway through ongoing academic session could lead to difficulties for schools

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday questioned the Delhi government's "hurried" implementation of the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Act, 2025, which seeks to regulate the fixation of fees by private schools in the national capital.

A Bench comprising Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe observed that while the legislation was aimed at advancing public welfare, implementing it midway through an ongoing academic session could lead to significant practical and financial difficulties for schools.

"We are completely in favour of the legislation, but its present form of implementation is unviable... You are forcing people overnight to get up and do it. It is an ideal Act enacted for a very good purpose, but it must be implemented in a proper way," the Bench said, addressing Additional Solicitor General



Parents staging a protest against fee hike outside the DoE in New Delhi. FILE PHOTO

S.V. Raju, appearing for the Directorate of Education (DoE), Delhi.

The new law mandates that any increase in fees by private schools must be cleared through a two-tier regulatory framework comprising school-level panels and district-level appellate authorities. Every private school is required to constitute a School Level Fee Regulation Committee (SLFRC), consisting of representatives of the school management, the principal, three teachers, five parents, and one DoE nominee.

The court was hearing pleas filed by private unaided schools challenging the new law and the rules framed under it. The petitioners contended that the new law runs contrary to the Delhi School Education Act, 1973, and its rules by diluting the authority of school management and vesting greater control in parents and teachers in the fixation of school fees.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the private schools, argued that even assuming the validity of the law, its manner of implementation ran contrary to the scheme of the 2025 Act. He submitted that the government's attempt to retrospectively regulate fees for the academic year beginning April 1, 2025, was unlawful, as the Act itself came into force only in December.

Mr. Raju contended that the timelines prescribed under the law had been extended at the behest of the schools. He said the present exercise was confined to the 2025-2026 academic year, and that the fees currently being charged would be treated as the proposed fees for that year before being tackled in the SLFRCs.

District Cong. chief post is position of 'prestige, honour,' says Hooda

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Addressing the Congress party's district presidents during their ongoing 10-day training session in Kurukshetra for the second consecutive day on Monday, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said it was "a position of prestige and honour" and several prominent national and State leaders had held it in the past.

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi is also expected to address the district presidents on Wednesday. As many as 33 district presidents are undergoing training from January 13-22 as part of the party's efforts to strengthen itself at the grassroots level.

'Internalise the pride'
"Many national and State leaders, such as Sir Chhotu Ram, have held this position. Chhotu Ram, Bansi Lal, Banarsi Das Gupta and others have graced this position," Mr. Hooda said.

"Congress is not just a party, but a culture and an ideal. You must remember that the glorious history of India's freedom struggle tells the story of the Con-



Bhupinder Singh Hooda.
FILE PHOTO

gress's struggle, sacrifice, and dedication. These are inseparable," he said, adding that all those appointed as district presidents must first feel and internalise the pride of being an inheritor of the glorious legacy.

'Event management'
Addressing a press conference, Mr. Hooda said the BJP had "completely ruined the State's law and order and economy". He said the present government was "only a government of event management" and did not have any outcomes to show. "Criminals are committing crimes and even openly taking responsibility for them. The Central government's Social Progress Index shows that Haryana is the most unsafe State in the country," he said.

Bengaluru civic polls after May 25, ballot papers to be used

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Elections to the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) will be held after May 25 with ballot papers to be used instead of EVMs, Karnataka Election Commissioner G.S. Sangreshi announced on Monday. The last civic elections, held in August 2015, used EVMs.

The Election Commissioner was addressing the media after a meeting with representatives of political parties regarding the publication of ward-wise draft electoral rolls for the five city corporations

under the GBA. He did not give a clear or specific reason for reverting to ballot papers, merely stating that the law permits their use.

"This is not banned. We are doing it. Even developed countries, like the United States, conduct elections using ballot papers. In India, only MLA and MP elections are conducted using EVMs," he said.

He added that the decision was taken after due consideration by the State Election Commission. "There may be many reasons. Once the State Election Commission takes a

stand after consulting all stakeholders, we take a decision," he said.

SC observations

Mr. Sangreshi also cited Supreme Court observations to defend the move, stating that the apex court had held there was nothing wrong with conducting elections using ballot papers. "In GBA elections, there is a provision to use ballot papers," he pointed out.

Dismissing apprehensions about delays or inefficiency, he said the process would not be a waste of time and expressed confidence that the

exercise would be "100% successful".

Meanwhile, Minister for IT/BT, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Priyank Kharge said it was the prerogative of the State Election Commission to decide the mode of conducting elections and asserted that there was nothing illegal in reverting to ballot papers.

He said the State government had already moved a Bill and brought in an amendment to enable the change and pointed out that there was no rule prohibiting the use of ballot papers.

Responding to questions on possible opposition from the BJP, Mr. Kharge said the party was free to oppose the move.

"The BJP can oppose anything it wants," he said, adding that the State government had repeatedly placed facts on record regarding alleged manipulation of voter lists.

He alleged that the Election Commission had failed to respond to complaints raised by the Karnataka government and had also not shared documents related to the Aadhaar-linked voter data issue.

Odisha's saltwater crocodile population rises to 1,858

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's estuarine crocodile population has gone up by 32 to reach 1,858 as the State Forest and Environment Department introduced a pilot drone-based survey this year. The annual estimation was con-

ducted from January 8 to 10.

According to the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), 1,858 crocodiles were counted, including 531 hatchlings, 442 yearlings, 365 juveniles, 167 sub-adults and 353 adults. "Maximum 1,424 were spotted in Kanika Wildlife Range," it said.

Probe Sabarimala temple affairs deeply, Kerala HC tells SIT

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The scientific findings in an interim report submitted on Monday by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) looking into the alleged misappropriation of gold from the Sabarimala temple "disclose suspicious and disturbing circumstances surrounding the transactions under scrutiny", the Kerala High Court said.

The findings warrant a deeper, more comprehensive and exhaustive investigation of multiple aspects of temple administration and related transactions spanning over two decades, the court said.

While many accused persons were arrested, the possible involvement of five others is under active scrutiny, they said. After perusing a scientific examination report prepared by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, based on samples of artefacts collected by the SIT, the court said the focus of the investigation at this stage is to ascertain the precise quantum of gold originally cladded in 1998, the quantity of gold used for subsequent plating in 2019, and whether the original gold-clad plates were removed and substituted with freshly plated components.

Dwarapala idols, a critical examination brought to light serious institutional lapses, gross mismanagement and possible complicity, which may have enabled the systematic and sustained siphoning of temple assets. This *prima facie* points to a wider and more entrenched pattern of misconduct, it said.

The SIT must therefore proceed with utmost diligence and conduct a thorough and impartial probe to unearth all facets of the alleged criminal acts, after probing the (gold-related) transactions of the years 1998 and 2019, to ensure continuity and evidentiary coherence, the court said.

While many accused persons were arrested, the possible involvement of five others is under active scrutiny, they said. After perusing a scientific examination report prepared by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, based on samples of artefacts collected by the SIT, the court said the focus of the investigation at this stage is to ascertain the precise quantum of gold originally cladded in 1998, the quantity of gold used for subsequent plating in 2019, and whether the original gold-clad plates were removed and substituted with freshly plated components.

राजस्थान सरकार का उपक्रम

औद्योगिक विकास के खुल रहे द्वारा आप भी बनें भागीदार

आवंटन

अन्तिम 4 दिन शेष

आधारभूत सुविधाओं युक्त औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में करें उद्यम की स्थापना

65	कुल औद्योगिक क्षेत्र	313	कुल भूखण्ड	304	औद्योगिक भूखण्ड	09	लॉजिस्टिक भूखण्ड
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उपरोक्त औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों पर प्रत्यक्ष आवंटन योजना-2025 लागू नहीं है

इंसमी अंतिम तिथि: 23 जनवरी, 2026 (सार्व 06:00 बजे) आवंटन तिथि: 27 जनवरी, 2026 (ग्राम: 10:00 बजे)

अंतिम तिथि: 29 जनवरी, 2026 (सार्व 05:00 बजे)

31	आदू रोड	03	चूल	33	नागौर	08	उदयपुर
38	अंजमेर	08	बीकानेर	07	पाली	03	जयपुर (दक्षिण)
05	अलवर	14	श्रीगंगानगर	24	झालावाड़	02	जयपुर (उत्तर)
08	भिवाड़ी-I	16	किशनगढ़	01	जालोर	25	ईंपीआईसी सीतापुरा, जयपुर
19	भिवाड़ी-II	13	भीलवाड़ा	13	राजसमंद	02	जोधपुर
07	बोरानाडा	01	जयपुर (ग्रामीण)	20	कोटा	03	सर्वांगाधोपुर
05	छिलोठ	01	सीकर	03	नीमराना		

राजस्थान सरकार इन्डस्ट्रियल डेवलपमेंट एंड इन्डस्ट्रीज लिमिटेड

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OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA,
NIRMAN SOUDHA, KESHARI NAGAR, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR-751 001

1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. CE-BRIDGES - 12 / 2025-26

Following changes are made to the Invitation for the work at Sl.01 "Improvement such as widening and strengthening of Left out Rengali main canal from Kelua NH-149 to Manikamara Jaka road from 0.0 to 15.000km in the District of Dhenkanal for the year 2025-26 and Sl. 02 "Construction of H.L.Bridge over "Power Channel" at 3.660km on Burla Link road (ODR) in the District of Sambalpur under State Plan for the year 2023-24" vide Bid Identification No. CE - BRIDGES - 12/2025-26.

► The Last date of submission of tender is extended upto 5.00 PM of dt.17.02.2026.

<p style

18 detained at Manikarnika Ghat in U.P.'s Varanasi

Mavay Kumar
LUCKNOW

Eighteen people were detained on Monday when they attempted to stage a protest at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi alleging that a statue of Rani Ahilyabai Holkar had been damaged during the ongoing redevelopment work.

The protesters are believed to be from the Pal community and had gathered at the ghat chanting slogans against the administration.

"The crowd did not obtain any permission for the demonstration and indulged in sloganising. When they were stopped, they became violent and started abusing and pushing the police," Deputy Commissioner of Police, Kashi, stated in a release.

The protesters alleged that the police used force to disperse them as they tried to submit a memorandum to the district administration.

UDF will focus on job creation: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that the United Democratic Front (UDF) will provide a vision to address the issue of unemployment in Kerala once it is voted to power in the forthcoming Assembly elections.

"What is the UDF going to do once they win the election? This is the question in front of the leaders.



Rahul Gandhi

The UDF and the Congress have to provide a vision for Kerala to address the issue of unemployment," he said

in his inaugural address at the 'Maha Panchayat' organised by the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) at Marine Drive here on Monday to felicitate party representatives who had participated in the recent local body polls.

Mr. Gandhi said that it pained him to see thousands of youth going abroad because they do not get employment in the State. "We need to free the people of Kerala so that

they can do the jobs they do abroad in the State itself," he said.

He alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh stood for centralisation of power while the Congress supported decentralisation. "They do not want to hear the voices of the people. The ideological attack of the BJP and the RSS is designed to silence the voice of the people," he alleged.

BHOPAL SAHAKARI DUGDH SANGH MARYADIT (BSDS)

Habibganj, Bhopal-462024

Tel. : 0755-2457017, E-mail : pur.bds@sanchidairy.com, Website : www.sanchidairy.com

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)/LOCAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (LCB)

Bids are invited from eligible bidders for the works listed below :-

Sl. No.	Description of works/Bid Reference	EMD (Rs.)	Bid Submission Start/End Date & Time	Technical Bid Opening Date & Time
1.	Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of RP-HPLC Machine at BSDS, Bhopal. Ref. BSDS/PUR/QC/2026/16/3rd Call	54000/-	20.01.2026 11:00 hrs. 26.01.2026 13:00 hrs.	27.01.2026 13:00 hrs.
2.	Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of Gas Chromatography with Flame Ionization Detection at BSDS, Bhopal. Ref. BSDS/PUR/QC/2026/17/3rd Call	160000/-	20.01.2026 11:00 hrs. 26.01.2026 13:00 hrs.	27.01.2026 13:00 hrs.
3.	Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of NIR Dairy Product Analyzer at BSDS, Bhopal. Ref. BSDS/PUR/QC/2026/18/3rd Call	160000/-	20.01.2026 11:00 hrs. 26.01.2026 13:00 hrs.	27.01.2026 13:00 hrs.

For further details pertaining to IFB and for downloading the bid document, please visit website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in> and www.sanchidairy.com (only for reference). For any clarification please contact In Charge (Purchase), BSDS, BHOPAL, M.P.

The Chief executive officer, Bhopal Sahakari Dugdh Sangh Maryadit (BSDS) has all the rights to accept or reject any or all the bids.

NB : Any corrigendum/modification etc. will be posted only website <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

M.P. Madhyam/124046/2026

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER: PWD: BUILDING
ASSAM :: GUWAHATI-3.

No.CE/TB-II(Bldg)/65/2024/7

PRESS NOTICE

The Chief Engineer, PWD(Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids from eligible contractors/ firms having requisite experience in similar nature of work for the following work. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in. The Bidders must be enrolled in www.assamtenders.gov.in

Sl. No.	Name of Work	** Approx. Value of Work (in Rs)	Bid Security	Cost of Document (in Rs.)	Completion period
1	Construction of a (G+2) RCC building for judicial residential quarter at Morigaon, Assam (Provision G+3)	4,60,48,390.00	2% for General category and 1% for Reserved category on value of work	9210.00	18 (Eighteen Months)

N.B.

(i) Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT

(ii) All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents.

(iii) The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

Chief Engineer, PWD(Building)
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-03.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (ROADS)
ASSAM, CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-03

No.CE/CW/31/2025-26/1

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D.(Roads), Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bid from approved and eligible contractors registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for 1 (one) no. of project for construction of road work etc. under SOPD(G) for the year 2025-26 pertaining to PWD, New Guwahati Territorial Road Division in Kamrup (M) district of Assam.

Scheme is not yet sanctioned by the competent authority. In the event of non-sanction of the scheme, the bids may be cancelled and no claim what so ever on this account shall be entertained from the bidders.

Details along with Schemes for the works may be seen at website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned in the "City Works Cell" Amendment / Addendum to the SBD, if any, and further notifications shall appear in this website and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The contractors / bidders must be registered with the Electronic Tendering System (ETS) of PWRD, Assam website www.assamtenders.gov.in.

Note: NIT Value is inclusive of GST & Labour cess etc.

DIPR/C/HIND /789/20-Jan-26

Chie Enginee, PWD (Roads),
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THG PWD (Building) LTD., Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Directors, Employees of this newspaper shall be held responsible in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, यूपी-18
कल्पद्रव्यालय एवं डिजाइन संवित्तन,
उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय)
मकान सं. 78/1/108, बौद्ध विहार मठोला
योजना सं-4, भाग-2 (विकास संवित्तन
साहित्य वाटिका, चन्द्रशेखर आजाद पार्क
के समन्बन्धीय द्वारा दिल्ली रोड, मुमाराबाद-244103
E-mail: pm18mbd@gmail.com

पत्रांक: 71/एम-18/10

दिनांक: 14.01.2026

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय) की ओर से अधोलितारी द्वारा Repair & Maintenance work of OBC Girls Hostel at Govt. K.G.K. Homeopathic Medical College, Moradabad अनुभावी लागत रु. 30.12 लाख, हेतु दिनांक 31.01.2026 की अपराह्न 16:30 बजे तक ई-निविदा ए आमनेत्र की जाती है। उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की ए-प्रोक्रिया द्वारा दिनांक 17.01.2026 से दिनांक 31.01.2026 के मध्य उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की e-procurement की वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> से डाउनलोड किये जा सकते हैं तथा ई-निविदा दिनांक 02.02.2026 को 13:30 बजे कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, यूपी-18, सी०१० ए०४८ ई०४०, उ०३० जल निगम (नगरीय), मुमाराबाद में खोली जायेगी। ई-निविदा सूचना की वेबसाइट www.cdsupjn.org एवं प्रोजेक्ट पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है। समर्त शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum) <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर ही अपलोड किये जायेंगे, इनका पृष्ठ से कोई प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा। निविदादाताओं को सलाह दी जाती है कि उक्त वेबसाइट का समय-समय पर अवलोकन करते रहें।

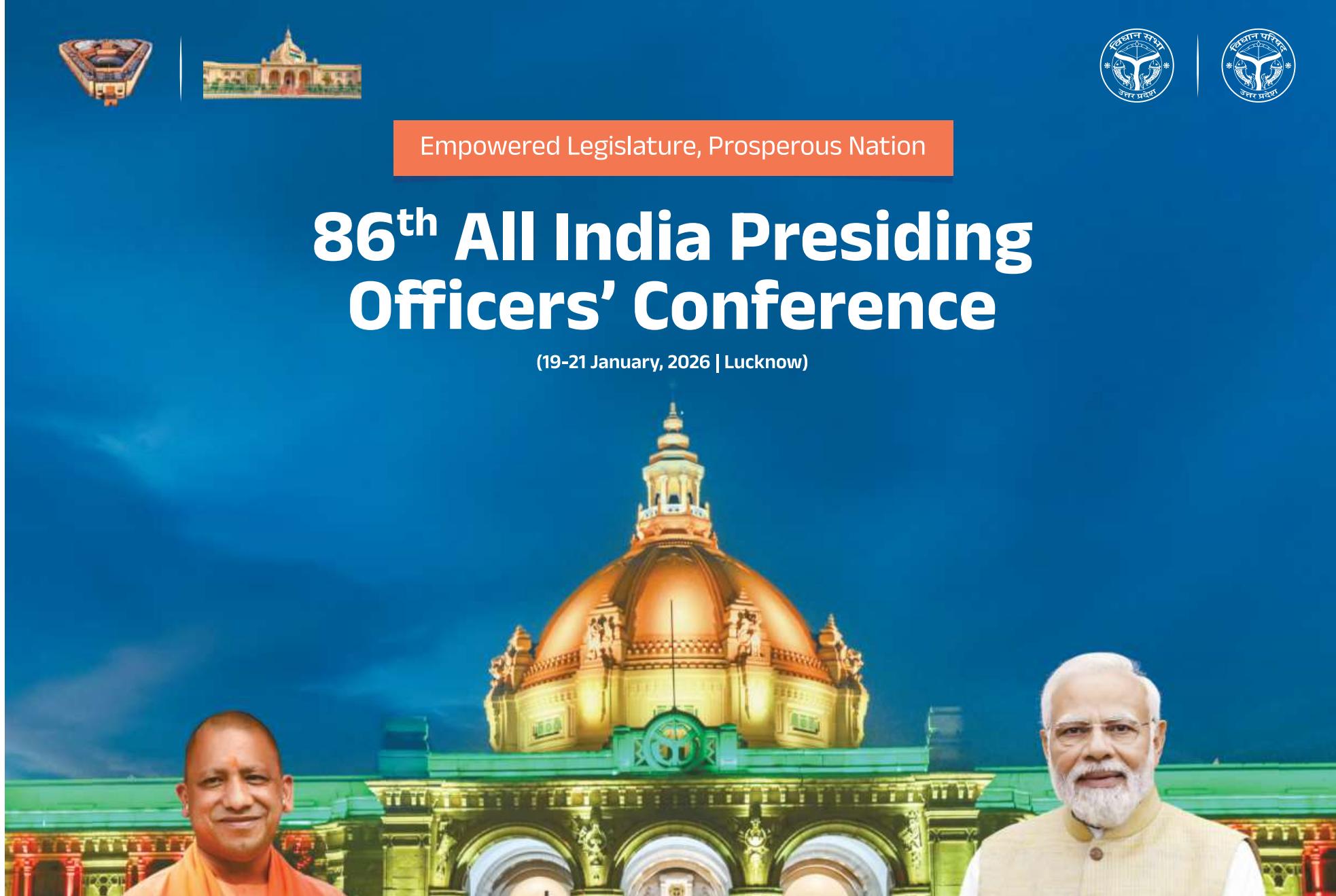
कार्यालय परियोजना प्रबन्धक, यूपी-18
कल्पद्रव्यालय एवं डिजाइन संवित्तन,
उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय)
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साहित्य वाटिका, चन्द्रशेखर आजाद पार्क
के समन्बन्धीय द्वारा दिल्ली रोड, मुमाराबाद-244103
E-mail: pm18mbd@gmail.com

पत्रांक: 72/एम-18/11

दिनांक: 14.01.2026

ई-निविदा सूचना

उत्तर प्रदेश जल निगम (नगरीय) की ओर से अधोलितारी द्वारा प्रोजेक्ट कार्ल कर्नाटक अन्यान्य राजनीतिक द्वारा दिनांक 14.02.2026 के अपराह्न 16:30 बजे तक ई-निविदा ए आमनेत्र की जाती है। उत्तर प्रदेश राजपुर के विभिन्न राजनीतिक कार्यालयों में वाराणसीपुरातारी ई०१०५४८ ई०४०, उ०३० जल निगम (नगरीय), मुमाराबाद में खोली जायेगी। निविदा की वेबसाइट www.cdsupjn.org एवं प्रोजेक्ट पोर्टल <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है। समर्त शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum) <https://etender.up.nic.in> पर ही अपलोड किये जायेंगे, इनका पृष्ठ से कोई प्रकाशन नहीं किया जायेगा। निविदादाताओं को सलाह दी जाती है कि उक्त वेबसाइट का समय-समय पर अवलोकन करते रहें।



86th All India Presiding Officers' Conference

(19-21 January, 2026 | Lucknow)

National Deliberation

on Parliamentary Procedures
by Presiding Officers of the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha,
Legislative Assemblies and Legislative Councils

Date: 20th January, 2026 | Time: 10:00 AM

Venue: Legislative Assembly Premises, Lucknow

Day Two : Major Points of Deliberation



Leveraging Technology for
Transparent, Efficient and
Citizen-Centric Legislative Processes



Capacity Building of Legislators to
Increase Efficiency and Strengthen
Democratic Governance



Accountability of
the Legislature
Towards the People



Regional saffron

The BJP is on the ascent in Maharashtra; so is Chief Minister Fadnavis

Maharashtra politics remains in a flux, but the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) continues to be on the ascent, as trends from the recent civic body elections suggest. Various factions continue to fight for the legacy of Balasaheb Thackeray, who combined Marathi nativism and Hindu communalism, but the BJP appears to have adopted that agenda more smartly, catering to the State's changing demographics, particularly in Mumbai and other urban centres. The BJP secured roughly 1,425 of 2,869 corporator seats across 29 municipal corporations, while its ally, the Shiv Sena (Shinde faction), also did well, except in Mumbai. The Ajit Pawar and Sharad Pawar factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) had an understanding in their family strongholds in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, while remaining in opposition alliances – the former in the BJP-led Mahayuti and the latter with the Congress and the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction). Uddhav Thackeray and estranged cousin Raj Thackeray joined hands after many years to reclaim the family's prominence in Mumbai and in Nashik. Both the Pawar and the Thackeray families performed poorly, while the BJP and the Shinde Sena seized power in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Uddhav Thackeray had been in control of the BMC for 25 years. The BJP emerged as the single largest party in key cities, including Pune, Nagpur, Nashik and Navi Mumbai.

The Congress managed wins in Latur, Bhiwandi and Chandrapur, but is still distant from showing signs of a notable comeback. It can take solace only in the fact that people are not very excited about the family politics of the Pawars and the Thackerays, leaving an opening for it. The Congress had disapproved of the Uddhav-Raj partnership in Mumbai. But adding to the party's troubles is the AIMIM, which has made some inroads in Muslim-dominated areas. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has emerged a strong leader, and the election results boost his standing within and outside the BJP. He is walking a thin line between pleasing the ideological hardliners in the BJP and managing the complex realities of governance. The composition of the State's population is changing with migration, weakening the Sena's nativist politics. All factions of the Sena are trying to adapt to this changed reality, but its past restricts its manoeuvrability. The BJP, on the other hand, has turned demographic changes into a tool of communal propaganda against Muslims while winning over Hindi-speaking voters. It is not much better for the State to replace nativism with communalism, and the BJP should drive its ambitions using a more inclusive platform.

Fractured Yemen

Saudi Arabia and the UAE must help all Yemeni factions come together

The flare-up in fighting between Yemen's Saudi-backed government and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a separatist force backed by the UAE, has exposed the country's internal vulnerabilities and the Persian Gulf region's geopolitical fault lines. The crisis escalated in early December when the Aden-based STC launched a surprise offensive in the oil-rich Hadramaut and al-Mahra governorates, which were under government control. It gained control of nearly half of the former South Yemen state, but the advances were short-lived. Government forces, covered by Saudi air power, swiftly recaptured the lost areas. On January 7, government forces entered Aden, forcing the STC to send a delegation to Riyadh for talks. In the Saudi capital, the STC announced its dissolution, while its leader, Aidarus al-Zoubaidi, who has been charged with treason, is believed to have fled to the UAE. The crisis also brought Saudi-UAE tensions into the open. Riyadh accused Abu Dhabi of transferring weapons to Yemeni separatists, and carried out air strikes on the port of Mukalla, reportedly targeting arms shipments. Following a rare public rebuke from Saudi Arabia, the UAE announced its withdrawal of forces from Yemen and an end to its "counterterrorism operations".

The UAE was a part of Saudi Arabia's military coalition when it began bombing the Houthis (Ansar Allah), the Shia militia that captured Sanaa, Yemen's capital, in 2014. But the years-long war did little to defeat the Houthis. The Saudi-backed government operated from Aden in the south, until the STC began challenging it. The UAE then began support to the STC. Saudi Arabia, facing a direct security threat from the Houthis along its southern borders, entered into a ceasefire with the group, and sought to stabilise southern Yemen through the government. Yet, Riyadh grew increasingly alarmed by the expanding military power and defiance of the separatists. As government forces and the STC fought for influence in the south, the Houthis entrenched their position in the north, encompassing key population centres. The true victims of this multi-layered conflict, however, have been Yemen's civilians. The country faces one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with millions on the brink of famine, an economy in ruins and devastated infrastructure. For now, an uneasy calm prevails in the south. But STC representatives in the UAE have dismissed claims that the council has been disbanded. For peace to take hold, all Yemeni factions must together establish a federal governance structure, addressing present power dynamics and historical grievances. For this to happen, Saudi Arabia and the UAE must bury the hatchet and work jointly for stability in their impoverished neighbouring country.

Calling out the ED's actions, the media trials

Last year, in June, when the Madras High Court stayed all proceedings initiated by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) against film-producer Akash Bhaskaran, he was left in disbelief but was still a relieved man. Just weeks earlier, sections of the media had portrayed him as a key figure in an alleged ₹1000-crore TASMAC liquor scam". The ED had raided his home in May, seized a laptop and mobile phones, and had also sealed the premises of his associate, Vikram Ravindran. YouTube personalities claimed that investigators had discovered assets such as luxury watches. The media did not cover itself in glory by airing visuals of 'incriminating WhatsApp chat print-outs' which had been "found thrown out" during one of the ED's searches. Hashtags trended, memes flourished, and political opponents quoted ever-expanding figures in this alleged scam.

All this collapsed the moment the courts examined the facts. The Madras High Court held that the raids on Mr. Bhaskaran and Mr. Ravindran were effectively illegal, noting that there was no credible information to link them to any scheduled offence, or even the alleged Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Limited (TASMAC) scam. The High Court stayed all proceedings against the two men and directed the ED to return all seized devices and materials to them. It also held that the agency had no authority to seal premises or issue coercive summons in the absence of a predicate offence. Faced with judicial scrutiny, the ED revoked the search authorisation and unsealed the premises. And it tendered an unconditional apology. When the ED attempted to issue fresh summons, the Supreme Court of India stepped in and stayed the broader probe, observing that the ED was "crossing all limits" and violating federal principles.

Waywardness and a vague mandate
This is an episode that matters. This is because it captures a pattern that has become familiar: search and arrest first, investigate later, make selective leaks to friendly media, and then quietly retreat when courts demand evidence.

The ED has been entrusted to administer the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, which is meant to prevent criminals from enjoying the proceeds of crime. The structure of the law is clear in principle: there must first be a scheduled offence that generates proceeds of crime.

In practice, the ED has inverted this logic. In many cases, it treats the money-laundering process as independent of an underlying crime, and then proceeds to establish a predicate offence to justify its action.

The ED wields sweeping powers. Under Section 50 of the PMLA, it can summon anyone and record statements under oath without clarifying whether the person is a witness or an accused. Under Section 17, it can conduct searches on anyone and seize materials. Under Section 19, it can arrest a person without warrant based on its own subjective "reason to believe". It can provisionally attach property, freeze bank



Saravanan Annadurai
is a senior lawyer who has appeared in several Directorate of Enforcement-related cases, and an official spokesperson for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)

accounts and cripple businesses before any trial begins. To get bail under the PMLA is notoriously difficult, reversing the presumption of innocence – requiring the accused to prove that they have not committed an offence and for the court to be satisfied that they are not likely to commit any offence while on bail.

These powers might be defensible if exercised sparingly against terror financing, drug trafficking or large-scale organised crime – as they are meant to be. Instead, these powers are increasingly deployed as tools of political intimidation.

Section 50 summons are used to keep people waiting for hours, unsure of their status and creating psychological pressure on them to comply. There have also been allegations of physical assault in custody. Despite directions by the Supreme Court mandating audio-visual recording of interrogations, the ED has been accused of only selectively recording proceedings, undermining transparency and making judicial review difficult.

Section 17 searches are conducted on the flimsiest grounds. Courts have repeatedly held that rumours and vague allegations do not constitute credible information. Yet, the ED has used these to justify raids, even on state-run institutions.

Section 19 arrests are justified on the vague grounds of "non-cooperation", which often means nothing but a refusal to endorse the agency's narrative.

Even when cases have collapsed, the ED is known not to release attached properties. Assets that were acquired long before the commission of the alleged offence are held for years.

While the Court's judgment in *Vijay Madanlal Choudhary vs Union Of India* upheld many of these provisions, the verdict itself is under review, although no hearings have been held, leaving citizens exposed to unchecked power.

Corruption and political misuse

An agency entrusted with extraordinary powers must by itself be beyond reproach. Over the past few years, there have been cases of many ED officers having been caught accepting bribes or extorting money. In November 2023, an ED officer in Rajasthan was arrested for taking a bribe to dilute a chit-fund case. The next month, an officer from the ED's Madurai sub-zonal office in Tamil Nadu was caught red-handed demanding money to drop a closed case. In August 2024, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested an assistant director with the ED for accepting a bribe from a Mumbai-based jeweller. In May 2025, a senior ED officer was arrested in Odisha for demanding crores from a mining businessman. Every time, the ED has responded with suspension orders and press statements, yet none of these incidents have prompted institutional reform.

Claims of moral authority ring hollow when officers tasked with enforcing financial probity themselves indulge in extortion. Benches of the Supreme Court have openly questioned whether the agency is using the PMLA to prolong incarceration rather than secure convictions, and

The Directorate of Enforcement's status as a central agency does not make it infallible, with instances of its overreach, poor investigation and even an outright abuse of power

warning that the fight against corruption cannot itself become lawless.

In West Bengal, the ED's raids on I-PAC and its legal offensive against the State Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, show the same drift – it raises concerns about selective investigations being pushed into public view ahead of State elections before there is establishment of solid evidence. If the ED can brand a State Chief Minister as obstructionist, based on theatre rather than facts, what does that say about fairness and the rule of law? Therefore, we need to ask whether such prosecutorial zeal serves justice or political impact. The observations by Justice B.V. Nagarathna of the Supreme Court, on the misuse of Article 32, have highlighted the stark irony in the ED's West Bengal case. While the agency frequently uses its powers in a manner seen to be selective and arbitrary, its direct invocation of Article 32 underscores a double standard. This approach, amid Justice Nagarathna's broader critique of Article 32 being abused for routine or trivial grievances, has only illustrated the institutional hypocrisy in the politicised use of investigative powers.

The same template is now visible in leaked communications about Tamil Nadu Minister K.N. Nehru of the DMK. The media has reported on two letters that the ED wrote to the State's Director General of Police alleging scams. It must be noted that the ED's letters amount to recommendations, not findings. The leaks, however, achieved the desired effect: public suspicion, political pressure and reputational damage. Whether the allegations survive judicial scrutiny remains to be seen, but the pattern is unmistakable.

The need for vigil and checks

What is the takeaway in all this? First, the media must introspect. Reporting allegations without verification, especially when they stem from leaks and internal communications, amounts to complicity. Journalism is not stenography. The duty of the press is to step outside and verify the truth. Journalists must resist becoming conduits for false and politically-motivated allegations.

Second, scepticism is healthy. The ED's status as a central agency does not confer infallibility. Its recent record reflects overreach, poor investigation and, at times, an outright abuse of power. Citizens are entitled to demand evidence, not theatrics.

Third, the rule of law matters. Money-laundering statutes exist to protect the integrity of the financial system, but these laws must not become tools of intimidation.

Finally, courts must urgently define the limits of the ED's powers and reinforce citizens' rights. Only firm constitutional guardrails can prevent investigative authority from mutating into arbitrary state power.

This is about the health of India's democracy. If the CBI was once described as a caged parrot, the ED today resembles a hound let loose. Every false or weak case normalises authoritarian overreach. Every media trial erodes faith in institutions. We must ensure that the institutional rot is reversed.

In a changing world, it is 'small tables, big dividends'

On January 26, 2026, Kartavya Path will send a signal that goes beyond ceremony. The chief guests at the Republic Day parade will be the European Union (EU)'s institutional leadership, representing a 27-member bloc rather than a single capital.

That break with tradition points to a wider truth about 2026. Bilateral diplomacy will remain demanding. The neighbourhood will require constant attention, and ties with Washington and Beijing will keep producing friction, from trade disputes to sharper strategic competition.

India's best openings may, therefore, lie in diplomatic white spaces. Think of them as gaps in global leadership. Problems need coordination, but no major power can credibly take charge. They are crowded rooms without a convenor. In such spaces, India can work through coalitions to shape rules and deliver global public goods, provided it chooses priorities that it can sustain.

Working with Europe
Europe is the first test. The presence of Ursula von der Leyen and António Luís Santos da Costa on January 26 signals the intent to push forward the long-pending India-EU Free Trade Agreement. While ties with Berlin, Paris or Rome matter, India's decisive engagement will be with the EU's collective trade, competition and climate policy. This is not only about customs duties. It is about market access rules, data standards and sustainability requirements. If India treats the agreement as a de-risking compact, the payoff is threefold. It strengthens access to Europe, positions India in reworked value chains, and offers some insurance against United States trade pressure. But it will raise compliance burdens for firms.

The European window is open because the EU wants to reduce exposure to China and hedge against U.S. unpredictability by deepening



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partnerships with India. Delhi needs to move quickly. Windows close.

The next is BRICS and the Quad

Europe is the technocratic test of India's white space diplomacy. BRICS is the political one. BRICS in 2026 is not what it was. Expansion has widened its reach but blurred its focus because members do not want the same things at the same speed. That raises the key question: what is BRICS actually for, and can India help define it?

The demands BRICS represents are real. Many members want a stronger voice for the Global South, fairer representation and credible alternatives in development finance. Yet, the group's direction is contested.

As chair and host in 2026, India can steer BRICS toward delivery through better use of New Development Bank guarantees and practical toolkits that turn communiqués into action.

External risks also matter. Washington's tariff threats against countries seen as aligning with BRICS raise the cost of careless signalling. India gains little by letting the group drift into anti-West rhetoric or a de-dollarisation crusade, which would undercut its effort to attract western capital and technology. India's task is to hold the balance. Reform is not the same as rejection.

The third white space is the Quad. If India hosts a Quad leaders' summit, it could be hosting U.S. President Donald Trump. That would add political weight and raise the stakes for delivery.

The Quad's agenda on maritime domain awareness and resilient ports matters to Indian Ocean littoral states that want capacity without being drawn into great power rivalries. India can make the Quad useful by turning capabilities into services that others can access.

India's Operation Sagar Bandhu following Cyclone Ditwah in Sri Lanka showed the value of having assets that can be retasked quickly without

With bilateral diplomacy remaining demanding, India's best chances lie in diplomatic white spaces

diplomatic drama. Success, however, will depend on Washington managing trade differences with partners without disrupting broader cooperation.

All this underlines a hard truth about large forums. The United Nations remains essential for legitimacy and norm-setting, but it is a weak instrument for delivery when major powers are at odds. Outcomes are shifting to coalitions that can move even when the centre cannot.

The G-20 shows the same strain. In theory, it is the premier table for economic coordination. In practice, it is increasingly exposed to domestic politics and agenda fights. The U.S. boycott of the Johannesburg G-20 summit in 2025 and the push to narrow the agenda under the U.S. presidency in 2026 could sideline Global South priorities and make the forum less inclusive.

Amid global volatility, India's momentum in 2026 will come from turning white spaces into working arrangements. Europe is about standards, BRICS is about functionality, and the Quad is about public goods.

The message for India

The AI Impact Summit in Delhi (February 2026) is India's chance to get governments, companies and researchers together to bridge differences where interests overlap. As Washington experiments with new forums, including Mr. Trump's proposed 'Board of Peace' that is focused on peace building, Delhi will need to choose carefully. An invitation for India to join Pax Silica, a U.S.-led capability club for Artificial Intelligence and semiconductor supply chains, is reportedly in the works and shows how fast these new tables are multiplying.

In a divided world, it is rarely the biggest table that shapes the future. It is the smaller tables where things actually get done. In 2026, India's advantage will lie in making the tables that it chooses work.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gaza peace board

Gaza's newly announced peace plan, now dressed with promises of reconstruction and development, risks repeating a familiar western ritual. Iraq and Afghanistan

were once presented with similar blueprints of renewal, backed by pedantic conferences and donor pledges. Yet, we are left with shattered institutions, dependent economies, and political

vacuums that bred further conflict. Gaza cannot be rebuilt only on massive concrete while its burning angst of political captivity remains untouched. Regional fault lines, from Palestinian self

determination to security guarantees for neighbours,

are not technical obstacles but the core dispute.

Corrections & Clarifications

In an article, "Corruption and prior sanction, case of a divided house" (Editorial page, January 19, 2026), a sentence in paragraph 12 should have read: "... honest public servants needed to be insulated from frivolous and malafide police investigations", and not "... to be insulted from..."

hapless Gaza can at best help the Oval Office adorn itself with a Nobel.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

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

A Centrist lens on 'illegal immigration'

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which omitted nearly 6.5 crore electors from draft rolls of nine States and three Union Territories, has triggered widespread procedural disputes. The Opposition appears determined to seize this moment to move forward with its "vote chor" campaign on which its politics has exhaustively relied.

The Opposition's mistake
But it will be naive to mistake the people's annoyance for anger. Despite the Election Commission of India's low credibility, and discontent over its shoddy handling of the SIR, few buy the Opposition's account, which depicts elections as fraudulently manufactured to suit the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the SIR as a tool to perfect that machination.

The overwhelming sense is that a voter list revision is necessary to remove dead, shifted, and duplicate voters. The approval for the SIR also draws from mobilisation of emotion over the vexing question of 'illegal immigrants', with verifiable incidents, tendentious assertions, and inflammatory rhetoric creating a tangle that threatens to dominate Indian politics, particularly electoral possibilities in the northern States.

When Home Minister Amit Shah said recently in poll-bound West Bengal that "even Kolkata is facing a threat from infiltrators," it echoed the telling apprehensions of a sizeable section of Bengalis. The Opposition is loath to recognise the potency of the issue, often deploying lacerating wit to evade the question. Trinamool Congress leader Mahua Moitra's jibe – "who wants to come to India?" – is an example.

This behavioural pattern tinged with sourness – either you agree with me, or you are a bigot – has been counterproductive for liberal parties the world over. It was the European Union's uncritical support for wide-open borders that precipitated the steady trickle

**Anando Bhakto**

covers national politics, Kashmir and elections in the Hindi heartland

of voters of the centre-left to populist, anti-immigration parties, more notably in Germany, Italy, Hungary and Poland.

The Opposition's denial of undocumented immigrants in the face of evidence alienates people. Last November, several hundred Bangladeshi nationals were intercepted by Border Security Force personnel at the Hakimpur check post in West Bengal, while allegedly attempting to return to Bangladesh. In December, 19 Bangladeshis were among the 511 people arrested in Uttarakhand under Operation Kalmi.

The Opposition sees acting on undocumented immigrants as corrosive to universal human rights. But national security concerns are not corrosive; fulminations aimed at hijacking them are. Opposition leaders show proclivity to confuse illegal immigration with immigration, boxing everyone who talks about border security as foot-soldiers of the Right tasked with manufacturing xenophobia. While covering the 2024 U.S. presidential election, I found that in the battleground States, this boxing triggered negative sentiment. The anger was more palpable among immigrants who came to the U.S. legally. Donald Trump's share of Hispanic votes climbed from 32% in 2020 to 46% in 2024.

The more the Opposition chastises people who talk about border security, the easier it gets for right wing provocateurs to depict immigration as chaotic, and build consensus for violent crackdown. A June 2025 report by the European Policy Centre emphasised that conspiracy theories, such as those surrounding population replacement, find acceptance as they provide "a sense of control" and "understanding" for individuals who otherwise felt powerless and unheard.

A reason why the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi was able to monopolise nationalism was because in the decade preceding 2014, the Congress

nearly jettisoned expositions of national pride – at least the animating kind invoking India's spiritual traditions and heritage – as though they were impediments to secularism. That misjudged fear induces its studied silence on the immigration issue.

A nuanced conversation
In June 2025, Parliament passed the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, to regulate the entry and stay of foreigners in a tech-driven, time-bound manner; the Opposition staged a walkout. A prudent course would have been to build a more nuanced conversation on immigration, reflecting its complexity and multifaceted nature, delineating both the challenges and the benefits it brings along. It must focus on legal work authorisations, spending versus contributions, and negotiations with allied countries for easing refugee intakes, as Italy's Georgia Meloni attempted with Albania.

In Europe, the Left drastically reoriented its politics to sync with public attitudes on immigration. In Denmark, Social Democrats led by Mette Frederiksen passed a law allowing asylum claims to be processed and refugees to be resettled in partner countries such as Rwanda. This ebbed the appeal of the anti-migration Danish People's Party; it plummeted to one seat in the 2024 European Parliament election.

The Congress is mistaken that whatever weighs heavily on the minds of its think tankers weighs on the minds of the public. Its preoccupation with "saving" Indian democracy before every election bears that out. It misses the point that the people are divided on where the threat to democracy comes from. People have less anxiety over weakening institutions and "vote chor" and more over the alleged immigrant influx. Centrist politics must reconstruct itself. An aptitude to reckon with people's emotive issues and give a positive spin to them is imperative to that effort.

The Opposition's denial of undocumented immigrants in the face of evidence alienates people

The rising cost of poll promises

The AIADMK is promising more freebies instead of promoting fiscal prudence

STATE OF PLAY

T. Ramakrishnan
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With Tamil Nadu going to Assembly polls in April-May, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami recently made some promises. He announced an expansion of the monthly assistance scheme for women, promising to provide ₹2,000 per month to the woman head of every ration card-holding family; and the expansion of the free travel scheme, which is currently limited to women, to cover men as well. Mr. Palaniswami termed the promises as the "first dose", with more to be made in the manifesto.

In response, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) regime deployed two Ministers – S. Regupathy and T.R.B. Rajaa – to criticise Mr. Palaniswami for having "copied the successful schemes" of the government. Mr. Rajaa, who is also a member of the DMK's election manifesto committee, said that the country would turn its attention to the DMK's manifesto once it was out, "as was the case in the past." Indeed, Mr. Palaniswami's announcement may prompt the DMK to come out with many other assurances at a time when the State government is struggling to sustain its welfare and populist schemes. As the Election Commission of India is expected to announce the poll schedule in late February, the incumbent government has time to launch more populist schemes.

If the AIADMK chief's two offers are implemented, it would mean an additional burden of ₹40,000 crore annually. In other words, these two components alone would

be around 11% of the projected revenue receipts of the State for 2026-27. There is a qualitative difference between the DMK's Kalaigai Magalir Urimai Thittam, which provides ₹1,000, and the AIADMK's proposed scheme, Kula Vilaku Thittam, which will offer ₹2,000. While the first scheme covers 1.3 crore people because of some conditions, the second will include 2.23 crore. In addition, this year's estimated expenditure for the free bus ride is ₹3,600 crore. Its expanded coverage would double the subsidy bill.

For about 15 years, until the mid-2000s, the two parties had a different approach while they were in power. As economic reforms were unveiled in 1991, the AIADMK and the DMK favoured greater space for the private sector, shrinking the role of the government and its enterprises, and experimenting with the gradual reduction of subsidies. In 2002-03, the AIADMK regime led by Jayalalithaa withdrew free power supply for farmers and fixed a two-slab pricing system for rice supplied through the public distribution system. However, she rolled back these schemes when her party performed disastrously in the 2004 general elections.

Since then, the DMK and the AIADMK have been aggressively resorting to competitive populism. In 2006, the DMK said that it would reduce the price for rice sup-

plied through PDS uniformly to ₹2 per kg, distribute free colour television sets to all ration cardholders, and waive off crop loans taken through cooperative societies for all categories of farmers. In September 2008, the regime led by M. Karunanidhi cut the price of rice further to ₹1 per kg. In 2011, the AIADMK government went one step further by providing 20 kg of rice free for all ration cardholders. It also supplied a table fan, a mixer, and a grinder as freebies to every woman covered by the ration card system. In May 2016, Jayalalithaa retained power. Since then, about 2 crore domestic consumers of electricity have been getting free power up to 100 units bimonthly. In 2021, the DMK promised a monthly basic income scheme for women. Those who claim to be alternatives to the Dravidian majors are also no exception to the freebies culture, which seems to have become an all-India phenomenon.

Mr. Palaniswami has not committed to the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for State government staff. Yet his promises have caused concern among those who follow the State's finances, which are under strain owing to several domestic and international events. Besides, the DMK regime announced in 1991, the AIADMK and the DMK favoured greater space for the private sector, shrinking the role of the government and its enterprises, and experimenting with the gradual reduction of subsidies. In 2002-03, the AIADMK regime led by Jayalalithaa withdrew free power supply for farmers and fixed a two-slab pricing system for rice supplied through the public distribution system. However, she rolled back these schemes when her party performed disastrously in the 2004 general elections.

With his promises, the AIADMK leader appears to have strengthened the hands of advocates of freebies when he should have promoted the agenda of fiscal prudence instead. This is something Tamil Nadu needs.

Wikipedia has 3,000 iPhones worth of content

It would take 38 years of continuous reading to finish every English article on the site

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

Wikipedia has amassed 775 terabytes of data, equivalent to the storage capacity of 3,000 iPhones, according to a recent Pew Research Center report. The site hosts over 7 million English articles, the language with the highest volume of content (**Chart 1**).

As of 2025, Wikipedia features articles in 342 languages. However, much of the content in other languages may be generated by automated bots translating English entries. Cebuano – a language spoken in the southern Philippines – is a prime example; the vast majority of the millions of articles in Cebuano was created by bots.

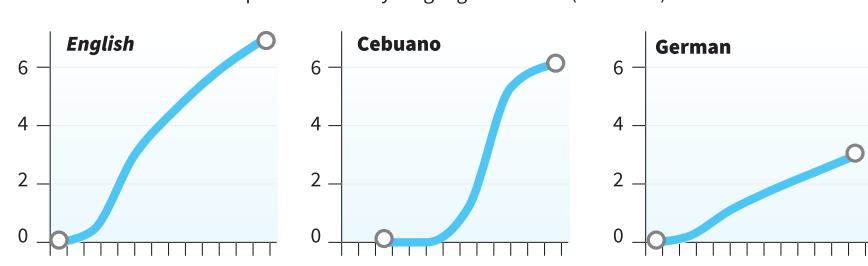
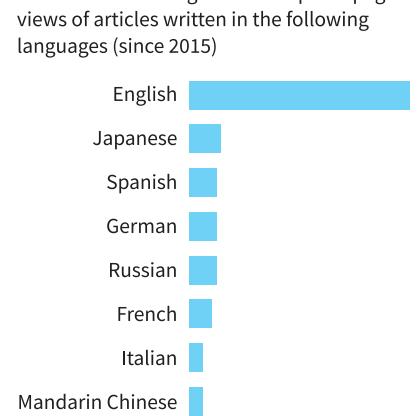
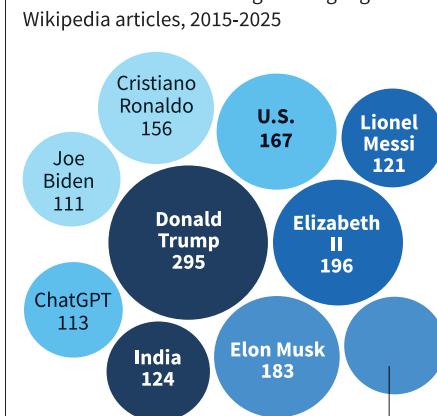
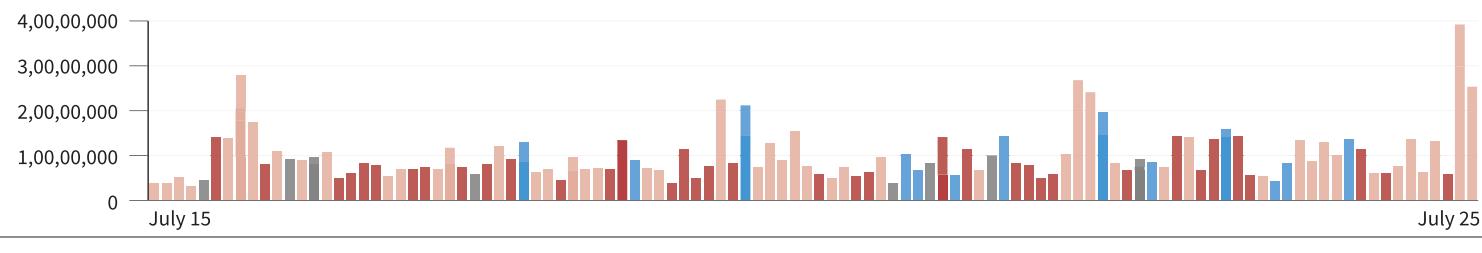
Wikipedia averages 508 million daily views, with nearly half of that site traffic directed specifically towards the English edition (**Chart 2**). Remarkably, web crawlers, automated bots, and non-human agents generated 88 billion page views throughout 2025. Meanwhile, organic human page views declined by 8% year-over-year during October 2025, likely influenced by automated summaries.

The Wikipedia article on U.S. President Donald Trump was the most viewed page between 2015 and 2025 (**Chart 3**). During this decade, 46% of the most-viewed English Wikipedia articles focused on prominent personalities, while 14% involved the FIFA World Cup, and 31% were dedicated to TV shows or movies (**Chart 4**). The list of WWE personnel was the most frequently edited information on the platform (**Chart 5**).

The biography of American political activist Charlie Kirk received 15 million visits on September 10, 2025, the day he was killed. This is the highest single-day viewership for any page in the last 25 years. The article covering the 2005 London Bombings holds the record for the most edits in a single day.

How big is Wikipedia?

The charts were sourced from the Pew Research Center

CHART 1: Number of Wikipedia articles by language over time (in million)**CHART 2:** Percentage of all Wikipedia page views of articles written in the following languages (since 2015)**CHART 3:** Most viewed English language Wikipedia articles, 2015-2025**CHART 4:** Most viewed English Wikipedia article topics each month, 2015-2025**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 20, 1976

Madurai Mahal to be converted into museum

Madras, Jan. 19: The Tamil Nadu Government has sanctioned the opening of a historical museum in the Thirumalai Naicker Mahal in Madurai. The museum will lay special emphasis on the art, culture and history of South Tamil Nadu, once known as the South Pandya Nadu.

Extensive repairs are being carried out to the Mahal by the State Department of Archaeology, to which the Palace was recently handed over. Built by the illustrious ruler (Thirumalai Naicker) in the first half of the 17th Century AD, the surviving portion is believed to be only a fourth of its original size. Another part was pulled down by a successor to construct an exactly similar palace at Tiruchi – the demolished material was carried from Madurai – though the objective was never realised. The cupolas of the original palace were gilded with gold, it is stated.

The British Government which was interested in preserving the Mahal for posterity spent as much as Rs. two lakhs even 100 years ago, to repair the decaying portions and preventing the break up of the structures. The Mahal later housed the Madurai and Ramanathapuram District Courts, and the Public Works Department was attending to the Mahal's maintenance.

The Mahal had been brought back to its shape, Dr. R. Nagaswami, Director, said to-day. Another important work was to get rid of the thousands of bats, adopting special techniques.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 20, 1926

Campaign against theatre queue

Rugby, Mid. Jan 19/20: Of late a campaign has been waged against theatre queue, and a Society has been formed aiming at its abolition. It appears that official action has now been taken in the matter. Lord Cromer, the Lord Chamberlain, by virtue of the control which he exercises over London theatres, has asked their proprietors to notify queues when there is no possibility of obtaining seats. His action will remove one of the chief grievances of the theatre-goers, namely, that they often wait in queue ignorant of the fact that the queue already numbers more persons than can be accommodated.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount sanctioned by PSBs for MSMEs under digital credit model

52,300 In ₹ crore. Public sector banks under the digital credit underwriting programmes sanctioned over 3.96 lakh MSME loan applications amounting to over ₹52,300 crore between April 1 and December 31, 2025. PTI

The increase in Indian refiners' crude processing last month

6.5 In per cent. Indian refiners' crude throughput rose by 6.5% month-on-month in December to 5.62 million barrels per day. Refinery throughput in November was at 5.27 million barrels per day. On a year-on-year basis, refinery throughput gained 11.6% in December. REUTERS

The decrease in India's oilmeal exports in the month of December

40 In per cent. India's oilmeal exports fell in December to 2.40 lakh tonnes from 3.98 lakh tonnes a year earlier, hit by a sharp decline in soybean meal shipments. Soybean meal exports plunged to 1.14 lakh tonnes in December, from 2.78 lakh tonnes a year ago. PTI

Construction workers to be upskilled by the Delhi government

1.2 in lakh. The Delhi government, under the Code of Social Security, has planned skill training of construction workers to ensure better job prospects. The training is important as construction workers are one of the most vulnerable segments of the labour workforce. PTI

The total population of China in 2025; three million less than 2024

1.404 In billion. The total population in the country in 2025 stood at 1.404 billion, which was three million less than the previous year. The birth rate in 2025 is the lowest on record since 1949. AP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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What is T.N.'s new hybrid pension model?

The Tamil Nadu government has unveiled the Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme (TAPS) for government employees, combining features of the Old and Unified Pension Schemes, amid growing demands from staff for better pension security

ECONOMIC NOTES

T. Ramakrishnan

A nonagenarian professor of physics, who retired at the age of 58 from a leading aided college in Chennai in 1985 with a monthly pension of around ₹800, now draws a pension of ₹1.3 lakh. Similarly, an official in the Public Works Department, on reaching the age of superannuation in 1998, received a pension of ₹6,000. Today, he is getting ₹35,000.

All these retirees and those who joined the State government service or government-aided educational institutions before April 1, 2003 are covered under the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). The OPS is non-contributory and fully funded by the State government. Upward pension revision, or pension reset, is allowed with the implementation of every Pay Commission's recommendations, once in every 10 years. In addition, Dearness Allowance (DA) is given at par with the serving employees. Approximately two lakh employees are covered under the OPS.

But, post-2003 recruits come under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), which is similar to the National Pension System (NPS). In this scheme, each employee is required to contribute 10% of basic pay plus DA with a matching contribution from the State government. At the time of retirement, employees are paid a one-time settlement and do not receive any inflation-indexed increase or pension reset. To put it simply, they do not automatically get any pension on retirement, unless they invest their savings in annuity or retirement schemes of insurance firms.

As the Tamil Nadu government did not join the NPS and had not designated a fund manager in accordance with the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Act, the returns received by the government staff have been about two percentage points lower than those covered under the NPS, says a government official. Applicable to Union government employees who joined service on or after January 1, 2004, the NPS is a defined contribution-based scheme with market linked returns for post-retirement benefits. During normal exit, subscribers can put a minimum of 40% of their accumulations in annuity.

DMK's promise

In the run-up to the 2021 Assembly election, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which was then in the Opposition, had committed to the restoration of OPS.

But, as early as 25 years ago, the authorities had realised that the pension liability was becoming too heavy to bear, the primary reason being the pension reset. Also, driven by better health parameters, life expectancy was on the rise. In his Budget speech in 2001, the then Finance Minister and AIADMK leader C. Ponnaiyan said that "the pension liabilities of the government have been showing an average annual increase of 30 per cent, which is unsustainable." Karnataka's former Chief Secretary B. K. Bhattacharya and his team, in their famous report of October 2003 to the RBI found that pension payment as a percentage of total revenue receipts in Tamil Nadu rose from 3.8% during 1980-90 to 6.6% during 1990-95 and 10.8% during 1995-2000. It hovered around 16% in 2001 and 2002. Moreover, according to the White Paper on the State government's finances, as produced by the present DMK regime in August 2021,



The TAPS impact

The Tamil Nadu government's expenditure on pension and retirement benefits for 25 years

Year	Total expenditure on pension and other retirement benefits (₹ in crore)	Expenditure on pension as a percentage of total revenue receipts (%)
2001-2002	3,050.48	16.07%
2002-03	3,488.20	16.86%
2003-04	3,279.96	13.84%
2004-05	3,921.05	13.78%
2005-06	4,488.83	13.22%
2006-07	5,461.68	13.35%
2007-08	6,038.96	12.71%
2008-09	7,776.21	14.13%
2009-10	8,439.24	15.11%
2010-11	11,855.27	16.89%
2011-12	12,687.97	14.89%
2012-13	13,248.08	13.41%
2013-14	14,934.37	13.82%
2014-15	17,528.06	14.32%
2015-16	18,490.89	14.33%
2016-17	20,176.74	14.39%
2017-18	22,432.23	15.34%
2018-19	29,710.58	17.19%
2019-20	30,219.77	17.32%
2020-21	27,115.07	15.58%
2021-22	26,260.37	12.66%
2022-23	32,177.50	13.20%
2023-24	37,696.81	14.25%
2024-25	42,509.25	14.22%

The table below shows the additional quantum of pension received by the Tamil Nadu government's pensioners / family pensioners aged 80 years and above

Age group	Additional quantum of pension/family pension	As on June 30, 2017	As on March 31, 2025
80-84 years	20% of revised basic pension/ family pension	27,707	70,350
85-89 years	30% of revised basic pension/ family pension	10,459	32,575
90-94 years	40% of revised basic pension/ family pension	2,730	8,828
95-99 years	50% of revised basic pension/ family pension	522	1,432
100 years or more	100% of revised basic pension/ family pension	71	195
TOTAL		41,489	1,13,380

Source: Budget documents of the Finance Department, Tamil Nadu government

the year-on-year growth rate of pensions and other retirement benefits in 15 years (2006-07 to 2020-21) was in two digits in eight years and in single digit in six years, apart from being in the negative during 2020-21, which was not only the pandemic year but also the period where government increased the retirement age.

Apart from it being nearly impossible to return to the OPS, the State government is also grappling with the problem of deploying accumulations of its staff, who joined after 2003, in better investments. As on March 31, 2025, accumulations stood at about ₹84,507 crore. The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), which had rapped Tamil Nadu several times for not joining the NPS, stated, in its report tabled in the Assembly three months ago on the State's finances for 2023-24, that the State government had, for long, invested in Treasury Bills and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)'s schemes such as the New Group Superannuation Scheme with Cash Accumulation Plan, both of which yielded lower interest than the General Provident Fund (GPF) rate. At present, the investments are in LIC schemes, carrying 7.1% aligned with the GPF's rate.

OPS's comeback
Meanwhile, the staff of the Union government and several State

governments have started demanding the OPS's restoration. Rajasthan became the first in February 2022 to announce its return to the OPS. A month later, Chhattisgarh followed suit. One should not gloss over the fact that both States, ruled by the Congress then, went to Assembly polls in late 2023.

During such developments, the RBI, in its bulletin of June 2022, observed that "as the current State government retirees are primarily the beneficiaries of the old pension scheme, the immediate financial strain will not be felt if the States choose to revert to the old pension scheme. However, when State government employees who joined after 2004-05 under the NPS begin to retire from 2034 onwards, the cost of such a move will become apparent. In other words, the adoption of the old pension scheme is likely to benefit the current generation at the expense of future generations."

Despite the RBI's caution, Jharkhand, in September 2022, opted for the OPS. Two months later, Punjab and in 2023, Himachal Pradesh also joined the OPS. Former governor of the RBI D. Subbarao called the OPS restoration "a regressive move" and felt that this would give more privilege to government servants at the cost of the larger public, majority of whom had no social safety net.

However, southern States seem to have

approached the matter in a different way.

South's response

In June 2023, the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party government in Andhra Pradesh, headed by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, unveiled a pension scheme called the Andhra Pradesh Guaranteed Pension Scheme (APGPS). Some of the features of the APGPS include that pensioners would get 50% of the basic salary of the last drawn salary as pension, while their contribution would be the same at 10% of their basic salary. DA, as announced by the Union government once in six months, would be extended to them too. In August 2024, the Centre came out with its own variant – the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS). As part of this scheme effective April 1, 2025, an assured payout is allowed at the rate of 50% of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months of service with a minimum qualifying service of 25 years.

As the DMK regime came under political pressure on the pension issue at the beginning of 2025, with about one year to go for the Assembly election, it announced the formation of a committee, headed by Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development & Panchayat Raj) Gagandeep Singh Bedi, which submitted its final report in December 2025. And on January 3, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced that his government would implement the Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme (TAPS), a hybrid model of the OPS, the APGPS and the UPS. Apart from incurring a one time expenditure of ₹13,000 crore, the State government's annual contributions will be approximately ₹11,000 crore.

Features of TAPS

The scheme came into effect from January 1, 2026. In addition to the monthly individual contribution of 10% along with at least a matching contribution from the government, there is no pension reset in the new scheme. And unlike in the case of UPS where 50% of the average of the last 12 months' basic pay is taken to fix the pension, TAPS enables pension determination based on 50% of the pay drawn in the last month of service. In the UPS, a minimum assured payout is made if superannuation is after 10 years or more of qualifying service whereas it will be given regardless of the length of service under TAPS. Pensioners and family pensioners under the new scheme will get a DA increase on par with the employees. When a pensioner dies, the monthly family pension will be equal to 60% of the pension last drawn by the pensioner and given to the deceased's family.

Apart from the provision of a death-cum-retirement gratuity (DCRG) of not more than ₹25 lakh, a special compassionate pension will be paid to CPS beneficiaries who retired before the TAPS implementation. The government is confident that the pension burden as a percentage of the State's own tax revenue will be "much lower than" 21%-22% in the long run, even though, for the next seven years or so, it will place the State government's finances under stress in view of the annual contribution to TAPS beneficiaries and the provision for new retirees under the OPS.

However, sections of government employees are not happy with TAPS.

It remains to be seen whether TAPS will meet the fate of the UPS, which could get support from about 1.22 lakh employees of the Central government out of the estimated eligible 23 lakhs. As of now, around six lakh staff of the Tamil Nadu government are covered under CPS.

THE GIST

▼ The Old Pension Scheme is non-contributory and fully funded by the State government. Upward pension revision, or pension reset, is allowed with the implementation of every Pay Commission's recommendations, once in every 10 years. All those who joined the State government service or government-aided educational institutions before April 1, 2003 are covered under the OPS.

▼ The Union government and several State governments have started receiving vociferous demands from their staff to bring back the OPS. Rajasthan became the first in February 2022 to announce its return to the OPS.

On January 3, Mr. Stalin announced that his government would implement the Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme (TAPS)

CACHE



Heady exercise: People wait in queues during hearings under the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, in Birbhum district, West Bengal, on January 19. PTI

Why SIR verification needs to be completely digitised

SIR 2.0, aimed at updating electoral rolls, has caused confusion and distress among voters. Despite the ECINet's ability to handle data entry, verification, cross-checks, and audit trails, the process has relied heavily on paper-based forms, summons, and hearings

Rajeev Kumar

The ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2.0 was projected as a technology-driven exercise to clean electoral rolls and include every eligible Indian resident. Instead of inspiring confidence, it has triggered widespread fear and anxiety among voters. The experience has exposed a stark mismatch between the Election Commission's (EC) digital capacity and its ground-level execution. Despite the ECINet's (the digital platform of the EC) ability to handle data entry, verification, cross-checks, and audit trails, the process has relied heavily on paper-based forms, summons, and hearings – error-prone methods that impose unnecessary hardship on voters.

As a result, even the most eminent citizens have been summoned. A Nobel laureate and Bharat Ratna awardee in his 90s received a notice over an alleged age mismatch. A former Police Commissioner of Kolkata, under whose jurisdiction SIR 2002 was conducted, was also found non-mapped. MPs, DGPs, senior secretaries, vice chancellors, professors, and other top-ranking public servants have similarly been asked to establish their identity. These are long-standing citizens with decades of documented presence – yet they are being asked to prove their residence.

The EC also summoned several monks from the Ramakrishna Math and Mission for hearings because their biological parents' names – severed upon embracing monastic life – do not match the names of gurus they now regard as parents. Several also found their names missing from the 2002 voter lists. Though these monks do not vote, in keeping with the order's apolitical principles, they seek inclusion to avoid identity-related hurdles in visa and administrative processes.

Institutions meant to safeguard democracy should honour their

contributions, not subject them to procedural indignity.

Punishing the voter

SIR 2.0's failures are not rooted in the absence of technology, but in the refusal to deploy it effectively. It was projected as user-friendly and transparent, but has instead produced confusion reminiscent of the 2002-04 SIR, which relied on pen-and-paper processes without third-party checks and left electoral rolls incomplete and inconsistent. Despite these well-known legacy flaws, the same defective rolls were carried forward as the foundation for SIR 2.0 – compounded by a continued reliance on manual filings and hearings rather than ECINet's digital capabilities.

As a result, draft rolls released across 12 States/Union Territories (UTs) have raised two primary concerns. The first is the alleged deletion of genuine voters from the 2024 final rolls, amounting to nearly 65 million deletions nationwide. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, submissions before the Supreme Court exposed a stark anomaly: the draft SIR roll lists 12.56 crore voters. In comparison, the Panchayat SIR records 12.69 crore voters in rural areas alone – an implausible outcome that highlights serious data inconsistencies and the cost of not adopting a digital-first correction.

The second concern is the emergence of a large number of "non-mapped" voters, primarily due to defects in the 2002-04 rolls, where voters missing from legacy lists are now flagged as non-mapped. Many are long-standing, law-abiding citizens who have voted in successive elections, yet are being asked to prove their residence under ad hoc SOPs that shift institutional failures onto voters. Nationwide, this category runs into several crores; in Uttar Pradesh alone, over ten million voters – about 8% of Enumeration Forms – were marked as non-mapped. Non-mapped voters are being pulled into short-notice, poorly

organised hearings for failures that originate within the EC's own systems. These hearings impose needless hardship, delay corrections, and spread anxiety. Many of those summoned are veterans, former public servants and professionals now compelled to prove their identity in their own country.

This reversal of accountability turns institutional error into citizen punishment. Voters whose names are accidentally deleted due to institutional flaws are then further trapped by the process. They are forced to seek restoration through Form 6 – meant only for first-time applicants – thereby compelling factually incorrect statements which declare that they have never been enrolled in any constituency. As a result, genuine voters seeking restoration are exposed to potential criminal liability under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023. This procedural flaw shifts legal risk onto citizens for errors originating within the system.

The need for digital verification

The dignified and effective remedy lies not in multiplying physical hearings, but in fully deploying the EC's existing digital infrastructure to replace them. A digital-first system – built on online document upload and backend cross-verification – can make voter verification faster, fairer, and far more humane, while sparing citizens the stress of summons and hearings. By reducing manual handling and reliance on flawed legacy rolls, such an approach would significantly improve the accuracy and sanctity of electoral rolls.

As a first step, the EC should notify every applicant of the status of their Enumeration Form (EF) – whether accepted or flagged – via SMS, email, or EPIC-linked accounts. Where discrepancies arise, particularly for non-mapped voters, applicants should be asked to upload identity documents via ECINet and provide the corresponding

unique identification numbers. ECINet can automatically verify them via backend interfaces – much like Aadhaar authentication – while issuing acknowledgements at each stage. Issues such as incomplete data or anomalies can be addressed through the same digital workflow, with BLOs or nearby electoral offices assisting voters who are less digitally comfortable.

As verification progresses, the voter's status on the draft roll can be updated in real time. The entire process would take only minutes – primarily for document upload – while verification remains fully automated. This audit-ready digital workflow offers a level of accuracy, integrity, and trust that no manual hearing, however well intentioned, can realistically achieve.

Safeguarding democracy

SIR 2.0 has crystallised a fundamental question: is the exercise genuinely intended to clean electoral rolls with dignity, in keeping with the EC's core mandate to ensure that no eligible voter is denied the franchise, or is it being implemented in a manner that harasses genuine citizens and pushes them toward disengagement? The tools to achieve the former are already available; the distress witnessed so far reflects not technological limits, but choices in enforcement.

The real challenge, therefore, is not a lack of technology but the failure to use it wisely. An initiative meant to strengthen electoral integrity has instead fuelled anxiety and distrust by leaning on flawed legacy data and coercive, manual processes. Electoral reform will succeed not through suspicion, but through trust, inclusion, and the responsible use of digital infrastructure – safeguarding not just procedures, but the foundations of public trust and democracy.

Rajeev Kumar is a former Professor of Computer Science at IIT Kharagpur, IIT Kanpur, BITS Pilani, and JNU, and a former scientist at DRDO and DST

THE DAILY QUIZ

Test your knowledge on the federal holiday established in honour of Martin Luther King Jr., observed each year in the United States

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1

Identify the date on which the U.S. first marked Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the federal level.

QUESTION 2

On which Monday is Martin Luther King Jr. Day observed each year in the United States?

QUESTION 3

What is the official name of MLK Day as designated by U.S. law?

QUESTION 4

What date is Martin Luther King Jr.'s actual birthday?

QUESTION 5

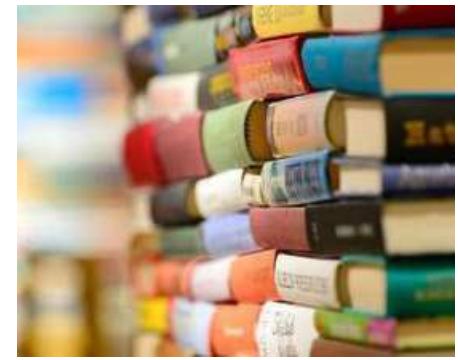
Which U.S. president signed the bill creating Martin Luther King Jr. Day?

**Visual question:**

Who is the political figure depicted in this photo serving lunch in honour of Martin Luther King Jr. Day?

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

1. This leader was the first woman Prime Minister of the world. **Ans: Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike**
 2. Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister following the death of this premier. **Ans: Lal Bahadur Shastri**
 3. Indira Gandhi defeated this veteran political figure to become the leader of the Congress Party. **Ans: Morarji Desai**
 4. This Prime Minister holds the record of longest-serving Indian Prime Minister. **Ans: Jawaharlal Nehru**
 5. Indira Gandhi was elected to the Lok Sabha from three constituencies starting with Rae Bareli. These are the other two constituencies. **Ans: Chikmagalur and Medak**
 6. Name the assassins who cut short her tenure as PM on October 31, 1984. **Ans: Satwant Singh and Beant Singh**
 7. Number of women she appointed to full cabinet rank during her terms in office. **Ans: No one!**
- Visual: Name this Janata Party leader. **Ans: Raj Narain**
- Early Birds:** C. Saravanan| Arun Kumar Singh| Suchit Narottam| Piyali Tuli| Sumana Dutta



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"Isn't it exciting? The World Cup is around the corner. By the way, I've told my friends they could come over to your place and watch all the matches on your new giant screen."

"....sorry to rain on your parade. But I have no intention of...."

"....rain on my parade? What are you talking about?"

"When you rain on someone's parade, you ruin their plans. You spoil something for someone. Here's an example. By not turning up for the party, Sujatha really rained on our parade."

"Can I say, Mulayam Singh Yadav rained on Sonia Gandhi's parade?"

"That's a very good example."

"Thank you. You said you were sorry to rain on my parade. What did you...."

"....the word 'parade' has the stress on the second syllable, not the first. The first 'a' is pronounced like the 'a' in 'China' and 'about'. The second syllable is pronounced like the word 'raided'."

"I see. But tell me, why do you think you'll be raining on my parade?"

"Because I have decided not to watch any of the World Cup matches."

"Not watch any of the matches! You are joking, right?"

"No, I am not. After watching Pakistan wipe the floor with our team in Sharjah, I have lost all interest in cricket."

"Wipe the floor with our team! Does it mean that the Pakistanis gave us a sound thrashing?"

"That's right! When you 'wipe the floor with someone', you defeat them completely. It's a slang expression. For example, Mala challenged Vatsan to a game of chess. He wiped the floor with her."

"Although Sujatha hadn't played tennis in a long time, she still managed to wipe the floor with Karthick."

"I haven't seen Sujatha play, but I've heard she's a good player."

"She's a terrific player. But coming back to the World Cup, do..."

"....let me be upfront with you. Every time I watch India play, I get depressed."

"I am sure millions of people in India got depressed when they watched our team play the final in Sharjah. But tell me, what does the word 'upfront' mean? Does it mean straightforward?"

"Exactly! When you say that somebody is upfront, it means he/ she is sincere and open. Vasu is the only car dealer I know who is very upfront."

"My mother claims that my uncle is upfront. I am not so sure, though."

"My boss isn't very upfront. Nobody really knows what goes on in that mind of his."

"He sounds like a politician. Politicians aren't very upfront either, are they?"

"Upfront? That's the last word you would associate with a politician!"

Although some go around beating their chests and claiming that they are. But my boss is no politician. He is what I would call 'mealy-mouthed'."

"Mealy-mouthed?"

"A person who is mealy-mouthed is not very frank or direct."

"In other words, he/she is not very upfront?"

"That's right."

Published in The Hindu on May 4, 1999.

Word of the day

Cloying:

overly sweet

Synonyms: saccharine, syrupy, treacly

Usage: The movie had a typical cloying ending.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/cloyingpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /klɔɪŋ/

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

From Page One

SC flags 'stress, strain' by SIR to Bengal's people

The court also extended by 10 days the time for people to submit objections and records following the publication of this list. The EC authorities have to give people receipts detailing the documents submitted before them by applicants during the verification hearing.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for the petitioners who include ruling Trinamool Congress MPs, asked what was the need for the EC to know "how many progenies my parents had". He said the EC was sending instructions on WhatsApp, submitting that "there is no transparency".

"In one district alone, over 2.31 lakh people got notices to explain 'logical discrepancies' found against them. In the 'progenies' category, 2.12% of the population have been issued notice... Where do all these criteria come from? This kind of profiling on a criterion which you [EC] just invented is undesirable. Where is the statutory sanction? What has the electoral roll got to do with progeny? Can it even be a relevant consideration for the EC? I believe not. Do they have a statute to back all this? I believe not. How could they act on such criteria?" Mr. Divan asked the court.

Mr. Dwivedi said seven persons were found with 100 children, two with 50 children.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal said the largest number of notices to file objections or submit records for verification were sent to people caught under the 'logical discrepancies' category. He said the EC had only 500 venues for conducting the hearing for these 1.36 crore people, when over 1900 venues were required.

Thirty-two lakh people were found 'unmapped' (those whose names or their family members' names do not figure in the electoral rolls prepared in the earlier 2002 SIR in West Bengal) and sent notices to produce documents and file objections. The third category are those who were able to be 'mapped'. The State government and the State Election Commission have been directed to provide the EC with the necessary human resources.

'Add digital currency link on BRICS agenda'

India's digital currency – the e-rupee – has attracted a total of 7 million retail users since its launch in December 2022, while China has pledged to boost the international use of the digital yuan.

The RBI has encouraged the adoption of the e-rupee by enabling offline payments, providing programmability for government subsidy transfers and by allowing fintech firms to offer digital currency wallets. The RBI and the central bank of Brazil did not respond to emails seeking comment. The People's Bank of China said it had no information to share on the subject in response to a request for comment; the South African and Russian central banks declined to comment.

For the BRICS digital currency linkages to be successful, elements like interoperable technology, governance rules and ways to settle imbalanced trade volumes would be among the discussion topics, one of the sources said.

IMF upgrades India's growth projection for current financial year from 6.6% to 7.3%

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised upwards its estimate of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the current financial year 2025-26 to 7.3% from its earlier prediction of 6.6%.

This upward revision, the IMF said in its January 2026 World Economic Outlook update released on Monday, was primarily a reflection of stronger-than-expected growth in the third quarter, and "strong momentum" in the fourth quarter of the financial year. "In India, growth is revised upward by 0.7 percentage point to 7.3% for 2025 [FY 2025-26], reflecting the better-than-expected outturn in the third quarter of the year and strong momentum in the fourth quarter," the report said.

Turbulent times "Headwinds from shifting trade policies are offset by tailwinds from surging investment related to technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), more so in North America and Asia than in other regions, as well as fiscal and monetary support, broadly accommodative financial conditions, and adaptability of the private sector."

On the inflation front, the report predicted that inflation in India is expected to go back to near-target levels after a decline in 2025 driven by subdued food prices. The Reserve Bank of India's target for inflation is 4%.

For the global economy, the report projects growth to remain "resilient" at 3.3% in calendar year 2026 and at 3.2% in 2027, largely the same as the 3.3% estimated for 2025. These forecasts entail a small upward revision for 2026 and no change for 2027 as compared with the predictions made in the October 2025 World Economic Outlook.

"This steady performance on the surface results from the balancing of divergent forces," the report said.

The operation was suspended late on Sunday night in the challenging terrain marked by thick vegetation and steep slopes, limiting visibility and movement, officials said.

In a post on X, the White Knight Corps said 'Operation Trashi-I' continues in Chatroo. "The cordon has been further tightened

India signs Letter of Intent to elevate defence ties with UAE

The signing of the pact comes amid increasing Saudi-Pakistan defence cooperation in the Arabian peninsula and especially in Yemen; the two sides also ink energy deal during UAE President's visit

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of growing military tension in the Gulf region, the United Arab Emirates and India signed "Letter of Intent for a Bilateral Strategic Defence Partnership" on Monday. The Letter of Intent was sealed during the three-hour visit by the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, when the two sides set a goal of doubling bilateral trade to \$200 billion by 2023.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the UAE leader at the Palam airport and the two leaders discussed, among other issues, the situation in Gaza where U.S. President Donald Trump's peace plan will be tested in the coming weeks as well as the protests in Iran. In a press briefing after the departure of the dignitaries, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said



PM Narendra Modi with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan during a meeting, at the PM's residence in New Delhi. PTI

the two leaders also discussed the situation in Yemen over which Saudi Arabia's relation with the UAE has nosedived.

In response to a question on whether the India-UAE strategic defence partnership could drag India into a future conflict scenario in the Gulf region, Mr. Misri said the Letter of Intent was aimed at the "work on concluding a framework agreement for Strategic Defence Partner-

ship". "So I would really characterise it as a natural evolution from the already considerable defence cooperation between the two countries and not necessarily a response to any specific event that may have taken place in the region or any intent to get involved in a hypothetical future scenario in the region," said Mr. Misri.

There has been greater involvement of Pakistani military in safeguarding

Saudi defence and security interests in the Arabian peninsula and especially in Yemen. The Saudi-Pakistan defence cooperation has intensified since the two countries signed a mutual defence agreement on September 17, 2025.

The Saudi-Pakistan military alliance has been active in the Yemen theatre and that has increased pressure on the UAE.

During the brief visit, the two sides also signed an energy deal involving the Hindustan Petroleum Company Ltd (HPCL) and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company Gas (ADNOC) that will allow purchase of 0.5 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMPTA) LNG by the HPCL from ADNOC over 10 years starting from 2028.

Another Letter of Intent was signed between the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre and the Space Agency of the UAE for the development of space industry in the UAE.



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Poland's Foreign Affairs Minister Radoslaw Sikorski in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

Foreign Ministers of India, Poland spar over neighbours

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India and Poland sparred over their respective regional rivals as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Polish Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Radoslaw Sikorski aired their differences over Pakistan and Russia on Monday as the two Ministers met for talks in New Delhi.

Taking aim at Poland's renewed ties with Pakistan, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told visiting Mr. Sikorski that India expects its partners not to help "fuel" terrorism in the neighbourhood. Mr. Jaishankar also delivered a severe message to the visiting dignitary about the European Union's sanctions against India's trade and oil imports from Russia, calling it "selective targeting".

In televised opening remarks at Hyderabad House, Mr. Jaishankar said he wanted to "discuss some of [Mr. Sikorski's] recent travels to the region", a direct reference to the Polish FM's visit to Pakistan in October 2025, where he had met Pakistan's top leadership. The visit to Pakistan by Mr. Sikorski appears to have upset the government as it came a few months after the India-Pakistan conflict in May.

During talks, Mr. Jaishankar turned to the issue of India's imports of Russian oil that he said Mr. Sikorski had been speaking about "publicly" during his visit. In Jaipur on Monday, the Polish Foreign Minister had said that he was "pleased" that India had cut its purchase of Russian oil.

"Poland should display zero tolerance for terrorism and not help fuel the terrorist infrastructure in our neighbourhood," Mr. Jaishankar said.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting at Hyderab-

bad House, Mr. Sikorski said that the conversation about India and Poland's respective regions had been "frank", and said that while the two sides agreed on concerns over terrorism, India's participation in "Zapad-2025" military exercises in Russia and Belarus was seen as "threatening".

"We all have regional concerns and we all have neighbours, and with neighbours you have opportunities and challenges," Mr. Sikorski said, adding that on terrorism India and Poland are of "one mind".

"We also have concerns. India took part in the Zapad exercises in Russia that we find threatening," he stated.

The exchange of differences between Delhi and Warsaw was seen as unusual given that the two countries have been improving relations in recent years, and India and the European Union are close to a major trade agreement next week.

During talks, Mr. Jaishankar turned to the issue of India's imports of Russian oil that he said Mr. Sikorski had been speaking about "publicly" during his visit. In Jaipur on Monday, the Polish Foreign Minister had said that he was "pleased" that India had cut its purchase of Russian oil.

"I have repeatedly underlined that the selective targeting of India is both unfair and unjustified. I do so again today," Mr. Jaishankar said.

SC gives two-week deadline for sanction to prosecute Vijay Shah

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The request for prosecution sanction was made to the State government in August 2025.

"We are in January 2026 now," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant addressed senior advocate Sridhar Pottaraju, appearing for the

State. Mr. Pottaraju said the hold-up may be due to the fact that Mr. Shah's present petition seeking quashing for the FIR against him was pending in the highest court of the land.

Senior advocate Maninder Singh, for Mr. Shah, said he had apologised online.

At the time, the top court had said the Minister was "testing the court's patience".

"You keep on cooperating. It is too late now for all that [apology]," Chief Justice Kant observed heading a three-judge Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Joymalya Bagchi.

The Court said the State must file a status report before the next hearing.

In July 2025, the Supreme Court had questioned the nature of the "online" apology issued by Mr. Shah for his remarks against Col. Qureshi.

Senior advocate Maninder Singh, for Mr. Shah, said he had apologised online.

At the time, the top court had said the Minister was "testing the court's patience".

"What do you mean by an apology like this? He made the statement on the first date itself. We are talking about a public apology. Where is it on record?" the court had asked Mr. Shah's side.

Cong. accuses Bihar govt. of foul play in student death

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

The CISF is awaiting instructions from the Home Ministry on the reservation percentage for Agniveers. SIDDHANT THAKUR

a blueprint and a committee is studying the aspects," Mr. Ranjan said.

Coastal cyclothon'

Briefing about the "Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon 2026", he said Indian coasts were "very porous" and there was a need to reach out to coastal communities that would help in gathering information and strengthen national security.

Two teams of 130 CISF personnel will cycle along 6,553 kilometre of coastline covering 72 districts to sensitise local people about the threats emanating from the smuggling of drugs, weapons and explosives, said Sonia Narang, Inspector-General, CISF.

The Congress leaders alleged that even girls preparing for competitive exams were not safe under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) rule in Bihar.

The 18-year-old girl from Bihar's Jehanabad district was found in an unconscious state on January 6 in the girl's hostel in Patna. She died in a private hospital during treatment five days later on January 11. Later the post-mortem report confirmed sexual violence.

Mr. Allavaru questioned the delay in filing the First Information Report and the release of the hostel operator after questioning.

"The hospital administration and doctors attempted to destroy evidence and yet the perpetrators have not been arrested. Why has the hospital not been sealed yet?" Mr. Ram said.

Operation Trashi-I continues; one paratrooper dies

Press Trust of India
JAMMU

Havildar Gajendra Singh

with search operations expanded. Troops of the corps, along with police and CRPF, remain deployed to dominate the area."

Multiple teams of the security forces, supported by drones and sniffer dogs, are combing the area while maintaining a tight security cordon to ensure that the terrorists are not able to escape, the officials said.

They said search teams have busted a terrorist hideout and recovered a large quantity of food items, including rations, utensils, a gas cylinder and a stove near the site of yesterday's gunfight.

Two or three terrorists allegedly affiliated with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) are believed to be hiding in the area, officials said.

Responsibilities to be assigned to ex-Agniveers yet to be decided: CISF D-G

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Director-General Praveer Ranjan said on Monday that an internal committee had been formed to determine the responsibilities that would be assigned to former Agniveers who are absorbed into the force.

The officer said they were awaiting instructions from the Union Home Ministry on the reservation percentage for Agniveers in the CISF and also on the pattern of reservation to be followed, whether horizontal or vertical.

The government launched the Agnipath recruitment scheme in June 2022, under which candidates are enrolled into the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force as Agniveers for four years. Of them, 25% are retained after four years, while the remaining 75% exit the services.

Subsequently, the Home Ministry announced that 10% of all vacancies in the Central Armed Police Forces would be reserved for Agniveers who have completed four years of service. We will make

vice. The first batch of such Agniveers is set to exit the services in the coming months. The Hindu earlier reported that the Ministry had decided to enhance reservation for former Agniveers in the Group C posts of all CAPFs from the existing 10% to 50%.

On December 19, 2025, the Ministry notified that 50% vacant constable posts in the Border Security Force would be reserved for ex-Agniveers.

Mr. Ranjan said the Ministry had decided to assimilate Agniveers into the force. "We are looking into the induction protocol. They can be used for port security. The Agniveers in Navy can be used to secure the seaports. We will make

Sonowal's office denies letter on Assam BJP rift

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal's office on Monday took serious note of reports in sections of the media claiming that an internal conflict within the Assam BJP had reached New Delhi, allegedly based on a letter written by Mr. Sonowal to the party's president.

Issuing a categorical clarification, the Minister's office said the purported letter – claiming demands for a leadership change in Assam and making allegations against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma – is completely fake. It added that the document carries a forged official letterhead and a fake signature of Mr. Sonowal.

An FIR has been lodged, and authorities have been asked to investigate the matter on priority.

Decks cleared for Nitin Nabin to take charge as BJP president

After a day-long nomination process, five-time MLA remained the only candidate; as one of the youngest persons to hold the key post, he is expected to engineer a generational shift in BJP; Narendra Modi to be present when he takes charge today

Nistula Hebbal
NEW DELHI

Nitin Nabin, 45, five-time MLA from Bihar, will be the new national president of the BJP, the party announced after a day-long nomination process at its headquarters here on Monday. He was the only candidate in the fray.

Rajya Sabha member K. Laxman, who had been functioning as the returning officer for the election of the BJP president, said 37 sets of nomination papers had been filed in favour of Mr. Nabin and had been found valid at the end of the day. "Now, after a period of withdrawal, in my capacity of National Returning Officer, Sangathan Parv, Bharatiya Janata



BJP leaders J.P. Nadda, Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and others propose the name of Nitin Nabin for party president. ANI

Party, I hereby announce that only one name, that of Shri Nitin Nabin, has been proposed for the post of National President of the Bharatiya Janata Party," Mr. Laxman said in a statement.

Mr. Nabin was appointed national working president of the BJP on December

14, after a nearly 18-month search, and that appointment was meant to signal that he was the choice of the high command for the post of national president.

The notification of the schedule for formally electing Mr. Nabin was issued on January 16. In all, 37 sets

of nomination papers, including those signed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Ministers J.P. Nadda, Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, and others were filed.

On scrutiny, as per the statement released by Mr. Laxman, all sets of nominations were found to be correctly filed, and with Mr. Nabin as the only candidate in the fray, he was elected president. Mr. Nabin is slated to formally take over the role on Tuesday.

Nabin's background
As one of the youngest BJP presidents to date, Mr. Nabin is expected to midwife a generational shift in the BJP as it looks forward to the next decade or so. He was roped in to contest an

Assembly byelection after his father's death in 2006. Since then, Mr. Nabin has remained unbeaten as an MLA, first from Patna West, and after delimitation, from Bankipur. He also served as Minister for Roads in the Nitish Kumar government between August 2021 and 2022, and Minister for Urban Development, Housing and Law and Justice from 2024 to 2025.

Organisational, he held positions in the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the youth wing of the BJP, at the State and national levels. BJP sources said Mr. Modi would be present when Mr. Nabin formally takes over on Tuesday. A meeting of the BJP national council is likely to be called soon to ratify the election.

In his choice of office-bearers, he will have to pick a blend of youth and experience

his choice of office-bearers, including secretaries and morcha chiefs, he will have to pick a blend of youth and experience. The high command's decision to effect a generational shift in the party's leadership through Mr. Nabin's candidature makes it clear that he is expected to accommodate a younger cohort. However, a president new to national politics will require some experienced hands as well. Striking the right balance and more importantly, asserting his authority while doing so will be a challenge.

The second internal challenge for Mr. Nabin arises from the fact that the BJP is the ruling party, with a long-running government at the Centre, and the need to assert the organisation's identity within that paradigm. He already has the template in this regard, derived from the tenures of Union Ministers Amit Shah and J.P. Nadda, the party chiefs since the 2014 election of the Narendra Modi government. Finding and nurturing the organisation in the shadow of the BJP-run government's issues and agendas will be a trial by fire.

While the Assembly elections will be the immediate outward challenge for Mr. Nabin, he has two internal challenges that may well define his presidency. The first is that at 45, he is young – a millennial helming a party operating amid a Gen Z-dominated electorate, but with a Gen X party structure. In

The meta narrative for Mr. Nabin's presidential term, therefore, is to bring in new, younger leaders into the organisation to make it ready for a generational shift, without shifting its core ideology and base.

Rajasthan Congress alleges bid to purge voters through SIR

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday accused the BJP of conspiring to "fraudulently" remove supporters of the Opposition in Rajasthan through the ongoing special intensive revision of electoral rolls, and demanded a forensic investigation into the forms used for seeking the deletion of voters' names.

Addressing a press conference with the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly, Tikaram Jolly, Pradesh Congress Committee president Govind Singh Dotasra said that they would "not allow murder of democracy in the State".

'BJP leader's visit'

"Until January 3, there was no chaos, and the entire system was running smoothly. However, on January 3, the BJP's national general secretary (organ-

sation), B.L. Santosh, visited Rajasthan, held a meeting there, and then the process of fraudulently adding and removing voters began," he alleged.

Citing data from the Election Commission's website, Mr. Dotasra claimed that between December 17 and January 14, the BJP, through 937 booth-level agents, sought the deletion of 5,694 names and the addition of 211, while the Congress, through 110 agents, applied to add 185 names and delete two. He alleged there had been a surge in Form 7 applications in select constituencies.

"The SIR in Rajasthan has become 'CVR' or 'Congress Voter Removal' ... We demand that the EC and the Supreme Court carry out a forensic audit of these forms, which have been submitted by BJP agents. These forms are all done from a centralised place," Mr. Jolly said.

"The SC has rightly ordered that the names of



Ongoing issue: BJP and Trinamool Congress workers fighting over the submission of Form 7 in Murshidabad on Monday. PTI

those arbitrarily slapped with the vague, sinister label of "logical discrepancy" must be publicly published. The BJP-EC combine has been exposed for the *Bangla birodh za-mindars* (landowners against the Bangla people) they are," the Trinamool Congress posted on social media.

Party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee also hailed the development. "The BJP's game of SIR has ended. This is a victory of

ma (mother), maati (earth), manush (human) and the people of Bengal. Those who wanted to take away the fundamental right of voting of the people of Bengal, this is a tight slap on both their cheeks by the Supreme Court," Mr. Banerjee said.

The Trinamool Congress leader also added that he had "defeated them [the BJP] judicially, and in April will defeat them electorally [in the Assembly election]."

Trinamool and BJP clash over Form 7 submission

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Supporters of the Trinamool Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party clashed on Monday in West Bengal over submission of Form 7 for the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Clashes erupted in Murshidabad, after BJP supporters tried to submit Form 7 in large numbers. Supporters of the Trinamool were seen allegedly assaulting BJP workers and setting Form 7 applications on fire. A fight also broke out between supporters of the two parties outside the sub-divisional officer's office in Asansol in Paschim Bardhaman district.

New rural employment law is universal and demand-driven: Shivraj Chouhan

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Accusing the Congress of spreading misinformation on the new rural employment law, the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the government had strengthened the law, it remained universal, and continued to be demand-driven.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge released a joint appeal to party workers as part of their campaign seeking restoration of the MGNRE-



GA. In the letter, they accused the Union government of reducing the right to "revali", a euphemism for dole, and withdrawing the guarantee of yearly revisions of wages, introducing a blackout period, and

increasing the financial burden of State governments.

Mr. Chouhan dismissed the Congress's claims as "lies", especially the statement that "right to work" would be removed. "I would like to tell Gandhiji and Khargeji that by spreading misinformation about VB-G RAM G, they are not strengthening but rather weakening the Congress," he said. The Narendra Modi-led government had spent ₹9 lakh crore under the MGNREGA, in contrast to the UPA government's expenditure of ₹2 lakh crore, he added.

"Instead of 100 days, we are now giving 125 days

work," Mr. Chouhan said. The new Bill has stronger provisions for distributing "unemployment allowance", he said.

He insisted that the scheme remains universal. However, Section 5(1) of the law states that the Centre will "notify the rural areas in a State."

According to Mr. Chouhan, this is merely legalese and does not undermine the universality of the law. "They are spreading misinformation that employment will be provided only in certain panchayats. I want to clarify that this scheme will be implemented in all panchayats," the Union Minister said.

Himachal Cabinet allows 'orphan and widow cess' on fuel

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet on Monday gave nod to promulgate an ordinance to levy a dedicated "orphan and widow cess" on petrol and high-speed diesel at the point of first sale within the State.

The cess will be non-burdensome to consumers, while ensuring the availability of adequate financial resources for the effective implementation of welfare schemes for orphans and widows, said a statement.

It gave its approval to

adopt the national policy on geothermal energy to facilitate the exploration and development of untapped geothermal energy resources in the State. It approved the Directorate of Energy as the nodal agency for the implementation of the policy.

The Cabinet decided to establish four laboratories for nutritional profiling and strengthening of the food testing eco-system.

It decided to allow Alliance Air to operate 46-seater aircraft on the Delhi-Shimla-Delhi and Shimla-Dharamshala-Shimla routes, the statement said.

Tricky elections, internal challenges await new BJP chief

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nistula Hebbal
NEW DELHI

Nitin Nabin, 45, is all set to be declared the new national president of the Bharatiya Janata Party after being the sole candidate in the fray on Monday, with the requisite number of supporting nominations already being filed.

Quite possibly the youngest BJP leader to take on the job, Mr. Nabin faces his share of challenges at the helm, many of them related to the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and Assam, besides issues related to the party organisation.

For the BJP, the next round of elections is particularly challenging. Other than Assam and Puducherry, where the National Democratic Alliance government is in power, the party is not running a government in any of these States, and has a smaller presence in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The BJP is the main Opposition party in West Bengal, but the road to victory in that State is lined with challenges. For Mr. Nabin, channelling the BJP's formidable electoral machine in these States under less favourable circumstances will be a trial by fire.

While the Assembly elections will be the immediate outward challenge for Mr. Nabin, he has two internal challenges that may well define his presidency. The first is that at 45, he is young – a millennial helming a party operating amid a Gen Z-dominated electorate, but with a Gen X party structure. In

the meta narrative for Mr. Nabin's presidential term, therefore, is to bring in new, younger leaders into the organisation to make it ready for a generational shift, without shifting its core ideology and base.

Cong. slams BJP for 'mistrreatment' of seer

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday condemned the alleged mistreatment of Shankaracharya Swami Avimuktешwaranand at the Prayagraj Magh Mela, accusing the BJP-led government of disrupting a centuries-old religious tradition by not allowing him to take the customary 'royal bath'.

Congress leader Pawan Khera said that the incident exposed what he described as the BJP's duplicitous

ity in matters of faith. He sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention and demanded an apology to the community of saints.

He further criticised the Uttar Pradesh government over the redevelopment of the Manikarnika ghat and the alleged vandalism of a statue of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar in Varanasi.

Eighteen persons were detained when they attempted to stage a protest at the Ghat over the alleged damage to the statue during redevelopment work.

CENTRE FOR MATERIALS FOR ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY (C-MET)

(A Scientific Society, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Govt. of India)
IDA PHASE - III, CHERLAPELLY, HCL (PO), HYDERABAD-500051, Telangana State, INDIA

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date: 19.01.2026

Sealed Tenders are invited under Two Bid System (Part I - TECHNICAL BID & Part II - PRICE BID) at C-MET, Hyderabad for the following items:

Sl.No.	Name of the Item	Tender Reference No.
1	Procurement of "Vibrating Sample Magnetometer"	CMET/409/2025-C-MET/3161371

Last Date for Receipt of Tenders : 16.02.2026 up to 17:00 Hrs IST

For Details and Tender Document, please visit our website <http://www.cmet.gov.in> & also CPPP portal. Sd/-
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IN BRIEF



Thousands join rally to protest against Vadhavan port project

Thousands of protesters held a demonstration and began a "long march" on Monday, demanding the scrapping of the Maharashtra government's Vadhavan port project in the coastal town of Dahanu, in Palghar district. They also called for implementation of the Forest Rights Act, and rejected changes to the MGNREGA scheme. Organised by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the All India Kisan Sabha, the long march began from Charotai village in Dahanu; it will conclude at the Collector's office in Palghar on Tuesday. Another rally was held by the Vadhavan Bunder Virodi Sangharsh Samiti opposing the port project from Panch Patti Chowk to Collector's office.

YouTuber-doctor stopped at airport in defamation case

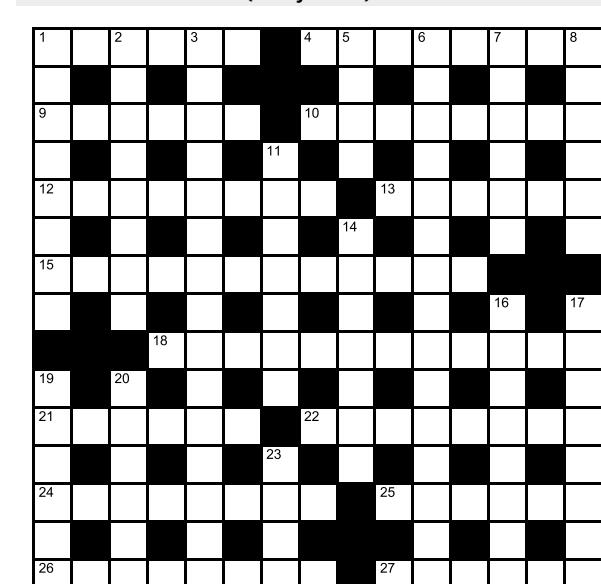
The London-based doctor and popular YouTuber Sangram Patil was stopped at the Mumbai International Airport on Monday morning in connection with a defamation case filed by a Bharatiya Janata Party functionary, Nikhil Bhamre. A lookout circular (LOC) had been issued against him. "The Facebook post only questioned the Centre and in no capacity spread fake news, yet I was booked under a serious Section," said Mr. Patil, after he was refused permission to fly back to his home. He had put up the social media post which said, "Is it right to expose a 75-year-old man's youthful revelry? Congress should be ashamed of exposing Modi!"

HC quashes tax notices to NDTV founders

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Terming the reassessment proceedings "arbitrary" and against fundamental and constitutional rights, the Delhi High Court on Monday quashed the 2016 income tax notices to NDTV founders Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy and asked the department to pay ₹1 lakh to each of them as token cost.

The Bench observed that reopening reassessment proceedings against Mr. Prannoy Roy and Ms. Radhika Roy for the same transaction was without jurisdiction. "Impugned notice(s), any consequential order(s) or proceedings pursuant thereto are quashed. We impose a token cost of one lakh per case, payable to each petitioner," ordered the court.

TH CROSSWORD
(set by Arden)

Across
1 Old revolutionary had plenty to provide cover (6)
4 Going over the top alone is tough, boss (2,6)
9 A good essay about a port (6)
10 Title restricted to those who are not too old, perhaps (8)
12 Ending the last four months on a luxury ship — a capital chap (8)

SC stays Rajasthan HC order to move 1,102 liquor outlets

The court says the High Court's concern over drunk driving deaths is genuine; calls for closer scrutiny of 500-metre removal directive; State flags practical hurdles in towns along highways

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed the operation of a Rajasthan High Court order directing the State government to remove 1,102 liquor outlets located within 500 metres of highways within a period of two months, even as it acknowledged the growing toll of road fatalities resulting from drunk driving.

A Bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta observed that while the concerns expressed by the High Court were "absolutely genuine", the sweeping directions merited closer judicial scrutiny.

'Genuine concern'
"The concern shown here is absolutely genuine...the fact is that many deaths have indeed taken place. Some decision or policy will have to be put in place to save lives," the Bench remarked.

The top court was hearing a petition filed by Ram Swaroop Yadav, who contended that the High Court had issued its directions without affording affected stakeholders an opportunity to be heard. He further submitted that the order had failed to take into account binding judicial precedents permitting the operation of liquor vending within municipal limits and certain local bodies.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Mr. Yadav, argued that the High Court's November 24, 2025, order would have serious adverse consequences if allowed to operate.

He submitted that while the High Court was seized of a matter arising from a single village in Sujangarh, it went on to issue directions with Statewide effect



Road safety: The top court says concern expressed by the Rajasthan High Court are 'absolutely genuine'. FILE PHOTO

without hearing other affected parties.

"The judge has passed an order for the entire State without hearing anybody. The State is supporting me," he told the Bench.

'Practical difficulties'
Appearing for the Rajasthan government, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta flagged the practical difficulties in enforcing the High Court's directions, highlighting that a significant number of cities and towns in the State lie along national and State highways.

He submitted that a blanket enforcement of the order is available 500 metres away," he said.

500-metre restriction would, in effect, remove liquor vends from vast urban areas. He also pointed out that in cities such as Chandigarh, which are located directly along highways, all liquor vends would have to be removed.

Accordingly, the Bench issued notice on the appeal and stayed the operation of the High Court's directions until further orders. It, however, clarified that it was not discounting the serious public safety concerns relating to highway accidents and deaths associated with alcohol consumption.

Justice Mehta also flagged the prevalence of surrogate advertising by liquor outlets along highways, observing that billboards often carry indirect references to the sale of alcohol. "They put up advertisements saying that liquor is available 500 metres away," he said.

Echoing this concern, the Solicitor-General noted that since direct hoardings advertising liquor vends are prohibited in some States, advertisers have turned to indirect signage. "Now, the only hoarding is an arrow. Those who know, know what the arrow means," he said.

Infighting kills third Kaziranga tiger within a fortnight

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI



The 2024 tiger census said that Kaziranga's big cat count had risen to 148 from 104 earlier.

Veterinarians said the death could have been natural or due to infighting.

Wildlife experts said infighting among tigers is a natural phenomenon and usually occurs when territories overlap or resources become scarce. However, they noted that prey availability is not a concern at Kaziranga, which has a high diversity and abundance of prey species.

"As the tiger population is at its maximum upper limit, infighting may be influenced by the carnivore's inability to move out and settle beyond the core area (430 sq. km) of the park," said M. Firoz Ahmed, a tiger specialist at biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak.

Top court flags exorbitant surge in airfares during festivals, calls it 'exploitative'

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said that unpredictable fluctuations in airfares were "exploitative", and flagged the exorbitant surge in ticket prices during festivals and peak travel periods.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking binding regulatory guidelines to curb erratic airfare pricing and ancillary charges levied by private airlines.

Indicating that the court would intervene, Justice Mehta pointed to sharp fare hikes during religious gatherings and festivals. "We will definitely interfere. Just see the exploitation of passengers during the Kumbh

and other festivals. Look at the fares from Delhi to Prayagraj and Jodhpur — they are three times the normal fare," he told Additional Solicitor-General Anil Kaushik, who appeared for the Centre.

Earlier, on November 17 last year, the Bench had sought responses from the Union government, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), and the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA) on the plea filed by social activist S. Laxminarayanan. The petition seeks the creation of a robust and independent

regulatory mechanism to ensure transparency in airfare pricing and strengthen passenger protection across the civil aviation sector. On Monday, Additional Solicitor-General Anil Kaushik sought additional time to file a response on behalf of the Centre. The Bench posted the matter for further hearing on February 23.

The petition said that opaque airline practices, such as sudden fare escalations, and reduced flight services, infringe upon citizens' freedom of movement and a life with dignity. The plea also pointed out that there is currently no regulatory authority vested with the power to review or cap airfares, enabling airlines to exploit consumers through hidden fees and unpredictable pricing.

EC to host international conference on election management, democracy

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Around a 100 delegates from over 70 countries will take part in the inaugural India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IIC-DEM), 2026 that will be held in the national capital this week.

The three-day conference, being organised by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (III-DEM), a body under the Election Commission of India (EC), is expected to be the largest global conference of its kind hosted by India in the field of democracy and election management.

It is being held at Bharat Mandapam from January 21 to 23. Nearly 100 international delegates, representing over 70 countries from across the world, are



Nearly 100 international delegates, representing over 70 countries from across the world, are expected to participate. FILE PHOTO

expected, along with representatives of international organisations, foreign missions in India, and academic and practising experts in the electoral domain, the EC said in a statement.

The Chief Election Commissioner of India, Ganesh Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, will receive the delegates and inaugurate the session on January 21.

The three-day programme includes general and plenary sessions for election management bodies (EMBs), besides thematic sessions focusing on global electoral issues, model international electoral standards, and innovations and best practices in electoral processes. A total of 36 thematic groups, led by

the CEOs of States and Union Territories and supported by national and international academic experts, will contribute to in-depth deliberations during the conference.

40 bilateral meetings

The EC will hold over 40 bilateral meetings with the EMBS for further discussions and cooperation on various challenges confronting them around the world. The commission will formally launch ECI-NET, the EC's one-stop digital platform for all election-related information and services.

An exhibition showcasing the magnitude and complexity of conducting elections in India, along with the recent initiatives taken by the EC to strengthen the two pillars of elections, preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections, will also be held.

FAITH

Preach, follow dharma

What is dharma? Sri Damodhara Dikshitar said in a discourse that it is a unique and defining principle of life. Dharma means cultivating and practising noble qualities such as patience, compassion, straightforwardness, charity, and truthfulness. It also implies not treading the opposite path of any noble virtue. It denotes reverence and worship for one's mother, father, guru, and God. Being a comprehensive principle, dharma encompasses discipline in food habits and purity in lifestyle. Refined and gentle speech is equally a form of dharma. We should never hurt others with harsh words. Our words should be like seeds sown in the ears of listeners, which they can remember and draw strength from in times of need, and not like sand thrown carelessly. Moreover, the prescribed codes of conduct for celibates, householders, and sanyasis are collectively known as dharma.

There is no charity greater than feeding the poor, no vrata more sacred than observing the Ekadasi fast, no mantra superior to the Gayathri, and no God higher than one's own mother. Adherence to all of these is considered dharma. The greatness of Hindu religion, which encompasses all these aspects of dharma, lies not merely in preaching them to others but in sincerely practising and living by them. We should set a living example for our children by practising dharma ourselves, so that they may naturally emulate and uphold it.

When the Lord manifested as Rama, He embodied all the virtues of dharma (ethical discipline) and practised them Himself, thereby setting an ideal example for the world to follow.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

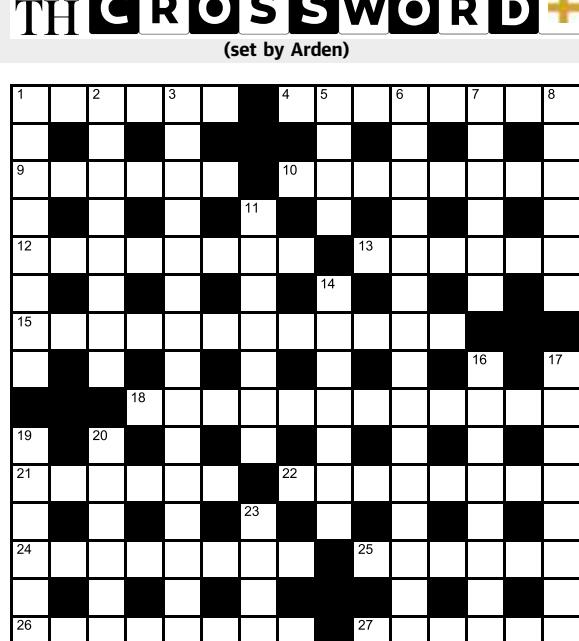
M	A	N	I	T	H	E	S	T	R	E	E
E	B	R	A	A	R	D	E	M	A	S	A
M	A	S	A	I	K	S	I	S	G	E	R
A	T	S	E	E	L	E	R	O	T	T	T
T	R	A	C	H	E	A	S	I	E	S	I
E	I	H	I	H	I	C	C	C	C	C	C
D	I	N	A	R	N	E	N	N	N	N	N
I	N	V	I	N	V	I	I	I	I	I	I
N	O	T	O	T	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
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O	E	I	S	H	A	S	A	A	A	A	A
O	E	I	S	H	A	S	A	A	A	A	A

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

CROSSWORD

14695

(set by Arden)



Across

- 1 Old revolutionary had plenty to provide cover (6)
- 4 Going over the top alone is tough, boss (2,6)
- 9 A good essay about a port (6)
- 10 Title restricted to those who are not too old, perhaps (8)
- 12 Ending the last four months on a luxury ship — a capital chap (8)
- 13 Festivity said to be for an achievement (4)
- 14 Hand over in-laws to a fellow traveller (7)
- 15 Like to restrict work — it's the doubting Thomases (8)
- 16 Is able to switch partners with tribades (8)
- 17 Festivity said to be for an achievement (4)
- 18 After may be brief call, net working — capable of double refraction (12)
- 19 First breakthrough — a gate crash will land one in hot water (3,3)
- 20 Destined for gold — patience oddly missing during days outside... (8)
- 21 ...or during service imbroglio (6)
- 22 Work can be cultivated all around — lovely! (8)
- 23 Destined for gold — patience oddly missing during days outside... (8)
- 24 ...or during service imbroglio (6)
- 25 Cover for 60 seconds stopping dead (8)
- 26 Harry asks to include a name of state (6)
- 27 Boast a bit about a worn-out horse (4-4)
- 28 I've order to refuse bypass (8)
- 29 Correct path is isolation to get medical care (15)
- 30 Conduct in front (4)
- 31 The malady that ensures people are on a six-an-over disposition (8,7)
- 32 Work on a what, in Spain? Not clear at all (6)
- 33 Every essential equipment empties into a hole (6)
- 34 Song indeed is late (7)
- 35 Hand over in-laws to a fellow traveller (7)
- 36 Is able to switch partners with tribades (8)
- 37 Like to restrict work — it's the doubting Thomases (8)
- 38 Walk-way on top of list (6)
- 39 Timed naturally while some of them rise together (6)
- 40 Festivity said to be for an achievement (4)

Down

- 1 Old revolutionary had plenty to provide cover (6)
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- 31 The malady that ensures people are on a six-an-over disposition (8,7)
- 32 Work on a what,

IN BRIEF



CIL unit valued at \$2.2 billion after stellar market debut

Shares of Bharat Coking Coal, India's top coking coal miner, soared as much as 96% in their market debut on Monday, buoyed by optimism around the country's steel sector. The stock pared some of its gains to trade 83.4% higher at ₹42.19 on the National Stock Exchange of India, valuing the company at ₹196.48 billion (\$2.16 billion). The company, which produces coking coal, is a unit of Coal India. REUTERS

TVS Infrastructure Trust raises ₹830 cr. in first tranche

TVS Infrastructure Trust, an Infrastructure Investment Trust sponsored by TVS Industrial & Logistics Parks (TVS ILP), on Monday said it had raised ₹830 crore under tranche-1 of its ₹1,100 crore non-convertible debenture (NCD) programme. The company said the funds were raised through a 20-year, long-tenor bond issuance, anchored by the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development. PTI

'Imperative that we frame our own rules as per requirement'

It is imperative that we make our own rules based on requirements, said Union Minister for Power Manohar Lal Khattar. "We [India's power sector] are competing with the world. They will frame their own regulations; we will also frame our regulations. However, it is necessary that instead of [borrowing entirely] their regulations, we frame regulations that adhere to our requirements," he said at an event at IIT Delhi.

BHEL reports 3-fold jump in net profit to ₹390 cr in Q3

Press Trust of India

Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) on Monday posted a three-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹390.40 crore for the December quarter, mainly due to increased revenue from key sectors.

The company had clocked a net profit of ₹134.70 crore in the October-December period of the preceding 2024-25 fiscal, as per an exchange filing.

BHEL's total income rose 18% to ₹8,691.85 crore during the third quarter from ₹7,385 crore in the year-earlier period, the firm said in the filing.

PNB Q3 net rises 13% to ₹5,100 crore, NPAs slide

The Hindu Bureau

Punjab National Bank Ltd (PNB) reported third quarter net profit climbed 13.1% year-on-year to ₹5,100 crore while gross non-performing assets (GNPA) slid to ₹39,314 crore from ₹45,414 crore a year earlier.

Net non-performing assets (NNPA) dipped by ₹603 crore to ₹3,834 crore from ₹4,437 crore.

Global business grew by 9.5% to ₹28,91,528 crore. Global deposits reported a growth of 8.5% to ₹16.60 lakh crore. Global advances rose 10.9% to ₹12.31 lakh crore from ₹11.10 lakh crore a year earlier.

RAM (Retail, Agriculture and MSME) advances rose 11% to ₹6.62 lakh crore.

Silver hits all-time high of \$94 an ounce on geopolitical unrest

The white metal opened at \$93.3 an ounce and closed at \$93.5 on Monday; gold prices, too, hit an all-time high of ₹4,690 an ounce

Ashokamithran T.

MUMBAI

Silver hit an all-time high of \$94 an ounce in the international spot market on a potential acquisition of Greenland by the U.S. and the EU's threat to suspend the trade deal. Silver opened at \$93.3 an ounce and touched a high of \$94.09 before closing at \$93.5 an ounce on Monday.

Prices of the white metal have doubled since April 2025 in the wake of global demand in strategically important industries such as semi-conductors. Gold prices, too, rallied hitting an all-time high of ₹4,690 an ounce.

Gold has hit all-time highs on almost 50 occasions in the past year alone, according to a re-



Precious metal: Prices of the white metal have doubled since April 2025 in the wake of demand in key sectors. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

search report from Tata Asset Management Company.

On the MCX, too, gold and silver topped ₹14,500/10 grams and ₹3,04,000/kg respectively. "The move followed President Trump's renewed push for the U.S. to acquire Greenland, accompanied by threats of progressively higher tariffs on European allies until such a deal is

permitted. In response,

European officials are considering retaliatory measures, including tariffs on U.S. imports and the EU's anti-coercion instrument, [which are] set to be discussed at an emergency summit in Brussels on Thursday," said Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research, Kotak Securities

TCS incorporates regional HQ in Saudi

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) said it has incorporated its regional headquarters in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at an investment of 1.65 million Saudi Riyal, complying with the

Saudi government's project bidding norms.

In a regulatory filing, TCS informed the stock exchanges that the company named Tata Consultancy Services Regional Headquarters was incorporated on January 18, 2026.

Tata Consultancy Ser-

vices Netherlands B.V. is the holding company of the Tata Consultancy Services Regional Headquarters, which is a step-down subsidiary of TCS.

The company will be engaged in information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services, it said.

'Threshold for significant index likely at ₹20,000 cr.'

Ashokamithran T.

MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) proposed a ₹20,000-crore threshold to identify "significant" indices relating to the Index Providers' Regulations 2024.

The consultation paper containing the proposal was released with the intent to strengthen governance of benchmarks used by mutual funds.

The proposed norm does not apply to indices regulated by the RBI. Grievances can be addressed only to subscribers of these indices. SEBI has set February 10 for comments.

Govt. removes QCO on textile machinery imports

The Hindu Bureau

COIMBATORE

The Union Ministry of Heavy Industries has rescinded its order issued on August 24, 2024 relating to quality standards for machinery and electrical equipment safety.

With this, there will be no quality control standards for imported textile machinery. Weaving and processing machinery are imported by many textile units and the textile industry has been demanding withdrawal of the quality standards order on machinery.

On energy, IKEA said it is close to running all its Indian operations on renewable power. "Through our investments in solar and wind, including a large solar project in Rajasthan, we will generate more renewable energy than we consume across our stores and shopping centres in India," Mr. Antoni said.

Sangita Rajan

CHENNAI



Patrik Antoni and Bhavana Jaiswal of IKEA India.

store opens, it's locally relevant from day one."

On sustainability

IKEA said its sustainability approach in India is embedded across product design, sourcing, logistics and energy use. All products sold in India follow the company's global design framework, which factors in material efficiency, durability and recyclability at the design stage.

"We're starting in Chennai the same way IKEA started 80 years ago – by reaching people where they are," said Patrik Antoni, CEO, IKEA India.

"Just as our founder began by shipping products to his local community, we're beginning here with deliveries first. The physical presence will come as we evolve. Homes here carry warmth, family, craft and sustainability and these are values we have always stood for," he said.

Digital-first move

India is one of the few markets globally where IKEA has adopted a digital-first strategy, using e-commerce data to understand consumption patterns before committing to brick-and-mortar investments.

"Online helps us learn before we build," said Bhavana Jaiswal, country e-commerce integration manager, IKEA India.

"Different Indian cities behave differently. Digital gives us clear insights into what customers need, where demand comes from, and how homes are actually used, so when

ED attaches two flats worth ₹73 crore in Gensol, BluSmart cases

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached two luxury Gurugram apartments worth close to ₹73 crore in connection with two cases allegedly involving Gensol and BluSmart group, its promoters and others, said the agency on Monday.

In the first case, the agency attached an apartment in Haryana registered in the name of Capbridge Ventures LLP (Gensol Group company) valued at ₹40.57 crore and ₹14.28 crore in bank balances of various entities.

Gensol Engineering Ltd. (GEL) and its associated group entity BFPL, had collaborated with Go Auto Private Ltd. in an alleged criminal conspiracy to systematically divert public funds disbursed as loans from public lenders, Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and Power Finance Corporation (PFC), and

the total amount of outstanding of Gensol Engineering Limited out of the IREDA and PFC loans in December 2025 is ₹505.27 crore," it was alleged.

In the second case, the ED attached an apartment worth ₹32.28 crore, registered in the name of Anvi Power Investment Private Ltd. It alleged that Mr. Anmol, chairman of Gensol Group, acquired the property using the funds diverted from the group company Matrix Gas and Renewables Limited.

The CBI had registered a case against Matrix Gas and Renewable limited (Matrix) and others, following a complaint lodged by MECON Limited, which has been appointed as the agency to implement a scheme of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

Based on the same, the ED is conducting a probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	83,246	-0.39
US Dollar	90.90	-0.13
Gold	1,48,100	1.29
Brent oil	64.14	—

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2134.60	-22.70
Adani Ports	1403.00	-18.90
Apollo Hosp	7133.00	-102.50
Asian Paints	2754.00	-2.90
Axis Bank	1307.50	13.30
Bajaj Auto	9429.50	-59.50
Bajaj FinServ	2017.80	15.30
Bajaj Finance	969.45	19.20
Bharat Elec	412.80	2.55
Bharti Airtel	2010.00	-6.40
Cipla	1392.30	-5.20
Coal India	430.15	-0.85
Dr Reddy's Lab	1167.20	-8.30
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	0.00
Eicher Motors	7323.50	8.50
Etemal Ltd.	281.35	-6.35
Grasim Ind	2780.00	-29.60
HCL Tech	1716.80	18.80
HFDC Bank	927.90	-3.20
HDFC Bank	736.80	4.25
Hindalco	939.95	5.30
Hindustan Unilever	2413.90	53.50
ICICI Bank	1380.60	-30.20
InterglobeAvi	4941.50	201.50
Infosys	1681.20	-8.60
ITC	333.20	4.00
Jio Financial Servic- es Ltd.	275.65	-3.15
JSW Steel	1184.10	-3.20
Kotak Bank	426.90	8.70
L&T	3869.45	13.40
M&M	3657.40	-0.80
Maruti Suzuki	1617.00	317.00
Max Healthcare	1013.60	-23.40
Nestle Ind	1215.60	0.30
NTPC	343.35	-3.00
ONGC	243.11	-4.06
Powergrid Corp	356.65	0.35
Reliance Ind	1413.60	-44.30
State Bank	1038.40	-3.90
Shriram Finance	1010.35	14.90
Sun Pharma	1675.40	6.50
TataConsumerPro- duct	1180.20	-8.90
Tata Steel	188.27	0.06
TCS	3163.60	-43.10
Tech Mahindra	1718.30	-47.80
Titan	4144.10	-52.80
Tata Motors PV	344.00	-9.60
Trent Ltd.	3945.60	45.90
UltraTech Cement	12297.00	-81.00
Wipro	245.95	-21.50

Govt. permits wheat flour export

The government has permitted exports of 5 lakh tonnes of wheat flour and related products, according to a notification. PTI

Maharashtra Transmission Communication Infrastructure Ltd (MTCL)
113, 12th Floor, Building 8, 247 Park CC Bus Stop, LBS Road, Gandhi Nagar Vile Parle west, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400079
Email : chirag.mawana@mtcl.com, Contact : +91 99202328 (IN - 04202MH/0212/C24316)

TENDER NOTICE
Tender Doc no: MTCL/TENDER/ACTIVE_OPGW/21

MTCL is a Joint Venture Company between Sterlite Electric Ltd. (SEI) & Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (MSETCL). It has been formed with the objective of establishing OPGW Cable based Communication Network in Maharashtra on existing EHV transmission lines of MSETCL and will exploit the same commercially as a Telecom Infrastructure Provider.

Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Company Limited (MTCIL) is inviting request for proposal from interested bidders for Design, supply, installation, commissioning, integration, testing and handing over of communication network including SDH, DWDM, Fiber-optic, Pre-fabricated and other subsystems in MTCIL Network. The total length of the network shall cover 100 Nos transmission substations on OPGW network of 200 Km in Maharashtra State.

DUBAI

Iran to consider lifting restrictions on Internet; state TV hacked briefly



Iran may lift its Internet blackout in a few days, a senior Parliament member said on Monday, after authorities shut communications while they used force to crush protests. The state TV appeared to be hacked on Sunday, briefly showing speeches by the exiled son of Iran's last shah calling on the public to revolt. REUTERS

KABUL

Seven killed as blast rips through Chinese hotel in Afghan capital



A blast at a Chinese restaurant in central Kabul on Monday killed at least seven people and wounded more than a dozen others, emergency services said. Kabul police spokesman said a Chinese, and six Afghans were killed, adding that the cause was under investigation. AFP

OSLO

Trump tells Norway his Greenland threats linked to Nobel Prize snub



U.S. President Donald Trump in a written message to Norway's Prime Minister said he no longer feels obligated "to think purely of Peace" because he had not been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and repeated his demand for control of Greenland. Mr. Trump said Denmark cannot protect Greenland from Russia or China. REUTERS

ROME

Italy's fashion king Valentino, who pursued beauty at every turn, dies



One of the top designers of his era, Italy's elegance aficionado Valentino Garavani spent nearly half a century dressing the world's great beauties, from Jackie Kennedy to Princess Diana before his death on Monday at age 93. The giant in the world of haute couture died at his home in Rome, ANSA news agency reported. AFP

EU, U.K. attempt negotiating with Trump, while keeping possibility of retaliation open

German Chancellor Merz says he would try and meet with Trump at the WEF in Davos to discuss the Greenland issue; Finance Minister Klingbeil says Europe 'will not allow ourselves to be blackmailed'; British Prime Minister rules out a tariff war, but adds that Trump's tariff threats were 'wrong'

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

While European leaders kept open the possibility of retaliatory trade measures against the U.S., for now they appeared to engage in negotiations with U.S. President Donald Trump, who, on Saturday, announced tariffs on seven EU members and the U.K. The tariffs were announced to pressure the European nations to hand over Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, to the U.S.

German Chancellor Frederick Merz said on Monday he would try and meet with President Trump at



Push back: Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz at a press conference last year. FILE

gency summit on Thursday. An EU package of €93 billion in tariffs on U.S. products is due to kick in on February 6, unless a suspension, currently in effect, is extended beyond this date.

Germany's Vice Chancellor and Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil appeared to back a stronger response than the Chancellor. "We are constantly experiencing new provocations..." he said at a joint

press conference with his French counterpart, earlier on Monday. "Germany and France agree: We will not allow ourselves to be blackmailed," he added.

Mr. Klingbeil said legally permissible economic retaliation should be looked into, as he appeared to support French President Emmanuel Macron's push for the EU to restrict the U.S.'s access to the Single Market, by invoking the bloc's Anti-Corruption Instrument.

The European Council met on Sunday and reached a "shared assessment that tariffs would undermine transatlantic relations and are incompatible with the EU-U.S. trade

agreement," according to its President, Antonio Costa.

In the U.K., Keir Starmer, arguably Mr. Trump's closest ally in Europe, ruled out a tariff war, i.e., retaliatory tariffs, saying these were not in anyone's interest. "We have not got to that stage, my focus is making sure we don't get to that stage."

He stood by the U.K. and European position that the future of Greenland was up to Greenland and Denmark. He also said it was "completely wrong" to threaten allies with tariffs.

He admitted that the tariffs from the U.S. had been "very badly received" across the U.K..

China's population drops for fourth year; births at historic low

Press Trust of India
BEIJING



7.9 million babies were born in 2025 compared to 9.5 million the previous year

by 3.39 million people last year compared to 2024.

Meanwhile, about 11.31 million people died last year - one of the highest totals in five decades.

At the end of 2024, the number of people aged 60 and above in China had hit 310 million.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e- PROCUREMENT NOTICE WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-mail : ceworldbankprojects@gmail.com

Bid Identification No. CE-BRIDGES - 14 / 2025-26

1. The Chief Engineer (Bridges), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Construction of Road & Bridge work detailed below:
2. Nature of work : 01 no.
3. No. of work : Rs.10,00,000.00 (On-line)
4. Tender Paper Cost : A/ Special Class Contractor
5. Class of Contractor : 6. Available of bid document in the website : From 10.00 A.M. of 21.01.2026 to 5.00 PM of 05.02.2026
7. Date of opening of Bid : Dt. 06.02.2026 at 11.00 AM
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tenderodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Chief Engineer, Bridges, Odisha, Bhubaneswar,
OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR

U.S. held talks with hardline Venezuelan Minister months before capture of Maduro

Reuters
NEW YORK/MIAMI

Officials part of U.S. President Donald Trump's administration had been in discussions with Venezuela's hardline Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello months before the U.S. operation to capture President Nicolas Maduro, and have been in communication with him since then, according to multiple people familiar with the matter.

The officials warned Mr. Cabello, 62, against using the security services or militant ruling-party supporters he oversees to target the country's Opposi-

Venezuela labelled the report 'malicious information aimed at dividing the political high command'

tion, sources said. That security apparatus, which includes the intelligence services, police and the armed forces, remains largely intact after the January 3 U.S. raid.

The communication with Mr. Cabello, dates back to the early days of the current Trump administration and continues after the U.S. ouster of Mr. Maduro, sources said.

The communications,

which have not been previously reported, are critical to the Trump administration's efforts to control the situation inside Venezuela. If Mr. Cabello decides to unleash the forces that he controls, it could foment the kind of chaos that Mr. Trump wants to avoid and threaten interim President Delcy Rodriguez's grip on power, according to a source briefed on U.S. concerns.

Venezuela's government has categorically denied the information on Mr. Cabello and labelled the report as 'malicious information aimed at dividing the country's political high command'.

According to the statement, 71 incidents were identified as having communal elements.

'No religious angle in most incidents with minorities'

Press Trust of India
DHAKA

The majority of incidents involving members of minority communities in Bangladesh during 2025 were "criminal in nature" and not driven by communal motives, the interim government said on Monday.

Citing a yearlong review of official police records, the statement issued by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's office said a total of 645 incidents involving minority communities were recorded in 2025.

According to the statement, 71 incidents were identified as having communal elements.

High-speed train collision kills 40 in Spain; authorities fear more casualties

Associated Press

ADAMUZ

Spanish police said on Monday that at least 40 people are confirmed dead in a high-speed rail collision the previous night in the south of the country when the tail end of a train jumped the track, causing another train speeding past in the opposite direction to derail.

The impact tossed the second train's lead carriages off the track, sending them plummeting down a 4-metre slope. Some bodies were found hundreds of metres from the crash site, Andalusia regional president Juanma Moreno said, describing the wreckage as a "mass of twisted me-



Grim scene: Emergency personnel at the site of a derailment of two high-speed trains in Cordoba, Spain on Monday. REUTERS

tal" with bodies likely still to be found inside.

Efforts to recover the bodies continued on Monday, and the death toll could rise.

The crash occurred on Sunday at 7:45 p.m. when the tail end of a train carry-

ing 289 passengers on the route from Malaga to the capital, Madrid, went off the rails. It slammed into an incoming train travelling from Madrid to Huelva, another southern Spanish city, according to rail operator Adif.

The head of the second train, which was carrying nearly 200 passengers, took the brunt of the impact, Spanish Transport Minister Oscar Puente said. That collision knocked its first two carriages off the track. Mr. Puente said that it appeared the largest number of the deaths occurred in those carriages.

Authorities said all the survivors had been rescued in the early morning.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez declared three days of national mourning for the victims of the crash. "Today is a day of pain for all of Spain," Mr. Sanchez said on a visit to Adamuz, a village near the accident site.

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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. T-03-N-2025-26 Date:- 16.01.2026

Tender Notice

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (General) N.C. Railway, Agra on behalf of President of India invites "Open Tender" through on line (E-Tendering) for the following works.

Tender No.: T-03-N-2025-26

Name of work with its location & completion period: Hodal: Electrification work in connection with Replacement of Sub-standard type-I quarters into type-II quarters at Hodal station (14 nos.) including approach road and compound wall. Completion period 08 months.

Approx Cost of the work: ₹ 3289956.86

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.irps.gov.in. Tenders can only be submitted through web portal www.irps.gov.in up to 15:00 hrs. on 16.02.2026 128/26 FA

North central railways [] @CRONCR [] www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

E-tender Notice

Directorate of Sericulture Uttarakhand, invites E-tender from manufacturer/authorized distributors for procurement of Sericulture Rearing Trays size 3x2'x2.5" made of HDPE material. The trays should be double walled for extra strength with perforated bottom and closed at sides and HDPE Sericulture Mountings size 3'x2' with 11 folding height 70 mm Kancha 18x20 mm 350 gm weight Colour: Black. The E-Tender programmes are as under:

S. No.	Description	Dated
1	Web Portal / Platform	www.uktenders.gov.in
2	Tender document will be available on website	19-01-2026
3	Last date for uploading Technical and Financial bids	02-02-2026 upto 3:00 p.m.
4	Date of receiving the following in original at Directorate Office: i. Tender form ii. Earnest money DD iii. Tender Fee DD iv. Authorization Certificate Copy v. ISI/ISO Registration copy vi. Pan Number copy vii. Technical bid viii. Affidavit of company Blacklisted (Yes or No) ix. Industry / Factory Registration Certificate Copy X. Samples.	02-02-2026 upto 3:00 p.m.
5	Date of opening of tender	03-02-2026 at 2:00 PM

Directorate of Sericulture Uttarakhand
Premnagar-Dehradun India

Government of Karnataka DIRECTORATE OF URBAN LAND TRANSPORT URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER URBAN LAND TRANSPORT BMTC, TTMC B' Block, (Above Bus Stand), 4th Floor, K.H.Road, Shanthinagar, Bangalore-560027, Ph : 080-22226627 / 6628, Fax : 080-22226630, E-mail : dult-bangalore@gmail.com, dult@karnataka.gov.in

No: DULT-TECH/2/2020 Date: 19.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) invites e-bids from qualified consultancies for the services of preparation of Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) for the Bengaluru, Karnataka. The bidders may download the tender documents for from <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> in web portal. Tender Number is as follows: DULT/2025-26/SE0043

Sd/- Joint Director (Admin)
Directorate of Urban Land Transport
Urban Development Department.

GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT CANCELLATION OF TENDER
TENDER ID: 2022_EDHD_11107_1
TITLE : Selection of Bidder for purchase of one hundred percent shares in Distribution Company responsible for distribution and retail supply of electricity and having distribution license in the Union Territory of Puducherry

TENDER FLOATED DATE : 27-09-2022.
THE ABOVE SAID TENDER IS HEREBY CANCELLED DUE TO ADMINISTRATIVE REASONS.

SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT (POWER)
No.736/DIP/AD(Press)/2025-2026

IISc MEDICAL SCHOOL FOUNDATION
Bangalore - 560012.
IMSF/Package - 09/2025-26 13-Jan-2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION
IISc Medical School Foundation invites bids in two cover system through e-tender platform <https://etenders.gov.in/procure> Tender ID is: 2026_IISc_M_262892_1. The applicant/Company/Contractor should be "Class-I or above" registered under any one of the agencies CPWD, State PWD, MES, AAI and Municipal Corporations of any state of India or any Government/Semi Government bodies of India for the work of "Package No - 09: INTERIOR FINISHING WORKS FOR IISc MEDICAL SCHOOL FOUNDATION AT IISc CAMPUS, BANGALORE". Estimated Cost of Project is Rs. 37,68,82,398.50 (Exclusive of GST). Last date of receipt of application is 04.02.2026 at 15:00 hrs. Any other details can be obtained from the office of IISc Medical School Foundation/Office of Admin Deans, Main Building IISc, Bangalore-560 012 Tel No. 080-2293-3584 on all working days or e-mail: office@iiscmedicalschoolfoundation.org

Sd/- DIRECTOR, IMSF

TRULY SPECIAL

An amazing place to play cricket: Mitchell after Kiwis' series triumph



R.V. MOORTHY

We love touring India. It's an amazing place to play cricket. You look at the crowd — it's incredible. We're used to smaller crowds back home, grass banks and all that, and then you come here and experience the noise and passion. It's truly special — Daryl Mitchell after New Zealand's maiden ODI series triumph in India.

ULTIMATUM

Decide on participation by Jan. 21 or risk removal: ICC to BCB



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The ICC has asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to decide on its participation in the T20 World Cup in India by January 21 or "risk being replaced by another team" in the tournament beginning February 7. In case Bangladesh refuses to yield, the replacement team would most likely be Scotland based on current rankings.

CALLING IT QUIT

I felt my time was up: trailblazer Saina confirms retirement



FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Saina Nehwal has confirmed her retirement from competitive badminton, saying her body can no longer cope with the physical demands of the sport. "I had stopped playing two years back. I didn't think it mattered to announce my retirement. I felt my time was up because my knee cannot push like before," she said.

CAMARADERIE

We believed in each other, says Vidarbha's head coach Ghani



K. MURALI KUMAR

Vidarbha's maiden title in the Vijay Hazare Trophy was a result of the players' belief in each other, reckoned head coach Usman Ghani. "We believed in each other. We have been a dominant team in the white ball formats for a while now, but that white ball trophy had eluded us. But this time we were confident," Ghani said.

Gautami, bowlers ensure RCB becomes first to enter playoffs

The No. 4 batter stitches together handy partnerships of 60 and 69 with Smriti and Richa, respectively; Sayali scalps three while fellow medium-pacer de Klerk chips in with a couple; Gardner's all-round show not enough for Giants

WPL-4

Today's match



Vadodara, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 9

DC 4 | MI 5

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR



Making heads turn: Gautami notched up her first half-century of the competition. X@WPLT20

SCOREBOARD**ROYAL CHALLENGERS**

Grace Harris c Gardner b Renuka

1 (3b), Smriti Mandhana lbw b

Gardner 26 (23b, 4x4), Georgia

Voll k Kashvee 1 (3b), Gautami

Naik b Gardner 73 (55b, 7x4, 1x6),

Richa Ghosh c Gardner b Devine

27 (20b, 3x6), Nadine de Klerk

(not out) 4 (6b), Radha Yadav c

Bharti b Kashvee 17 (8b, 2x4,

1x6), Shreyanka Patil (not out) 8

(2b, 2x4); Extras (b-5, lb-1, w-15):

21; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 178.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-2 (Harris, 0.6 overs), 2-9 (Voll,

1.6), 3-69 (Smriti, 9.3), 4-138

(Richa, 16.6), 5-142 (Gautami,

GIANTS BOWLING

Renuka 4-0-23-1, Kashvee

4-0-38-2, Gardner 4-0-43-2, Happy

1-0-10-0, Devine 4-0-25-1,

Wareham 1-0-13-0, Tanuja

2-0-20-0.

GUJARAT GIANTS

Beth Mooney c Sayali 3 (4b),

Sophie Devine c Volt b Sayali 0

(4b), Anushka Sharma c Radha b

de Klerk 18 (20b, 3x4), Kanika

Ahuja b Bell 0 (3b), Ashleigh

Gardner c Prema b Sayali 54 (43b,

5x4, 1x6), Kashvee Gautam b

Radha 4 (8b), Georgia Wareham c

Sayali b de Klerk 2 (6b), Bharti

Fulmali c Harris b Shreyanka 14

FALL OF WICKETS

1-3 (Mooney, 1.1), 2-4 (Devine,

1.5), 3-5 (Kanika, 2.5), 4-34

(Anushka, 6.6), 5-48 (Kashvee,

10.1), 6-56 (Wareham, 12.2), 7-97

(Gardner, 16.2), 8-103 (Bharti,

17.5).

RCB BOWLING

Bell 4-1-23-1, Sayali 4-0-21-3, de

Klerk 4-0-17-2, Radha 4-0-34-1,

Shreyanka 4-0-19-1.

Toss: Giants; PoM: Gautami.

RCB won by 61 runs.

Kiwis get their tactics right; a wake-up call for India

NZ IN INDIA**Tarun Shastry**

INDORE

When a second-string New Zealand side arrived in India for the white-ball series about a week back, few gave the Michael Bracewell-led visitors even an outside chance, let alone making history. Yet, over an eventful week, the Kiwis produced a tactically superior performance to clinch a historic 2-1 series victory — their first-ever ODI series win on Indian soil.

New Zealand's success was built on method and clarity, with Daryl Mitchell at the centre of it. Throughout the series, Mitchell displayed exceptional control against both pace and spin. Against the tweakers, he used his feet decisively — either getting to the pitch or rocking back to manipulate the length.

He repeatedly employed the sweep and reverse sweep, particularly against Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav, forcing them off attacking lines and unsettling field placements. Both spinners struggled to adapt, allowing Mitchell to milk singles effortlessly and maintain relentless scoreboard pressure.

Against pace, Mitchell was equally assured. He played late, worked the ball into gaps with soft hands, and denied India the opportunity to build pressure through dot balls — a recurring theme across the series and a key factor in New Zealand's dominance during the middle overs.

Virat Kohli continued his tremendous form and once again stood tall as the



Simply exquisite: Kohli continued his tremendous form and once again stood tall. R.V. MOORTHY

India-New Zealand ODI series in numbers

Batting	M	Runs	HS	Avg	SR	100s/50s
Mitchell	3	352	137	176.00	110.34	2/1
Bowling	M	Wkts	BB	Avg	Econ	4W
Kohli	3	240	124	80.00	105.26	1/1
Phillips	3	150	106	75.00	113.63	1/0
Clarke	3	7	3/54	26.14	6.77	0
Jamieson	3	6	4/41	28.16	5.82	1
Harshit	3	6	3/84	33.50	6.81	0

fulcrum of the Indian batting. Beyond him, however, consistency remained elusive. Several batters got starts across the three matches but failed to convert them into match-defining innings — a drawback, captain Shubman Gill acknowledged after the series.

The bowling, particularly the spin department, raised serious concerns for the hosts. Both Jadeja and Kuldeep were worryingly ineffective, especially during the middle overs, allowing the New Zealand batters to dictate terms and dominate crucial periods of play.

To compound matters, India's fielding was abysmal, to say the least. Mis-

sed chances and sloppy ground fielding proved costly as the Black Caps pounced on every opportunity presented to them. Those lapses tilted the balance in New Zealand's favour.

With the 2027 World Cup still a far away, this defeat should act as a timely wake-up call. For head coach Gautam Gambhir and Gill, the priority now is to address the shortcomings — tighten fielding standards, demand greater accountability with the bat, and settle on the most effective XI.

There is time to course-correct, but rebuilding confidence and clarity within the group must begin immediately.

Royals hold nerve to shoot out HIL GC, boost their chances of qualification

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

BHUBANESWAR

In an edge-of-the-seat thriller, Ranchi Royals beat HIL GC via penalty shootout to boost its chances of making it to the final stages of the Hockey India League at the Kalinga Stadium here on Monday.

After a high-scoring 4-4 affair that swung both ways, Royals held their nerve to win their first tie-breaker 4-1.

Following a goalless first quarter, the second period turned out to be an action-packed one in which either team had two short corners.

Tom Boon's penalty corner conversion in the 18th minute was disallowed, but Royals did not have to



Perfect timing: Boon, who drew level in the final quarter, also found the mark for Royals in the shootout. BISWARANJAN ROUTH

wait much. Mandeep Singh stole the ball from a defender to execute a shot and the strapping Araijeet Singh Hundal pounced on the rebound to hammer home a reverse hit.

HIL GC equalised by converting its second short corner. Kane Russell's shot ricocheted off custodian Suraj Karkera and an unchallenged Lalit Upadhyay completed the formalities by tapping it in.

With the Royals midfield

gelling well, Jack Waller created a nice opportunity and the Mandeep-Hundal combine worked successfully again. Mandeep's shot rebounded off goalkeeper James Mazarello and Hundal found the target with a low hit.

HIL GC bounced back, with Russell beating Karerla on the left off a short corner, when Royals were down to 10 men.

Sudip Chirmako utilised

a fine cross from Jasjit Singh Kular from left to score spectacularly and put HIL GC in the lead, but Sam Lane slotted one to level the scores.

After end-to-end action, Upadhyay scored from a defensive lapse to regain the lead for HIL GC.

Royals survived despite conceding five penalty corners in the 56th minute before equalising again through Boon's strike to enforce the shootout.

Vishnukant Singh, Lane, Maxime van Oost and Boon found the mark for Royals, while Ajeet Yadav was the lone scorer for HIL GC in the tie-breaker.

The result:

Ranchi Royals 4 (Hundal 19, 32, Lane 40, Boon 57-pc) drew with HIL GC 4 (Upadhyay 25-pc, 53, Russell 36-pc, Chirmako 39); Royals won 4-1 via shootout.

Every time we tour India we learn and grow, says New Zealand's hero Mitchell



Mr. Consistent: Mitchell continued to torment India. R.V. MOORTHY

Tarun Shastry

INDORE

Daryl Mitchell has been a thorn in India's flesh for a while now, and the just-concluded ODI series once again underlined his value with the bat. Back-to-back centuries in the must-win second one-day and the decider helped New Zealand push the hosts into submission and seal a historic series victory on Indian soil.

Significant victory Addressing the media, New Zealand's Mr. Consistent spoke about the significance of the triumph and also the joy of playing in the country.

"This is very, very significant for us," Mitchell said. "A number of New Zealand teams have come here in the past and every time we

tour India we learn and grow as a team. We're really grateful for those experiences. But to come here with this group and achieve what we have achieved is something the guys are very proud of. Some players will be heading home with big smiles on their faces."

The IPL influence

IN BRIEF



Gill to play Punjab's Ranji game against Saurashtra

Shubman Gill has decided against taking a break after the recent 50-over loss to New Zealand and will play the next Ranji Trophy game for Punjab against Saurashtra at Rajkot, starting on Thursday. Gill has chosen to return to red-ball cricket immediately as he is not part of India's T20 World Cup squad.

Aishwary and Manini top 50m rifle prone 3P fields

Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Manini Kaushik finished on top of the men's and women's 50m rifle 3P fields on the first day of the rifle and pistol National selection trials 1 & 2 (Group A) in New Delhi on Monday. Manini topped T1 with a total of 625.0. Karnataka's Tilottama Sen finished second with 622.6, while Kerala's Vidarsa K. Vinod was third on 622.0. In men's Trials 1, Aishwary totalled 629.6. Akhil Sheoran was second with 626.4, while Swapnil Kusale finished third with 625.3.

Madrid to host Laureus World Sports Awards

Madrid will host the Laureus World Sports Awards for third year in a row, organisers announced on Monday. Like last year, the award ceremony will take place at Cibeles Palace on April 20. "Since Madrid first hosted the Laureus Awards in 2024, it has benefited greatly from the work of Laureus Sport for Good," said organisers.



Senegal stuns Morocco to win AFCON title in extra time

Senegal stunned Morocco in Sunday's Africa Cup of Nations final in Rabat as Pape Gueye's goal gave it a 1-0 extra-time win over the host at the end of a match marred in controversy. It was Senegal's second title in the last three editions.

The results: Senegal 1 (P. Gueye 94) bt Morocco 0. **On Saturday:** Third place play-off: In Casablanca: Egypt 0 drew with Nigeria 0. Nigeria won 4-2 on penalties.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SCHEDULE

Kairat vs. Club Brugge, 9 p.m.; FK Bodo/Glimt vs. Manchester City, 11.15 p.m. (both matches on Tuesday). Real Madrid vs. Monaco; Inter Milan vs. Arsenal; Villarreal vs. Ajax; Tottenham vs. Dortmund; Sporting vs. PSG; Olympiacos vs. Leverkusen; Copenhagen vs. Napoli (all matches at 1.30 a.m. on Wednesday).

LIVE TELECAST

Men's U-19 World Cup: SS Select 2 & JioHotstar, 1 p.m. **Australian Open:** Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, 5 & LIV, 1.30 p.m. & 5.30 a.m. (Wednesday) **HIL:** Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 5 & 7.30 p.m. **WPL:** Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m. **Champions League:** Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 9, 11.15 p.m.; Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3, 5 & LIV, 1.15 a.m. (Wednesday)

Amandeep grabs the opportunity in Peillat's absence



Making it count: The 23-year-old Amandeep has scored five goals so far this season. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

HIL - MEN

Y. B. Sarangi
BHUBANESWAR

From playing second fiddle to Gonzalo Peillat last season to being the No. 1 drag-flicker for Hyderabad Too-fans in this edition of the Hockey India League (HIL), Amandeep Lakra has emerged as a polished product.

Despite the presence of German star Peillat, Lakra, hailing from Odisha's hockey hub Sundargarh district, impressed in his

but HIL season by scoring five goals and finishing fifth among the top penalty corner goal-scorers.

As Peillat withdrew this season due to an injury, Too-fans coach Pasha Gade-man chose Lakra as their first-choice drag-flicker.

The 23-year-old has not disappointed as he has scored five goals so far to be fourth, behind top stars Kane Russell (10), Alexander Hendrickx (8) and Tom Boon (6), among short corner specialists and joint-fifth among overall scorers.

"The coach's trust is the biggest thing. It boosts my

confidence. Last season I got less chances, but this season I am getting more," Lakra told *The Hindu*. Lakra said working with his role model Peillat helped him.

"I follow Gonzalo a lot, he keeps it simple. I learnt a lot from him last season, and asked him how he became the top-scorer in the Rio Olympics. He told me to keep it on the frame of the goalpost as it gives more chances to score. If we are not able to score directly, our teammates are there to score off rebounds."

Gonzalo's absence has given me a great opportunity. I am utilising his tips and have got success. Variations are decided by the coach. My job is to implement those."

Lakra said he also liked to pay attention to his duty as a defender.

"If I am not able to score, then there's no need to panic. I also need to focus on my defence as well," said Lakra, who has represented the country at the junior level in the World Cup and the Asia Cup and is knocking on the doors of the Indian senior side.

A double-gold outing for Bhagat, Kadam

PARA-BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
CAIRO

Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam clinched singles gold each in their respective categories and then combined together to stand on top of the podium in doubles at the SPIRO SPATHIS Egypt para-badminton International.

Bhagat defeated compatriot Umesh Vikram Kumar 19-21, 27-25, 21-18 in a thrill-

ing three-setter in the SL3 men's singles final.

In the SL4 men's, Kadam overcame Surya Kant Yadav 27-25, 21-18 in a high-quality final.

In the SL3-SL4 men's doubles, Bhagat and Kadam were awarded the gold following a walkover in the final against fellow Indians Umesh Vikram Kumar and Surya Kant Yadav.

Nitesh Kumar, M. Thulasi-mith, Alpha James, and the women's doubles pair of Manasi Joshi and Thulasi-mith also clinched gold.

Djokovic cruises to a century of wins

The 10-time champion begins quest for 25th Major in earnest; former champion Wawrinka lives to fight another day; Swiatek and Gauff also register hard-fought victories; Medvedev and local favourite de Minaur advance with straight-set verdicts; seventh seed Auger-Aliassime retires with injury



AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic began his latest bid for a record 25th Grand Slam crown with an emphatic straight-sets victory on Monday as fellow Australian Open title contenders Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff also won but with less sparkle.

Three-time finalist Daniil Medvedev stayed alive, as did 40-year-old Stan Wawrinka, who rolled back the clock to reach the second round.

Sixth seed Alex de Minaur, the big home hope, was also a straight-sets winner on another hot day where temperatures reached about 30C and with record crowds of more than 100,000 facing long queues. to get in.

The tournament is over, however, for seventh seed Felix Auger-Aliassime, who retired from his match with cramp. Auger-Aliassime won the opening set

champion Wawrinka lived to fight another day with a gutsy four-set victory.

The three-time Major winner, playing his last season, downed Serbia's Laslo Djere 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 7-6(4) in front of a crowd willing him to victory.

Medvedev, runner-up in 2021, 2022 and 2024, ground to a 7-5, 6-2, 7-6(2) opening round win over Dutchman Jesper de Jong.

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6-3 against Nuno Borges but then lost the next two before calling time.

Tough going In the women's draw, six-time Major winner Swiatek was made to work unexpectedly hard against Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue. The Polish second seed, who will complete a career Grand Slam if she breaks her Australian Open duck, eventually saw off her spirited opponent 7-6(5), 6-3.

Gauff beat Uzbekistan's Kamilla Rakhimova 6-2, 6-3, but was also less than convincing at the start and struggled with her serve. Her reward is a clash with Venus Williams' conqueror Olga Danilovic. Fourth seed Amanda Anisimova, began her quest for a third consecutive Major final with a win over Switzerland's Simona Waltert.

IMPORTANT RESULTS

First round: Men: 19-Paul (USA) bt Kovacevic (USA) 6-4, 6-3, 6-3; 14-Fokina (ESP) bt Misolic (Aut) 6-2, 6-3, 6-3; 6-de Minaur (Aus) bt McDonald (USA) 6-2, 6-2, 6-3; 13-Rublev (RUS) bt Arnaldi (Ita) 6-4, 6-2, 6-3; 11-Medvedev (RUS) bt de Jong (Ned) 7-5, 6-2, 6-2; Marozsan (Hung) bt Rinderknech (Fra) 6-3, 6-4, 6-7(2), 6-4; 25-Tien (USA) bt Giron (USA) 7-6(2), 4-6, 3-6, 7-6(3); 6-Cilic (Croatia) 6-2, 6-3, 6-2; 17-Lehecka (Cze) 7-5, 7-6(1), 7-5; 4-Djokovic (SRB) bt Martinez (Esp) 6-3, 6-2, 6-1; 30-Vacherot (Mon) bt Damm Jr. (USA) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; 12-Ruud (Nor) bt Bellucci (Ita) 6-1, 6-2, 6-4.

Women: 17-Mboko (Can) bt Jones (Aus) 6-4, 6-1; 14-Tauson (Den) bt Galfi (Hung) 6-3, 6-3; 21-Mertens (Bel) bt Tararudee (Tha) 7-5, 6-1; 2-Swiatek (Pol) bt Yuan (Chn) 7-6(5), 6-3.

Fallen seeds: Men: 7-Auger-Aliassime, 24-Rinderknech, 27-Nakashima. **Women:** 15-Navarro, 27-Kenin.

Manisha headlines Kesari's victory

Sports Bureau
NOIDA

Manisha Bhanvala headlined Maharashtra Kesari's 6-3 victory over Tigers of Mumbai Dangals with a 12-0 win by fall against Alina Filipovich in the 57kg for their first win in the Pro Wrestling League.

The results: Maharashtra Kesari bt Tigers of Mumbai Dangals 6-3; **Men:** 57kg: Aman Sehrawat (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) bt Sumit Malik (Maharashtra Kesari) 6-3; **65kg:** Tevanyan Vazgen (Maharashtra Kesari) bt Ali Rahimzade (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) 5-2; **74kg:** Yash (Maharashtra Kesari) bt Naveen Malik (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) 13-5; **86kg:** Mukul Dahiya (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) bt Amit (Maharashtra Kesari) 18-11; **125kg:** Robert Baran (Maharashtra Kesari) bt Oleksandr Khotiansivskyi (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) 5-3. **Women:**

53kg: Jyoti Sihag (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) bt Guzman Lopez Yusneysil (Maharashtra Kesari) 9-5; **57kg:** Manisha Bhanvala (Maharashtra Kesari) bt Alina Filipovich (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) 12-0; **62kg:** Dudova Bilyana Zhivkova (Maharashtra Kesari) bt Sarika Malik (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) 11-2; **76kg:**

Harshita Mor (Maharashtra Kesari) bt Jyoti Berwal (Tigers of Mumbai Dangals) 4-1.

Euro Leagues

Reuters
MADRID

Real Sociedad earned a pulsating 2-1 home victory over LaLiga leader Barcelona on Sunday, ending the Catalans' 11-match winning streak in all competitions.

Real Sociedad cuts short Barcelona's winning streak



Keen tussle: Guedes, right, who netted Sociedad's winner challenges for the ball with Barcelona's Kounde. AP

points, one point ahead of Real Madrid. Villarreal and Atletico Madrid trail far behind with both on 41 points.

In Serie A, a profligate AC Milan secured a hard-fought 1-0 home win over Lecce, with Niclas Fullkrug heading in a late winner to ensure it kept pace in the title race.

Milan is second in the table with 46 points, three behind city rival Inter Milan.

The results: LaLiga: Real Sociedad 2 (Oyarzabal 32, Guedes 71) bt Barcelona 1 (Rashford 70); Celta Vigo 3 (Carreiro 40, Zaragoza 54-en, Rueda 79) bt Rayo Vallecano 0.

Serie A: Bologna 1 (Fabbian 88) lost to Fiorentina 2 (Mandragora 19, Piccoli 45+1); AC Milan 1 (Fullkrug 76) bt Lecce 0; Torino 0 lost to Roma 2 (Malem 26, Dybala 72).

Bundesliga: Augsburg 2 (Claude-Maurice 47, Rexhepaj 49) drew with Freiburg 2 (Suzuki 60, Matanovic 62); Stuttgart 1 (Fuehrich 59) drew with Union Berlin 1 (Jeong 83).

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Press Trust of India
CAIRO

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Nitesh Kumar, M. Thulasi-mith, Alpha James, and the women's doubles pair of Manasi Joshi and Thulasi-mith also clinched gold.

ANNA



Jaded-ja?

The 37-year-old's poor returns with bat and ball in the 50-over format in consecutive three-match jousts at home, against South Africa and New Zealand, have put him under the scanner

R. Kaushik

There are some cricketers who, without even trying to, attract the spotlight relentlessly, through sheer weight of performance, yes, but also through presence and personality. In the modern era in Indian cricket, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli headline that list.

And then there are others that, despite their stellar contributions to the cause, often slip under the radar, the adulation that comes their way not commensurate with their exploits on the park. Maybe it's because they don't talk a good talk, maybe because they undersell themselves, or maybe because they aren't considered 'exciting' enough.

Driving force

Within the team environs, such individuals are held in very high esteem because their colleagues know what they bring to the table. At the end of the day, that's what driven, proud, committed players aspire for - the respect of their peers and their opponents, not so much what the hype-driven social media warriors think and propagate.

There are no prizes for guessing which category Ravindra Jadeja falls under. Nearly 17 years in international cricket? Wow, really? Is that how long he has been around?

Guess what. Really, yes, that's how long he has been around.

Jadeja earned his maiden India cap in February 2009, in a One-Day International against Sri Lanka in Colombo. India had already taken a winning 4-0 lead when Jadeja was drafted into the XI for the dearest of rubbers. The left-arm spinner didn't have a great time with the ball, none for 40 from six overs, but provided a glimpse of the potential that nestled in his still evolving frame with an unbeaten 60. Coming in at No. 8 with the Indian chase of 321 in tatters at 138 for six, he batted with authority and composure before running out of partners as India went down by 68 runs. He was only 20, the world, it seemed, was his oyster.

All these years later, Jadeja can reflect on what has been a wonderful career with justifiable pride. He isn't done yet - he is only retired internationally from the T20 game - but the plain-speaking, fun-loving yet private Jadeja will be the first to admit that he is much closer to the end of his career than its beginning. He isn't running on fumes, not by a long way, but Father Time doesn't stop for anyone and Jadeja is no spring chicken, having rung in his 37th birthday a month back.

Wait. Jadeja is 37, really? Yes, he is, really.

More visible

The raging debates in Indian cricket in the last eight months, since first Rohit Sharma and then Kohli announced their retirement from the five-day game, have revolved around these two generational batters and what the future holds for them. Jadeja has, typically, not even been in the fringes of these discussions, largely because not only is he still a Test cricketer too, but he is a very, very good one at that. Because Rohit and Kohli are only one-format internationals, and because the former is 38 and the latter 37, conversations have tended to focus on whether they will be in the mix for the next 50-over World Cup, in southern Africa some 22 months away. If Jadeja has been excepted from these conversations, it's because he is more 'visible', both

physically and performance-wise, on a more sustained basis.

Jadeja is one of those rare gems that Indian cricket has been lucky to be blessed with over the years. Even cold statistics are enough to present the picture of a genuine all-rounder - 4,095 runs (highest 175 not out) with six hundreds and an average of 38.27 in 89 Tests to go with 348 wickets (best seven for 42) at an average of 25.11, bolstered by 15 five-wicket hauls. A tally of 2,905 runs at 32.27 and a strike-rate of 85.54 alongside 232 wickets, average 36.54, economy 4.88 runs per over. In a now inactive T20I career, Jadeja finished with 515 runs (average 21.45, strike-rate 127.16) and 54 wickets (economy 7.13) in 74 outings.

Born in unfashionable Navagam-Khed in Saurashtra, whose emergence as a domestic powerhouse has been triggered by the brilliance of Jadeja and the now-retired Cheteshwar Pujara and sustained by the industry and commitment of Jaydev Unadkat and Sheldon Jackson, among others, Jadeja boasts upwards of 7,500 runs and 634 wickets at the highest level. This is nothing short of phenomenal, but Jadeja has never been considered a phenom. If that has bothered him, he has done an awfully wonderful job of concealing it superbly.

Jadeja the person is much like Jadeja the cricketer. Or is it the other way round? Simple, understated and with a no-fuss attitude, he keeps talking himself down when those with far less impressive credentials clamber on to the rooftops and beat their chests till the world is forced to take notice. How understated, you ask? During the home Test season in October-November, his opinion was sought on what he thought was the greater requirement of him - as a batter or as a bowler. "Easy," he replied. "When the pitch is good for batting, I become a batter. And when it is good for bowling, I am a bowler." How does one argue with this logic, stunningly obvious for its simplicity, for the innate understanding of strengths and awareness of weaknesses that have made him one of the most valuable cricketers in today's ecosystem.

Jadeja's evolution as a Test batter over the last half-decade has been exceptionally upwardly mobile. From the time he started to look at himself as a genuine batter rather than just a lower-order slogger - a shift in mindset that coincided with greater responsibility as he was moved up the order - he has been one of India's most consistent run-makers, at home as well as overseas. In England last summer, he was one of three batters, alongside skipper Shubman Gill and K.L. Rahul, to finish with more than 500 runs. Five half-centuries, four of them on the bounce, and an unbeaten, match-saving 107 (in Manchester) flowed beautifully in 10 innings, more than making up for a middling effort with the ball in singularly unhelpful conditions for finger-spinners. He backed it up with 104 not out in Ahmedabad in India's first innings of their short home Test season and 54 (in a valiant losing cause) in the final essay of the last Test against South Africa in Guwahati.

In a league of his own

A return to India sparked a return to wicket-taking ways. Even though India played five full bowlers, including three tweakers more than once, he snared 18

wickets in four games to reiterate his efficacy when there is even the slightest of assistance on offer. Jadeja the Test player is in a league of his own.

But not so much Jadeja, the 50-over all-rounder, one must concede. It's been more than five years and 29 innings since he last made a 50-plus score (66* against Australia in Canberra in December 2020) but that's not such a big concern by itself because at No. 7, where he has batted for most of those knocks, the opportunity to produce a half-century doesn't present itself often. More worryingly from the team's point of view, he has picked up more than one wicket an innings just once in his last 11 bowls - encompassing 90 overs - while his economy has failed to match up to his usually miserly standards.

These numbers have been exaggerated in the last seven weeks, in successive three-match series at home against South Africa and New Zealand respectively. Jadeja played in all five of India's Champions Trophy games in Dubai in February-March, where he didn't have a great deal to do with the bat though he did strike the winning boundary that took Rohit's men past New Zealand and to ultimate glory in the final. With the ball, he performed largely a holding job alongside Axar Patel, allowing wrist-spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakaravarthy to wreak havoc; only five wickets from 42 overs, sure, but only 183 runs conceded for an excellent economy of 4.36. He was subsequently left out - 'rested'? - for the white-ball tour of Australia in October before being recalled for the home outings, where he wasn't at his fluent best.

Soaring economy rate
In five batting innings, he eked out 99 runs but at a strike-rate of more than 90 just as a solitary time. His bowling was singularly ineffectual, the lack of wickets compounded by a soaring economy rate. Especially against New Zealand, India's bowlers came under the pump, mainly but not exclusively from the scything willow of Daryl Mitchell.

Jadeja's 48

overs in six matches produced a lone wicket, and was made to look even worse because he went at 6.21 runs per over.

Uncharacteristically, he dropped catches he would otherwise have gobbled up and missed hitting the stumps when it appeared difficult to do so, prompting the wags to uncharitably label him 'Jaded-ja'.

How much should we read into his frugal returns from these two series? The knee-jerk reaction will be to dismiss him as a spent force, which has been the case in several quarters, but are six matches, however disappointing, enough to dismiss the pedigree of Indian cricket's most prolific left-arm spinner in international cricket? Perhaps it has been made so by Axar setting a stall as a worthy replacement who has proved himself repeatedly. If the debate all leads towards the next 50-over World Cup, the edge is clearly with the younger man - Axar is only 31 while by the time of the African safari, Jadeja will be nudging 39. But India have shown in the past that they can fit both these similar types of players in the same XI, even if that has largely been in the subcontinent.

Like Rohit and Kohli, Jadeja has no international cricket until at least June. All of India's assignments in the next seven weeks are in the 20-over version - five T20Is against New Zealand beginning on Wednesday followed by the World Cup. The IPL, where Jadeja will represent his alma mater, Rajasthan Royals, this season, will allow him to stay in touch with the game, and perhaps rediscover his mojo and enthusiasm because make no mistake, recent patchy form notwithstanding, there is plenty of fight left in the bat/sword-wielding left-hander.

THE GIST

His 48 overs in six matches, versus South Africa and New Zealand recently, produced a lone wicket. It was made to look even worse because he went at 6.21 runs per over

In five visits to the crease, he managed only 99 runs but at a strike-rate of more than 90 just once

Uncharacteristically, he dropped catches he would otherwise have gobbled up and missed hitting the stumps when it appeared difficult to do so

Jadeja can reflect on what has been a wonderful career with justifiable pride. He isn't done yet - he is only retired internationally from the T20 game – but the plain-speaking, fun-loving yet private Jadeja will be the first to admit that he is much closer to the end of his career than its beginning



When the pitch is good for batting, I become a batter. And when it is good for bowling, I am a bowler.

JADEJA

SCIENCE

Scientists chase the tough task of building a graviton detector

Gravitons are the hypothetical particles of gravity. To detect if they exist is a painful task because gravity is a very weak force; a simple fridge magnet can overcome the gravitational pull of the entire earth to pick up a paperclip. If gravitons exist, they could open the door to a theory of everything

Vasudevan Mukunth

CHENNAI

The Stevens Institute of Technology in the U.S. recently said some of its scientists plus a group at Yale University will be building "the world's first experiment explicitly designed to detect individual gravitons". The announcement has already drawn sceptical attention from the physics community – but also \$1.3 million from the W.M. Keck Foundation.

The plan is to use an ultra-sensitive antenna of sorts to listen for the impact of the particles of gravity. The device of choice is a cylindrical resonator made of superfluid helium. The researchers chose this material because they can control it precisely at a macroscopic scale. To detect something as faint as a graviton, the detector must be completely free of noise, so the team plans to cool the cylinder down to its quantum ground state, where it will have no thermal vibrations. It will effectively be waiting in near total silence.

When a strong gravitational wave, for example from a pair of black holes merging together, passes through the detector, the theory posits that it could transfer exactly one quantum of energy, i.e. a single graviton, into the cylinder. And when it does, the energy will be converted into a mechanical vibration within the cylinder. Lasers monitoring the cylinder will watch out for this vibration, revealing when a graviton has been absorbed.

"This current project is for three years and we aim to have an operational system within this timeframe," Stevens Institute assistant professor and one of the co-leaders of the new effort Igor Pikovski told *The Hindu*. "It is unlikely it will be able to detect single gravitons then, but serve as a blueprint for the next iteration."

A bridge between camps

The graviton is the hypothetical particle of gravity. Scientists do not know if it is real but they have some reasons to believe it could exist. In modern physics, forces are transmitted by particles. For instance, when two magnets repel each other, they are actually exchanging streams of (virtual) photons. Physicists believe gravity could work the same way: if the sun pulls on the earth, it could be doing so by exchanging gravitons.

Another way to understand a graviton is to compare it to light. Light is an electromagnetic wave but at the smallest level it's made of particles called photons. Gravity acts like a wave – they're called gravitational waves – but at the smallest level, physicists believe, it could be made of particles called gravitons.

If gravitons exist, they'd open the door to a theory of everything. Currently, physics theories are split into two camps: general relativity, which explains the macroscopic universe like stars and gravity using the bending of spacetime; and quantum mechanics, which explains small things like atoms using the properties of particles.

The problem is that the maths of these two theories refuse to work together. If physicists find the graviton, it will prove that gravity is also a quantum force like the others – a bridge between the camps.

But detecting gravitons, if they exist, is painful. While physicists have detected gravitational waves, they've never detected a graviton. This is like detecting tsunamis but not being sure if water molecules are real.

Impossible detector

The pain comes from the fact that gravity is such a weak force. Gravity is one of nature's four fundamental forces; the others are electromagnetism and the strong and weak nuclear forces. And gravity is 1 billion billion billion times weaker than the electromagnetic force, the next strongest.

This is why a simple fridge magnet can overcome the gravitational pull of the entire earth to pick up a paperclip. Because the force is so weak, the coupling constant – a number with which physicists measure how strongly a particle interacts with matter – is vanishingly small for gravitons. So while a photon interacts readily with atoms, allowing us to 'see', a graviton would pass through matter as if it weren't there.

For a detector to 'see' a particle, the particle must interact with it. The probability of this happening is defined by its cross-section. But the cross-section of a graviton is so small that a graviton with a typical amount of thermal energy could pass through a shield of lead spanning billions of light years without being absorbed.



In this artist's illustration of two merging neutron stars, the narrow beams represent a gamma-ray burst while the rippling spacetime grid indicates the gravitational waves from the merger. (Inset) An aerial view of the LIGO detector site near Livingston, U.S. AFP/REUTERS

The experiment will use an ultra-sensitive antenna of sorts to listen for the impact of the particles of gravity

In a 2006 paper, physicists Tony Rothman and Stephen Boughn calculated what it would take to build a detector capable of registering a single graviton. Their findings suggested the task may be physically impossible. They figured experimenters would need a detector with the mass of Jupiter (2 billion billion kg), composed of 100% efficient sensor material, placed in close orbit around a neutron star, a source of high-energy gravitons. And even with this extreme setup, they estimated the detector would register one graviton event every decade.

To distinguish that single graviton from the background noise of neutrinos – the universe's second-most abundant particles and thus vastly more common – the experimenters also will need to shield the detector. But the amount of shielding required would be so massive that the detector would collapse into a black hole under its own gravity. It's a catch-22 in effect: any detector massive enough to catch a graviton would be too massive to exist.

Finally, the gravitons scientists have access to, from gravitational waves, have absurdly low energy: going by the LIGO instruments data, each graviton would have about 10^{-13} eV. Even if a single graviton did deposit its energy wholesale, the resulting increase is far, far below ordinary thermal noise and below many irreducible quantum noise sources in measurement.

(This is why gravitational-wave detectors can measure a classical wave, which is a coherent superposition corresponding to an enormous number of gravitons acting together, rather than individual gravitons.)

Breaking a wine glass

The Stevens-Yale idea is based on two studies published in 2022 and 2024, combining a theoretical prediction with advanced sensors. First, the scientists propose a gravito-phononic effect, similar to the photoelectric effect used in solar panels: that the cylinder cooled to nearly absolute zero will be able to absorb a single graviton from a gravitational wave.

This effect is expected to evade the difficulties posed by the Rothman-Boughn calculations. Rothman-Boughn assumed scientists would catch a graviton the way a wall stops a bullet. But because gravity is so weak, you need an impossibly thick wall. Instead the Stevens-Yale team is building a wine glass. An opera singer can shatter the glass not by hitting it with a rock but by singing a specific note that

matches the glass's natural vibration. Similarly, according to the team, if the helium cylinder is in a quantum state, the graviton won't have to hit a single atom but will interact with the entire fluid at once.

The resulting absorption is expected to create a single unit of vibration, called a phonon. The second study, in 2024, described a quantum sensor capable of detecting and counting these individual phonons in a massive object.

'Won't teach us anything'
Technologies based on quantum physics have already come a long way since the birth of the theory a century ago.

The mid-20th century had semiconductors and transistors and the subsequent revolution in information and communication technologies. Today, scientists around the world are pushing borders by actively manipulating individual quantum states, paving the way for quantum computers, satellite-based data encryption, and ultra-sensitive detectors.

But even if the technologies exist, the physics underlying the new idea has already met with at least one rebuttal. Berkeley National Lab theoretical physicist Daniel Carney wrote on X that "this experiment will not teach us anything whatsoever about gravitons. The signal can be explained purely through classical gravity."

The basic issue appeared to be two claims in the Stevens Institute press release: (i) that a device could register an event consistent with the helium having absorbed one graviton and (ii) that seeing such events would show that gravity is quantum. But in a 2023 paper, before the new idea came to light, Dr. Carney and two other physicists had argued that (i) can be true in principle but that wouldn't mean (ii) is also true.

"I've never argued that you can't detect a graviton, assuming they exist," Dr. Carney wrote in a subsequent X post. "I've only ever been saying that doing so would not teach us anything since you have to assume their existence in the first place to draw that conclusion."

Ringing the bell

Imagine a bell that can only do two things: stay silent or sound one ding. It can't sound half a ding or any other sounds. Now say the bell sometimes dings when a gust of wind hits it. Because of the way the bell is built, each gust either fails to ding it or dings it once. As a result, even if there's a wind blowing continuously, you get multiple single dings or no dings, but you never get a single, continuous dinging.

The press release is effectively saying that if a gravitational wave makes the helium device sound a ding, it would mean a graviton hit it. But Carney et al.

have contended that a single ding only would reveal that the device is either single ding or no ding; it won't reveal whether the thing that dinged it came in discrete units (gravitons) or was a smooth wave (classical gravity).

"The objection by Carney is a well-known old observation, dating back even to the photoelectric effect: it is possible to describe mere detection by a semi-classical model, which is what we also discuss in our paper," Dr. Pikovski said.

"Semi-classical" refers to the gravitational waves being classical and continuous whereas the detector detecting them being quantum mechanical and discrete.

To prove each single ding is really a graviton rather than a gravitational wave, the device would have to be capable of more than sounding single dings. For example it would have to have a pattern that only a graviton could produce, or at least a pattern that a smooth wave could never produce on a single-ding device.

First, detect

But Dr. Pikovski said their main goal is to detect the particles rather than unambiguously test "all possible semi-classical alternatives". "The latter is not the goal of a detector but requires further advancements," he added. "The historic comparison is the 1905 photoelectric effect insight on the existence of the photon ... versus the 1974 first demonstration of anti-bunching, which ruled out semi-classical alternatives. That would be a more firm test of the quantum nature, but not detection."

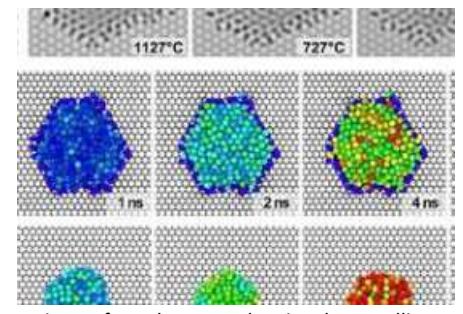
So then how will the scientists know if they've detected a graviton if it's also possible to explain that signal perfectly with a semi-classical model?

"In short: energy conservation," Dr. Pikovski explained. "If the detector 'clicks' it absorbed something from the gravitational wave. By energy conservation, this is the definition of a graviton. But one can now also study experimentally some of its properties".

"But to reiterate again, it cannot exclude all possible semi-classical explanations. In particular, one that doesn't conserve energy would be indistinguishable in this experiment," Dr. Pikovski continued. "Just like for photons, one then has more experiments to design and do in the (far) future to really rule everything else out. So it is never 'bullet proof', just a degree of empirical evidence that steadily grows. Which is always true in all of physics."

"Overall I think it's quite possible to have a successful graviton detection within a decade," he added. "But of course you never know, and there might be surprises."

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An image from the paper showing the corralling effect in action. ACS NANO, 2025, 19 (50), 42002-42012

New state of matter is a solid-liquid hybrid

Vasudevan Mukunth

CHENNAI

A new state of matter appears to be a solid-liquid hybrid, scientists from Ulm University in Germany and the University of Nottingham in the U.K. have reported in the journal *ACS Nano*.

The newfound material is not a slush or a gel in the macroscopic sense but refers to a specific atomic structure where different parts of a single nanoparticle exist in different states at the same time.

As a result, the nanoparticle displays the properties of solids and liquids both, but also unique behaviours that neither a pure liquid nor a pure solid would display on its own.

Conventionally, physicists assume the atoms in a solid are stationary while those in a liquid are moving fast and in random ways. The researchers sought to investigate the boundary between these phases at the nanoscale, specifically looking at how the presence of stationary atoms within a liquid nanoparticle influences the solidification process.

The most significant novel property the nanoparticle exhibited was the ability to remain liquid at temperatures far below the normal freezing point

The team used a technique called high-resolution transmission electron (HRTEM) microscopy to observe nanoparticles of platinum, palladium, and gold deposited on graphene, and complemented what they observed with mathematical calculations.

This way the team found that even when nanoparticles are in a liquid state, they contain individual metal atoms that remain stationary because they are confined to gaps in the graphene's network of carbon atoms. When a large number of stationary atoms aligned along the perimeter of a nanodroplet, they would effectively corral the liquid core.

Under the HRTEM microscope, the stationary atoms appeared as distinct and clearly demarcating features while the liquid core appeared transparent or blurry, since the atoms here were moving faster than the image capture time.

As a result, the nanodroplet could remain liquid at temperatures of 200-300°C, significantly lower than unconfined particles that crystallised only at around 500°C. The physical constraints also caused the supercooled liquid to not form a standard crystal lattice when it cooled. Instead it formed a disordered solid.

The findings suggest that the boundary between solid and liquid phases at the nanoscale is not as distinct as scientists have thought it to be.

The most significant novel property the nanoparticle exhibited was the ability to remain liquid at temperatures far below the normal freezing point. And when it did freeze, it formed a disordered solid that was chemically identical to the metal but structurally distinct from its natural crystal form.

This is relevant for scientists designing heterogeneous catalysts such as platinum on carbon. In fact, platinum on carbon is the primary catalyst in proton exchange membrane fuel cells and direct methanol fuel cells, which are used to power hydrogen electric vehicles and stationary power generators. In all these applications, platinum particles normally clump together or get poisoned and lose their effectiveness.

In a future catalyst, the researchers expect the corralling could pin the nanoparticles to prevent clumping while maintaining the active liquid or amorphous states, allowing catalysts to continue being effective rather than become unavailable.

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