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Battle for Delhi on Feb 5

Alok KN Mishra
and Paras Singh

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: More than 15.5 million people across Delhi will vote in assembly elections on February 5. The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced on Tuesday, laying the foundation for a high-voltage contest that will decide the future of the national capital.

The votes will be counted on

The elections will also be a crucial comment about governance in a city of 20 million people that has been caught in an acrimonious battle between two divergent power centres and wracked by crumbling infrastructure, civil strife, ethnic clashes and a string of gang-related cases.

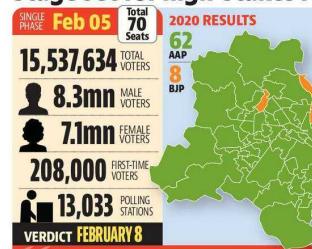
Deepak Kejriwal, AAP chief

CAPITAL CONTEST here. This diversity increases the responsibility of Delhites. I hope 'Dilli Dil Se Vote Karo' (Delhi will vote from the heart)," said chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar.

All 10 of Delhi's assembly segments will vote in a single phase and the incumbent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will look to retain power for a third term. It argued after two four-year staggered wins in the 2015 and 2020 elections, when it won 67 and 62 seats respectively. However, it has been beleaguered by corruption allegations and the arrests of its brass, including former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who

continued on →9

Stage set for high-stakes race



"Delhi symbolises diversity, with people from various states and cultures residing here. This diversity increases the responsibility of Delhites."

Rajiv Kumar, chief election commissioner

P Nadda, BJP chief

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NEW DELHI: Delhi chief minister Kejriwal said on Tuesday that the central government "evicted" her from the 6 Flag Staff Road bungalow, arguing that Atishi, who was appointed chief minister in September last year, failed to take "physical possession of the house almost three months after it was offered".

Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal occupied the residence till October 4 last year.

In a letter sent to Atishi on Monday, the state PWD offered the chief minister two alternative bungalows - bungalow number 2 at Raj Niwas Lane, Civil Lines, and bungalow number 115 at Ansari Road, Daryaganj.

However, Atishi hit out at the Delhi PWD and central government, saying she was "thrown out" of her official residence for the "second time in three months".

ALL CLAIMS OF POLL TAMPERING BASELESS: CEC

Aditi Agrawal

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NEW DELHI: Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday dismissed claims of tampering with electronic voting machines (EVMs) as "baseless". According to Kumar, the ECI has repeatedly vouched for the reliability of these devices.

Addressing accusations of voter roll manipulation, he said that all changes to electoral rolls are carried out following due process.

"From the preparation of electoral rolls to the counting of votes, there are about 70 steps where political parties and candidates are involved," he said. →9

POLL ON FEB 5 IN U.P.'S CRUCIAL MILKIPUR SEAT

LUCKNOW/CHENNAI: Milkipur assembly constituency in Uttar Pradesh and Erode segment in Tamil Nadu will go to the polls on February 5. The Election Commission of India (ECI) said on Tuesday.

Votes will be counted on February 8.

The election to Milkipur was necessitated after the resignation of Samajwadi Party leader Awasib Prasad Joshi the assembly to contest Lok Sabha elections.

The Erode seat in Tamil Nadu, meanwhile, has been vacant since the death of Congress leader VKS Elangovan last month.

Confusion prevailed throughout the day as some officials suggested that nine people were trapped in the mine and others said that the bodies were spotted on the surface of the ground.

"Prima facie, it appears to be an illegal mine," said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, adding that one person was arrested and a case of homicide not amounting to murder filed the man who operated the mine and engaged the workers.

→P10

Twist in bungalow saga: Evicted, says Atishi; didn't move in: BJP

become one of the focal points of the upcoming assembly elections.

The Delhi Public Works Department (DPWD) withdrew its offer to the 6 Flag Staff Road bungalow arguing that Atishi, who was appointed chief minister in September last year, failed to take "physical possession of the house almost three months after it was offered".

Former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal occupied the residence till October 4 last year.

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NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is expected to grow at 6.4% in 2024-25, a significant loss of momentum when compared to the 8.2% growth in 2023-24.

Driven by a slowdown in investment, this is the lowest this number since 2014-15. The economic slowdown in 2020-21 and also is lower than both the Reserve Bank of India's and government's initial forecasts - suggesting that the policy established in the budget did not match the actual economic situation. The budget also indicated that the slowdown in economic activity was inconsequential against headwinds to growth, including those generated by monetary policy.

How economic policy responds to these numbers will

be seen in the Union Budget, which is due on February 1 and the next Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of RBI which is scheduled from February 5-7. The former will decide the broad direction of fiscal pol-

icy and the latter will decide whether monetary policy finally makes an effective pivot and starts cutting interest rates. This will provide relief to households with mortgage payments as well

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NEW DELHI: Bharatpol and sys-

tems introduced under the three new criminal laws will empower Indian law enforcement agencies to "hit" offenders in just 15 days. Union home minister Amit Shah said at the launch of the new platform on Tuesday.

Urging the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI) to take the lead in implementing Bharatpol and ensuring widespread training on the ground, Shah said the new platform will improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement efforts.

"For years, Indian law enforcement agencies in India and fleeing to other countries have evaded the reach of Indian laws. How-

ever, with the implementation of

modern systems like Bharatpol, they can now be brought within the ambit of justice," Shah said.

Bharatpol, developed by CBI,

will bring all central and state law enforcement agencies on a common platform, streamlining the process of requesting for international assistance through Interpol, including the issuance of Red Notices and other colour-coded Interpol notices.

Letters@hindustantimes.com

GOVT APPOINTS V NARAYANAS AS NEW ISRO CHIEF

NEW DELHI: The government on Tuesday appointed distinguished scientist V Narayanan as the chief of the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro), according to an official release.

Narayanan, currently serving as the director of the Liquid Propellant Systems Cell (Lpsc) at Isro, is set to take over from S Somnath as the head of the Indian space agency on January 14.

HTC

Shah launches Bharatpol, on lines of Interpol, to widen scope of probes

Neeraj Chauhan

Letters@hindustantimes.com

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REACHED INDIA IN AUGUST

India extends ex-B'desh PM Hasina's visa amid extradition call by Dhaka

Rezaul H Laskar

Letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: India has extended the visa of deposed Bangladeshi prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina, 77, fled to India after stepping down amid nationwide

protests. She has been incommunicado since she arrived at Hindaon airbase on August 5, though it is learnt that she has been moved to a safehouse in Delhi. The interim government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought her extradition through a note verbal, or unsigned diplomatic correspondence, sent to the external affairs ministry on December 23.

The move to extend the visa

continued on →9

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Sheikh Hasina

AP/FILE

Nearly 130 killed as quake rattles Tibet



AFP

Damaged houses in Shigatse, Tibet on Tuesday.

Scientists have long warned that a massive earthquake is imminent in the Himalayan region which would trigger widespread destruction in the area but the predicted timelines vary from a couple of years to a century.

The quake's impact was felt across the Shigatse region of Tibet, home to 300,000 people. The region is administered by Shigatse city, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism.

Many homes in Shigatse city were reduced to rubble, video continued on →9

Forces join op as workers still trapped in 'illegal' Assam mine

Utpal Parashar

Letters@hindustantimes.com

GUWAHATI: An operation mounted in a remote corner of Assam on Tuesday as miners and navy personnel joined operations to rescue people trapped 300 feet under the ground in a flooded coal mine in the Dima Hasao district, marking the second day of frenetic but still unsuccessful efforts to save the workers.

This gave rise to speculation that some people were dead, but

officials denied an earlier report from the state information department that said three bodies were spotted on the surface of the ground.

"Prima facie, it appears to be an illegal mine," said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, adding that one person was arrested and a case of homicide not amounting to murder filed the man who operated the mine and engaged the workers.

→P10



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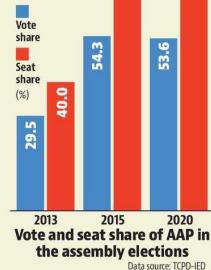
Can AAP win Delhi for the third time?

By Nishant Ranjan

Elections to the Delhi assembly will be held on February 5 and the counting of votes will take place on February 8. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) emerged as the second largest party in the first assembly election it contested in 2013 and formed a government with the outside support of the Congress, though that government did not last long. It won an overwhelming 67 and 62 assembly constituencies (ACs) in the 2015 and 2020 elections. Can it win Delhi for the third straight time? Here are four charts that try to answer this question.

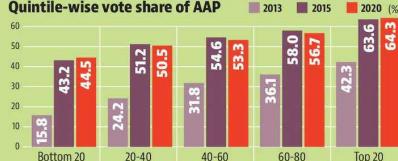
1 Did the AAP peak in Delhi in the 2015 elections?

A reading of vote shares and seat shares in the assembly suggests so. From a vote share and seat share of 29.5% and 40% in 2013, AAP won a massive 54.34% of the vote share in the 2015 elections leading to a seat share of 95.7%. In 2020 both the vote share and seat share of AAP came down marginally compared to 2015. To be sure, a 50% plus vote share, which is what AAP still had in 2020, is an extremely formidable number in a first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral contest.



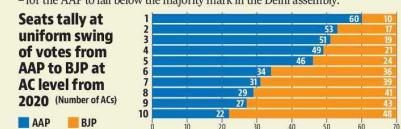
2 How skewed is AAP's support base in Delhi?

This is another interesting question. A headline vote share of 50% does not necessarily mean a party has similar levels of support in every AC. If this were to be the case it would win all seats in the assembly. The number of ACs where AAP had a vote share of 50% or more were 13 in 2013, 34 in 2015 and 48 in 2020. To be sure, AAP's vote share can be done by a quintile-wise (bottom to top 20%) comparison of its vote shares across ACs in 2013, 2015 and 2020. Data shows that AAP's vote share spread was formidable and consistent across four-fifths of ACs in 2015 and 2020. To be sure, it won ACs even in the bottom quintile of vote shares.



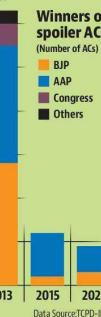
3 How much of a vote swing can make the AAP lose Delhi?

There are two ways to look at this question. In the 2020 assembly elections, AAP and BJP had a 9.2% vote share distributed between themselves, as the Congress vote share fell to just 4.26%. If the Congress were to remain where it was in 2020, then it would take just a six-percentage point swing – voters leaving AAP for BJP – for the AAP to fall below the majority mark in the Delhi assembly.



4 AAP also stands to lose if voters were to shift to non-BJP parties from AAP

AAP's debut in the 2013 polls produced a hung assembly. However, 2015 and 2020 actually led to an unprecedented level of bipolarity in Delhi's politics. This is what we look at this is the sharp fall in number of ACs with spoilers in the 2015 and 2020 elections. We define a spoiler as a party/candidate with a third position in an AC having a vote share greater than the winning margin percentage of the winner. In 2013, there were spoilers in 63 ACs. This reduced drastically in the 2015 and 2020 elections to 12 and 9 ACs respectively. Not only has the AAP gained from the polarisation of contest in Delhi – rise is basically a result of a decimation of the Congress even as the AAP has held its own. The number of ACs with the ACs where there were spoilers in 2015 and 2020. If the Congress or other non-BJP parties were to increase their vote share in these elections, it would definitely hurt the AAP. Will a potential anti-incumbency after having been in government for 10 years lead to a multi-directional erosion of AAP's formidable support base in Delhi? We will know on February 8.



{ MY INDIA } ON JANUARY 9

SC to hear same-sex unions' review pleas



A new five-judge bench of the Supreme Court will consider review pleas in the same-sex marriage case on Wednesday, a petition filed a day ago by a coalition of LGBT+ rights and legal advocates pushing for marriage equality. The bench, comprising justices Bhushan R Gavai, Sunya Kant, BV Nagarkar, PS Narasimha, and Dipankar Datta, will deliberate on the petitions in chambers, adhering to the practice of closed-door proceedings for reviews. On October 17, the top court refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriages and civil unions. →PHI

{ BUSINESS } TECH BOOST

Microsoft to invest \$3 billion to expand AI, cloud in India



Microsoft plans to spend \$3 billion to expand its cloud computing and artificial intelligence capabilities in India, targeting the world's most populous country to fuel its revenue growth. Microsoft chief executive officer Satya Nadella pledged the investment on Tuesday at an event in Bangalore, southern India, addressing a crowd of startup founders and executives from tech firms such as Wipro and Cognizant Technology Solutions. "The diffusion rate of AI in India is exciting," Nadella said. →PTI

{ WORLD } COMMUNITY NOTES MODEL

Meta abruptly ends fact-checking in US



Facebook and Instagram owner Meta said on Tuesday it's scrapping its third-party fact-checking program in the US, with its work being taken over by users similar to the model used by X. Starting in the US, Meta will end its fact-checking program with independent third parties. The company said it decided to end the program because expert fact checkers had their own biases and too much content ended up being fact checked. Instead, it will pivot to a Community Notes model that uses crowdsourced fact-checking contributions from users. →PTI

{ AFTER TRUDEAU'S RESIGNATION }

Front-runners for Canada PM post

Canada's Liberal Party looks to find a new leader who will become the country's 24th Prime Minister after Justin Trudeau announced his decision to step down from the top post on Monday. Here are the top contenders for the position:

CHRYSTIA FREELAND

FORMER DEPUTY PM AND FINANCE MINISTER,

She is seen as one of the top contenders to replace Trudeau. She quit the cabinet last month, criticising Trudeau in a public resignation letter. The 56-year-old has been an MP since 2013, when she left university to run for political office. Until her resignation, Freeland was considered one of Trudeau's most steadfast supporters, widely touted as his potential successor.

IMAGES: GETTYIMAGES

MARK CARNEY

SPECIAL ADVISOR TO TRUDEAU

Carney, 59, who has been serving in recent months as a special adviser to Trudeau, has been considered a contender for the top job. The Harvard graduate has never held public office but has served at the top of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England. He is seen as a champion of Liberal policies that have been unpopular within the country's conservative circles.

ANITA ANAND

TRANSPORT MINISTER

The 57-year-old lawyer entered the political scene in 2019 and was appointed minister of defence in 2021, leading Canadian efforts to help Ukraine in its war against Russia. She was eventually moved to the transport board, with many seeing it as a demotion. In December, she was made again during a cabinet shuffle, into the role of transport minister and minister of internal trade.

DOMINIC LEBLANC

FINANCE MINISTER

LeBlanc, 57, is one of Trudeau's closest and most trusted allies. He has a record of stepping into prominent and difficult moments, including becoming finance minister within hours of Freeland's bombshell resignation. The former lawyer has been a parliamentarian for more than two decades, having been first elected in 2000.

OTHER

CONTENDERS

François-Philippe Champagne,

minister of innovation, science and industry

Melanie Joly,

minister of foreign affairs

{ MAOIST ATTACK IN BIJAPUR }

IED was likely planted a month before detonation



Chhattisgarh DGP Ashok Juneja and senior CRPF officers at the site of Bajrang Dal IED strike in Bijapur.

HT PHOTO

These IEDs weighed around 1kg and 3kg," a senior CRPF officer said, asking not to be named.

Officials aware of Monday's attacks said the IED blast created a crater about 10 feet in diameter, measured about 8x10 feet deep. "The explosive used was powerful. The mangled door of the vehicle was flung almost 50 feet from the ground. A probe will reveal how Maoists knew about the route and the timing of the vehicle," he said.

"It is unfortunate that there was no intelligence regarding the IED placed on the Kurdu-Bedra road that killed 9 jawans. This is a case of sheer negligence. Maoists have planted such bombs along the road," the CRPF officer added.

"For us the challenge is racing such explosives. For them the challenge is getting specific intelligence about the exact time when we drive on such roads."

Lapses in security under lens after strike by insurgents

Vikas Tiwari and Ritesh Mishra
letters@hindustantimes.com

BIJAPUR (BASTAR): A number of security lapses, ranging from inadequate combatting operations to breach of norms, may have led to the Maoist attack on a vehicle carrying 10 jawans in Bijapur on Monday. Maoists of the Bajrang Dal, a wing of the Maoist group, had planted an IED blast in a vehicle in the early hours of Monday morning. The vehicle was carrying 10 jawans of the 1st Battalion, 10th CRPF, under the command of Major Ashok Juneja. The vehicle was carrying 10 jawans of the 1st Battalion, 10th CRPF, under the command of Major Ashok Juneja.

The Maoists blew up a vehicle killing eight security personnel and a driver who were on their way back to a base in Dantewada from an anti-Maoist operation in the jungles of Bijapur. The vehicle in the convoy sanitisers a certain length of the stretch of road. The vehicle in the convoy then moves beyond the first vehicle and clears another section of the stretch. This cycle continues serially with all the vehicles in the convoy. "By this method all the SUVs move on sanitised roads and there is very little chance of triggering an IED," said the second intelligence officer.

On Monday, only a few personnel were deployed as part of ROP, the officer said, adding that local DRG personnel and spotters should have been used along with paramilitary forces for ROP to identify the location of the vehicle and the frontal organisation of Maoists.

A DRG constable who was in the convoy that came under attack said eight Maoists were part of the assault. "Two Maoists carried out the IED blast while six others took cover behind the vehicle. Post-blast, the Maoists attempted to loot weapons from the forces, but the personnel in the last vehicle retaliated, preventing the Naxals from succeeding," said the constable.

PICK OF THE DAY

MY DELHI

IMD forecasts sharp rise in chill, rain on weekend

Jasjeet Gandhi

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Delhi is braced for colder days as the minimum temperature is expected to dip sharply by Friday on account of fresh snowfall in the mountains, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast. The city is also likely to see light rain over the weekend as a fresh western disturbance starts to impact the region from Saturday onwards, officials said.

On Tuesday, however, the minimum temperature was four degrees above normal at 10.5°C. This is forecast to dip to 6°C by Thursday and 5°C by Friday. The lowest minimum temperature recorded so far this season was on December 12, when it fell to 4.5°C.

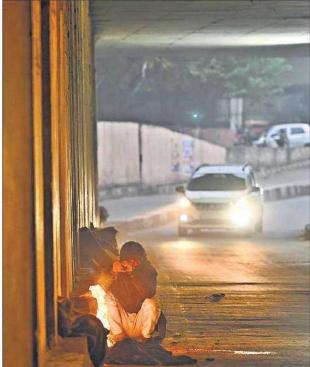
IMD has also issued a yellow alert till Friday, forecasting moderate to dense fog to persist in the region, accompanied with cold northwesterly winds which will lead to cold conditions in isolated pockets. Meanwhile, the maximum temperature stood at 16.2°C, which was three degrees below normal. The maximum is likely to hover around 16°C on Wednesday and marginally rise to 18°C by Friday.

IMD classifies it as a "cold day" when the maximum is 4.5°C or more below normal, with the minimum also being below 10°C. No weather station in the city met this criteria on Tuesday.

"There are no chances of isolated stationary fog recorded on cold day conditions as the maximum will hover between 14-16°C in parts of the city and the minimum too will be below 10°C," said an IMD official.

Delhi witnessed moderate to dense fog on Tuesday, with the lowest visibility of 150 metres at Palam at around 3:30am, IMD said. Visibility between 500 and 1,000 metres is classified as "shallow" fog, between 200 and 500 metres as "moderate" and below 200 metres is "dense" fog.

Maheesh Palawat, vice president at Skymet said the city is



A man warms himself by a bonfire on a cold Tuesday morning at Yamuna Bazar in north Delhi.

ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTO
STRONG WINDS HELP IMPROVE AQI TO 'POOR' LEVEL, MAY WORSEN

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Strong and consistent winds helped Delhi's air quality rise to the "poor" category on Tuesday, ending a streak of five consecutive "very poor" air days. The air quality index (AQI) stood at 296 (poor) at 4pm on Tuesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) daily national bulletin. It had been at "poor" a day ago at the same time.

Forecasts show AQI is expected to remain below 300 on Wednesday too before deteriorating to "very poor" by Thursday as temperatures are expected to dip. "Delhi saw its first 'very poor' category on January 8. The AQI is likely to be in 'very poor' on January 9 and 10," said the Centre's Early Warning System for Delhi.

Maheesh Palawat, vice president at Skymet, meteorology service provider, said the winds will again slow down. The moisture content will increase and this will lead to a spike in pollution once more," he said.

Meanwhile, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has written to Delhi and NCR state governments asking them to submit action plans for abatement of dust on roads and submit them before February 28.

witnessing consistent cold winds since Monday, will provide a chilling effect even during the day. "Even with sunshine, these winds will increase the chill factor and keep the maximum low. The minimum will also fall sharply again," he added, stating a rise in temperature is on the cards again. "We expect it to be above normal Saturday onwards as a fresh disturbance approaches."

"Winds will slow down once again over the weekend, but cloudiness and light rains will continue to the end of the week," he said. "The minimum is expected to be above normal in many parts of the country except some parts in east, northwest and west central India. The monthly maximum in January is likely to be above normal in most parts of the country, except some pockets in northwest, Central and adjoining east India, it had said.

The lowest maximum recorded so far this season was 14.6°C on December 27. Historical data shows the minimum in January can dip between 1-3°C. In January last

year, the lowest minimum was 3.3°C (January 2023), it was 1.4°C (January 15). The lowest minimum in the last decade was 1.1°C on January 1, 2021.

IMD is in its forecast for the months of January, February and March, issued on January 1, had said that north India is most likely to be above normal in most parts of the country, except a dip of ~90% of LPA. However, in January, north India is likely to see above normal rainfall (~122% of LPA), it had said.

Temperature forecast for January, meanwhile, shows that the maximum in northern India is expected to be above normal in many parts of the country except some parts in east, northwest and west central India. The monthly maximum in January is likely to be above normal in most parts of the country, except some pockets in northwest, Central and adjoining east India, it had said.

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Dr. Patangrao Kadam Saheb

Senior Leader,
Former-Minister (Education, Revenue, Cooperation, Industries, Forest, Water Conservation, Relief & Rehabilitation), Maharashtra State

Founder-Chancellor, Bharati Vidyapeeth & Bharati Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pune

Saluting A Legendary Founder on his
81st Birth Anniversary

Principal, Officers, Teaching and Non-teaching Staff



BHARATI VIDHYAPEETH,
PUNE

BHARATI VIDHYAPEETH,
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SPOTLIGHT CAPITAL CONTEST

'Concerns on electoral rolls, EVMs baseless'

Aditi Agrawal

<http://reporters@hindustantimes.com>

NEW DELHI: Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday dismissed claims of tampering with electronic voting machines (EVMs) as "baseless," stressing that the entire process has repeatedly vouched for the reliability of these devices. Addressing accusations of voter roll manipulation and EVM rigging, he emphasised that all changes to electoral rolls are carried out following due process, with political parties kept in the loop throughout.

Speaking at a press conference to announce the Delhi assembly election dates, Kumar addressed concerns raised by political parties over issues such as voter lists, voter turnout discrepancies, and EVM reliability. He reassured the public about the robustness of India's electoral process and the measures in place to ensure its integrity.

"For the preparation of electoral rolls and counting of votes, there are about 70 steps where political parties and candidates are involved," he said.

He urged political parties to refrain from making sweeping accusations and instead file specific complaints that could be investigated by the Election Commission (EC).

Kumar highlighted the scale of electoral operations in India, noting that there are approximately 105 million polling booths across the country, each staffed by four to five polling officers. These officials work round the clock in shifts of two-to-three days before they reach the booth and teams are formed," he said.

He urged political parties to provide records voter turnout figures, referred to EC's affidavit submitted in the Supreme Court regarding the general elections, explaining why exact voter turnout data cannot be provided before polling concludes. "With 1.05 million polling booths across India and disconnected EVMs, it is impossible to give precise voter turnout before the entire election is declared," he said.

He added that voters are given 6pm for those who arrive at polling booths before the deadline, with tokens issued to latecomers to ensure they can vote.

Kumar clarified that Form 1C, which records voter turnout, is provided to polling agents of all political parties, ensuring transparency.

He explained that discrepancies in voter turnout data occur because postal ballots, which are counted later, are included in the total, but are not processed until polling day. This, he said, accounts for the marginal difference between the preliminary turnout numbers and the final vote count.

On electoral rolls: Kumar explained the process of electoral roll preparation. Kumar noted that returning officers and district election officers, under ECI supervision, revise and update the rolls annually, with the final roll published around January 5 each year. "No deaths or births are recorded in Form 7. Even in cases of death, we have a record of the death certificate through the BLO," he said.

He added that political parties are provided with free copies of

rolls, and that the public can obtain them for a nominal fee.

Two copies of the electoral rolls – a hard copy with images of the electors, and a soft copy without the images – is made available at BLO level.

Before state assembly elections, the ECI conducts a Special Summary Revision (SSR), involving house-to-house surveys, physical verification by booth-level officers, and random checks by senior officials. Political parties, he said, are encouraged to oversee booth-level agents to approve booth-level agents to oversee the process.

On EVMS

Kumar reiterated that EVMs are not connected to the internet and thus cannot be hacked. He cited a Supreme Court judgment that upheld the constitutionality of EVMs, adding that "the technicality and deemed calls for a return to paper" ballots as a "regressive step."

He underscored the involvement of political parties in the entire voting process, including the sealing of EVMs, mock polling, locking, and storage in strong rooms. "All allegations of tampering are baseless," he said.

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These include the Mahila Samman Yojana, offering ₹2,000 monthly to women and their dependents in the city. The scheme has proved to be successful, though these freebies do not lead always to the real empowerment of women.

Once again, they will choose a leader from the party, rather than from the Janata party, said Sachdeva.

He added that the party is

confident in securing another victory in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections.

Hours after the Election Commission announced that the polls will take place on February 5, with the date of the assembly election framed as one between 'kaam ki rajneeti' (politics of work) and 'gaal ki rajneeti' (politics of abuses), in a veiled jibe at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has been the principal opposition party in Delhi since the last two elections.

Declaring that the AAP is

ready, Kejriwal urged volunteers

to face the opposition's formidable electoral machinery with a fourth term for the party.

"Delhi residents wait for a leader who has provided job-booths, electricity and ensured zero electricity bills, eases the lives of countless families in the city. The people will vote wisely and thoughtfully to make this a reality. Once again, they will choose a leader from the party, rather than from the Janata party, said Sachdeva.

The professor of political science at Jamias College said sops will play a crucial role in influencing voter behaviour. "Freebies resonate with a large number of voters, especially those from the economically weaker sections. The prospects of getting tangible benefits encourage voters to choose a particular party as they hope they will get something in return after the elections. The success of the party in the recent elections has proved this. However, these freebies do not lead always to the real empowerment of women," said Sachdeva.

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The three-and-a-half-minute song, titled 'Fir Layenge Kejriwal' (Will Bring Kejriwal Again), highlights the AAP's welfare schemes and criticises the BJP's policies on health and education, and Congress' for "spreading lies" about the party. It refers to Kejriwal as a "magician" for his governance initiatives.

"Kejriwal is facing an intense challenge from the BJP, as people are looking for some major development during his current tenure. He has more or less carried the same old policies on health and education, along with freebies," Ajeez said.

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'Ruthless' conspiracy: Delhi Police opposes bail to 2020 riots accused

Shrikrishna Kakkar

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NEW DELHI: The 2020 riots in northeast Delhi were the result of a "clinical and pathological" conspiracy, orchestrated by forces hostile to India, and carried out with "ruthless intensity," the Delhi Police told the Delhi high court on Tuesday.

Opposing a plea of student activists Gulfish Fatima, Sharjeel Imam, Umar Khalid, and United Against Hate (UAH) founder Khalid Saffi, additional solicitor general (ASG) Chetan Sharma, representing the police, argued that the scale of violence justified denying bail.

"The riots resulted in 53 deaths, including that of a police officer, and left 540 injured... This is the gamut, severity, spread of the violence," ASG Sharma said.

Citing Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, Sharma contended before a bench of justices Navin Chawla and Shailendra Kaur that the riots were a "well-planned" conspiracy.

"It is a case of clinical, pathological mindset planned with diabolical intention and ruthless intensity." ASG Chetan Sharma, representing Delhi Police

Constitution) is also available to those injured and those who are no more. Article 21 cannot be seen in isolation. This conspiracy was well planned, well planned and planned to be executed by forces inimical to India," Sharma said.

Northeast Delhi erupted in violence on February 23, 2020, following clashes between supporters of the then-proposed Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that left 53 dead and hundreds injured.

ASG Sharma highlighted the aftermath, noting that in addition to the deaths and injuries, 929 criminal cases were filed, and 560 homes were damaged, with over 220 crore demanded as relief to victims.

The accused have been booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), had approached the court for bail, which was denied by the Delhi court.

They argued that they had already spent more than four years in custody and that the trial's slow pace made prolonged incarceration unjustifiable. They also argued that it was not appropriate to be released on the grounds of parity with co-accused Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita and Asif

Iqbal Tanha, who were granted bail by the court in 2020.

The accused further countered that parity did not apply, as the Supreme Court, while upholding the bail order for those co-accused, explicitly stated it should not be treated as a precedent.

"That (bail order) shall not be treated as precedent so far as it has been met with judicial edict.

The decision (granting bail)

cannot be the basis of any

nuance of parity," Sharma added.

He also submitted that though the accused had sought bail, contending that there was no likelihood for the trial to complete soon, they were themselves delaying the trial.

"The trial is day-to-day from September 2023. The court is staying its trial," ASG said.

Mere delay coupled with the grave offences with which the accused have been charged,

is also a factor for denial of bail," he said.

Sharma submitted, was ipso facto a governing factor for bail.

Besides seeking bail on the grounds of parity and period of incarceration, Khalid had urged the court to release him on bail that the Delhi Police has yet to recover any physical evidence showing his complicity, while contending that he had been booked by the Delhi Police despite the absence of evidence in the form of text messages or calls with any of the co-accused.

Regarding Khalid's plea, Sharma argued that his appeal had merit, as no new material circumstances had emerged since his previous bail application.

"There is law to the effect that a second bail application is justifiable to the extent of facts and circumstances changing or

change in the factual circumstance making this (Khalid's) appeal a non-starter in law.

There cannot be or ought to be a second bite of cherry," the law officer submitted.

The court will continue hearing the matter on January 8, with the Delhi Police set to make further arguments against the bail applications.

Advocate Sahil Garg, representing Enviro Infra Engineers, informed the court that while

the municipality had deposited

₹92 lakh as fixed deposit (FD), the total amount owed under the arbitral award was ₹95 lakh.

In a December 12 affidavit, the executive officer of the Nokha Municipality stated that

₹92,24,050 had been deposited as a fixed deposit in the name of the district judge of the Commercial Court.

The November order had instructed the municipality to deposit the full amount with interest, as mandated by the arbitral award issued on Janu-

ary 21, 2020.

PTI

The heritage building is enlisted as one of the assets owned by the

Nokha Municipal Corporation in Rajasthan's Bikaner.

PTI

State-run DSCI fills critical infra gap: a microbiology lab

Ridhima Gupta

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NEW DELHI: After operating without a microbiology lab since 2020, the Delhi State Cancer Institute (DSCI), a government-run hospital providing cancer treatment at subsidised rates, has finally established a facility of its own to conduct routine and cancer-specific tests of patients.

Started in 2006, DSCI gets around 100,000 patients a year. However, in the absence of an in-house lab to conduct microbiology tests, including basic ones such as culture/sensitivity testing, stool routine etc., patients had to go on private labs or travel to other hospitals. This had led to delays and financial strain on patients.

"The routine bacteriology cultures and microscopy have been

shut since the year 2020. For some years, after the inception of the hospital, the tests were conducted at the hospital, however, due to lack of infrastructure, manpower and staff most of the labs were non-functional, forcing us to ask the patients to get the tests done from outside," said a senior official asking not to be named.

However, earlier this month, the microbiology lab was finally established, said Dr. Venkata Agrawal, director, DSCI.

"The lab aims to diagnose infectious diseases accurately among cancer and debilitated patients. By identifying the specific microorganism responsible for infection, healthcare providers can enter specific treatment plans according to the patient's needs, ensuring timely and effective interventions," she said.

Writing on the wall



Hidden amidst Champa Gali's line of cafes is a cruel reminder of the poison the city breathes daily. The mural in south Delhi's Said-ul-Ajib by contemporary artist Kunel Gaur has been made entirely using ink supplied by Air Ink, an organization that turns soot from air pollution into ink.

ARVIND YADAV/HV

{ RELIEF FROM DELHI HC }

Excise case accused gets nod to fly abroad

HT Correspondent

htcorrespondents@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court on Tuesday allowed businesswoman Sameer Mahendru, accused in the Delhi excise policy case, to travel to Dubai by suspending the lookout circular (LOC) against him.

Justice Vilas Mahajan permitted Mahendru to travel from January 9 to 16, 2025, directing the trial court to release his passport. "The petitioner is permitted to travel abroad... The LOC

issued against him is also suspended for the aforesaid period."

Mahendru sought a bail condition modification to visit his ailing 73-year-old father-in-law in Dubai with his wife and daughter. He cited his regular court appearances and noted that his legal team had received similar relief.

The enforcement directorate (ED) opposed the plea, arguing insufficient health documentation and Mahendru's required presence for the trial.

'Forces hostile to India'
The scale of violence in the riots justified denying bail to the accused, Delhi Police told the HC

February 23, 2020 riots
The riots had erupted in northeast Delhi following clashes over the then-proposed citizenship act that left 53 dead, hundreds injured

Accused facing UAPA
Student activists Sharjeel Imam, Gulfish Fatima, former JNU student leader Umar Khalid, and UAH founder Khalid Saffi

"It is a case of clinical, pathological mindset planned with diabolical intention and ruthless intensity."

-ASG Chetan Sharma, representing Delhi Police

City court extends stay on Bikaner House attachment

Arnavjit Sur

Reporters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Tuesday extended its stay on the attachment of the Bikaner House, a heritage building in Bikaner, Rajasthan, owned by the Nokha Municipal Corporation.

The stay has been extended till the next hearing on February 1. During the hearing, the municipal corporation urged the court not to release the amount to the firm until the high court issues an order for same.

Nokha is a municipality in Bikaner district of Rajasthan, and a heritage building in India's first capital —

Delhi's first capital in New Delhi — is enlisted as one of the assets owned by the municipal body.

The case developed after the corporation failed to pay Enviro Infra Engineers Pvt Ltd for constructing a sewage treatment plant in Nokha. On October 28, 2024, the court had ordered the attachment of Bikaner House following repeated failures by the municipality to disclose its assets or comply with court orders.

However, the attachment was stayed pending an appeal by the corporation. The court directed the corporation to deposit the amount in the form of a fixed deposit with the court.

Advocate Sahil Garg, representing Enviro Infra Engineers, informed the court that while



The heritage building is enlisted as one of the assets owned by the Nokha Municipal Corporation in Rajasthan's Bikaner.

District judge of the Commercial Court, Vidyas Prakash directed the judgment debtor (municipal corporation) to verify the shortfall. "Can this be a plausible ground? Why are you taking chances? You are the judgment debtor," the judge said.

Further, the court questioned whether any interim relief had been granted by the high court. The counsel for the municipality responded that the matter was yet to be listed for a hearing.

Advocate Sahil Garg, representing Enviro Infra Engineers, informed the court that while

the municipality had deposited

₹92 lakh as fixed deposit (FD), the total amount owed under the arbitral award was ₹95 lakh.

In a December 12 affidavit, the executive officer of the Nokha Municipality stated that

₹92,24,050 had been deposited as a fixed deposit in the name of the district judge of the Commercial Court.

The November order had instructed the municipality to deposit the full amount with interest, as mandated by the arbitral award issued on Janu-

ary 21, 2020.

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BATTLE FOR DELHI

made way for senior minister Atishi in September and has set up the upcoming polls as a referendum on his honesty and a governance model.

The AAP will have to fend off the charge of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was relegated to three and eight seats in the previous two elections respectively, and has not ruled the Capital since Sushma Swaraj's brief tenure in 2014. However, the party won all seven Lok Sabha seats in the city in the 2024 and 2019 assembly elections.

The Congress, which under former chief minister Sheila Dikshit ruled Delhi for four straight terms between 1991 and 2001, has regained some of its foothold in a city that once seemed to be an impregnable fortress for other political parties. The party blanketed in the 2015 and 2020 election cycles and had a presence in the Vidhan Sabha only in 2014, when it won eight seats and became the first ill-fated government with the AAP.

Kumar said around 100,000 personnel will fan out across the city and voters will cast their ballot in 13,033 booths.

AAP leader Koirala said voters will decide between the politics of work and the politics of abuse". "The people of Delhi will have faith in our politics of work. We will definitely win," he wrote on X.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said "this time, the lotus will bloom". He added, "We have a do-or-die fight against the leadership of PM Modi".

Congress in-charge for Delhi Quazi Nizamuddin said, "The party is fully ready for the election."

"We have announced the Pyari Didi Yojana under which we will provide free uniforms to our sisters. We have implemented such schemes in states where there is Congress government," he said.

The elections will bookend a bruising five years for the national capital, which has been beset by communal strife, crime, infrastructure collapse and a long-drawn government investigation by a raft of corruption charges that it has vehemently denied.

Governance of the national capital is split between the elected state government, which is in charge of all areas except land, law and order (known as reserved subjects), which are in turn under the Central

proceedings. However, the city has suffered across these fronts.

Trouble ballooned days after the 2024 elections, when on February 23, 2024, following clashes between Hindus and Muslims over the then proposed Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) that left 53 dead and over 700 injured. Weeks later, a national lockdown to stem the spread of Covid-19 saw the city down even as the number of infections increased and killed over 26,000.

And even as the city seemed to heal from those gashes, a seemingly ceaseless tussle for control of the city administration widened over the five months.

In October 2024, the Supreme Court allowed the elected Delhi government's power to appoint and transfer bureaucrats in the Capital in all areas except three (land, police and public order). However, the Centre essentially reversed that ruling in December 2024, later amending the amendment. The National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) Act came into law on May 19, 2023.

The Capital has had three tenant governors, who are appointed by the Centre, in Prakash Singh, Arvind Kejriwal and Vaishno Sena — and the acrimony between Raj Bhavan and the elected government has snowballed after the latter took charge in May 2022. Sena's office and the AAP government have clashed on nearly every policy issue, from the controversial 2024 Budget to the controversial 2024 Delhi civic policy, alleged irregularities in building hospitals, cleaning the Yamuna and, most recently, over two poll promises for senior citizens and women the party made.

What has led to such a deep divide in public opinion, becoming an albatross around the AAP's neck. An investigation into the policy led to allegations of corruption in the formulation and implementation of the regime that rocked the foundations of a party that was born out of the 2011 anti-government movement.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided several AAP ministers and leaders in connection with the case — including Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Raja Sabha MP Sanjay Singh. AAP member Vijay Raghav was also arrested in connection with the

GDP growth of 6.4%. This number was 7% and 8.2% in 2022-23 and 2023-24. The 2024-22 GDP growth of 9.7% was misleading because it came on the back of a 5.8% number in 2020-21.

While the latest GDP growth estimate is in line with the 6.4% forecast by a Bloomberg poll of economists, it is significantly lower than institutional forecasts at the beginning of the fiscal year. The 2024-25 GDP forecast, just presented along with the Union Budget in July 2024 — for example, projected a GDP growth of 6.5% to 7% for 2024-25. RBIs MPC started with a projection of 7% in April 2024, revised it upward to 7.5% in June 2024, and then made a downward revision to 6.5% in the December meeting. Even IMFs World Economic Outlook projected a 7% GDP growth for India in 2024-25 in October 2024.

The bottom line from all of these comparisons is the same. Almost everyone overestimated India's economic momentum in the first half of the fiscal year. India's quarterly growth rate fell to a four-quarter low of 5.4% in the quarter ending December 2024, from 7.0% in the quarter ending September 2024. And as a consequence appeared to take a back seat, nobody has suffered more than the average Delhi resident. The city's infrastructure has, especially since last year, buckled under the pressure of an ever-growing population and underweight of being the heart of the National Capital Region (NCR). Rainy wreaks havoc, with more than 50 people dying across the city — some in open drains others by electrocution. Notably, three UPSC aspirants lost their lives in July 2024 when they got trapped in the basement of a coaching centre in Rajendra Nagar that flooded during heavy rains.

All the while, Delhi has breathed toxic air, year after year, with pollution levels spiralling to new records in 2024, with few deep remedies in sight; even as rampant green law violations made the news.

GDP GROWTH as lower the cost of new investment.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) released the first advanced estimates of GDP for the fiscal year 2024-25 on Tuesday projecting a

GDP growth of 6.4%. This number was 7% and 8.2% in 2022-23 and 2023-24. The 2024-22 GDP growth of 9.7% was misleading because it came on the back of a 5.8% number in 2020-21.

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By sector, the slowdown is attributable to the non-farm non-government sector, which grew 4% in agriculture and allied activities and public administration, defence and other services is expected to increase from 1.4% to 3.8% and 7.8% to 9.1% respectively. The slowdown is particularly severe in manufacturing, which is expected to grow at 5.3% in 2024-25 compared to 9.9% in 2023-24.

To be sure, the slowdown in Gross Value Added (GVA) between 2023-24 and 2024-25 is milder than the slowdown in GDP growth. The central bank expected a 1.5% dip in 2023-24. The dip reflected in the latest GDP projection is 0.5%.

"Food inflation has finally begun to ease. Our analysis of 100 activity indicators shows that growth trends in the quarter ending December have improved, but remain below June levels. And the slowdown is particularly severe in manufacturing, which is expected to grow at 5.3% in 2024-25 compared to 9.9% in 2023-24.

To be sure, the slowdown in Gross Value Added (GVA) between 2023-24 and 2024-25 is milder than the slowdown in GDP growth.

The fiscal deficit target is to be met. What all of this means is that some of the growth momentum has been lost.

Whether this leads to a shortfall in revenue collections remains to be seen.

How will economic policy react to the latest GDP estimates which suggests that the economy is losing ground? The central bank has been debating this issue recently. The MPC for some time now with some members arguing for a cut rate while others including the outgoing governor Shaktikanta Das argued that the Indian economy continued to be "resilient".

The central bank's policy is likely to be more concerned than monetary policy as it has committed itself to future consultation in a quest to align the deficit target to FRBM targets. The July 2024 budget has set a fiscal deficit target of 4.9% for 2024-25 and 4.5% for

2025-26.

Independent economists expect monetary policy to support growth going forward in an environment which is constrained by external volatility.

China closed the Everest region to tourists after the quake. China's Xinhua news agency reported. Chinese President Xi Jinping said all-out search and rescue efforts would be carried out to maximize capabilities and to rescue affected people.

More than 1,500 firefighters and rescue workers have been despatched to the affected areas. Xinhua said. Some 22,000 items including tents, coats, quilts and folding beds have also been sent, it said.

The Indian government also condoned the loss of life and property in the earthquake. "Government and people of India express condolences on the tragic loss of life and property caused by the devastating earthquake that has hit the mountainous region of Nepal. Their

Government and people of India extend their sympathies and prayers are with the victims and their families," external affairs ministry spokesperson Bandaru Jaiswal said in a brief post on X.

On Tuesday, tremors were felt in Kathmandu, some 400 km (250 miles) away, and people in the city in their houses. According to the Nepal's National Emergency Operation Center, there were no initial reports of injuries or damage due to the quake.

The bed was shaking and I thought my child was moving the bed. I didn't pay that attention to the shaking of (a) window made me understand that it's an earthquake," said Kathmandu resident Meena Adhikari. "I'm still shaking out of fear and am in shock."

"I offer my prayers for those who have lost their lives and extend my wishes for a swift recovery to all who were hurt," said India's foreign minister.

One person was injured in Kathmandu when he jumped off the top of a house after feeling the strong tremor, Nepali Foreign spokesman Bishnu Adhikari said.

The quake also jolted Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, and India's eastern state of Bihar which borders Nepal.

Mount Everest is a popular destination for climbers and trekkers but winter is not prime season for climbing due to the snow level.

A German climber was the lone mountaineer with a permit to climb Everest but he had already left the base camp after failing to reach the summit, tourism department official Lijithar Awasthi said.

Tremors and aftershocks

Villages in Tingri, where the average elevation is around 4,000-5,000 metres (13,000-16,000 feet), reported strong shaking during the quake, which was followed more than 150 aftershocks with magnitudes of 3.5 and above.

Crumbled shop fronts could be seen in a video on social media showing the aftermath in the town of Lhase, with debris spilling out onto the road.

There are three townships within a radius of 20 km (12 miles) of the epicentre, with a total population of around 6,900, and more than 1,000 houses have been damaged, Xinhua reported.

Southwestern parts of China, Nepal and northern India are often hit by major quakes caused by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates. Since 1950, there have been 22 earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 or above in what is known as the Lhasa block, the largest of which was the 6.9-magnitude quake in Mainling in 2017.

Hindustan Times | MY DELHI

{ FROM PAGE 1 }

09

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER, DELHI
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PUBLIC NOTICE

GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NCT OF DELHI-2025

Single Window System for Issuance of Permissions During Elections Period

It is hereby informed to all political parties, candidates and other concerned that "Single Window System" has been setup in the office of all 11 District Election Officers of Delhi, for receiving of applications and to issue permissions/decisions to the political parties and candidates for public meetings/rallies/processions/loudspeakers and use of vehicles for election campaigning as well as use of non-commercial/remote/uncontrolled airports/helipads etc. to facilitate during the election period.

The procedure at "Single Window System" will be as follows:-

- a. The political party/candidate seeking permission has to apply online through the Mobile App "Suvidha Candidate App" or on ECI portal at suvidha.eci.gov.in at least 48 hours before the event along with details of Expenditure Plan in the prescribed format given in Annexure-D1 of Compendium of Instructions on Election Expenditure Monitoring (December-2024) (available on <https://www.eci.gov.in/compendium-of-instructions>) in accordance with the instructions of Election Commission of India.
- b. The political party/candidate seeking permission may also apply to the ACP (Permission) at Single Window in the office of the District Election Officer.
- c. A political party/candidate may apply through an application for permission in respect of those events/rallies/processions etc. scheduled to be organized within 07 days of making the application (excluding the day of application).
- d. Separate application has to be filed for more than one event on a particular day.
- e. In case an event/rally/procession etc. is to be held in the area covering jurisdiction of more than one Returning Officers of Assembly Constituency, then separate applications have to be filed to the ACP (Permission) in the office of concerned District Election Officers separately.
2. ACP (Permission) after obtaining necessary clearance, if any, from other departments such as fire, local authorities, land owning agencies, DISCOMS (Electricity), Delhi Traffic Police etc. will issue the permission/decision to the political party/candidate within stipulated time.
3. The permission/decision to the applicant will be issued on "First Come First Serve" basis from the Single Window only.
4. The application form can be downloaded from CEO's Delhi website at URL <https://ceodelhi.gov.in>

The above mentioned system/procedure shall remain in force till the completion of election process.

Following is the details of Single Window System setup in the Office of District Election Officers:-

| S. No. | Name of the District | Address of the Single Window | Name and Designation ACP/Inspector (Permission) | Mobile No. |
|--------|----------------------|---|---|------------|
| 01 | North-West | Room No. 17, Waiting Hall, DC Office Complex, Kanjhawala, Delhi 110081 | Sh. Krishan Lal , ACP | 9999631613 |
| 02 | North-East | Single Window, District North-East, B-Block, Ground Floor, D C Office Complex, Nand Nagri, Delhi 110093 | Sh. Subhash Chand, ACP | 6828401212 |
| 03 | South | Room No. 2, Saket Court Office of SDM Saket, M.B. Road, Saket, New Delhi-110068 | Sh. Subhash Malik, ACP | 9999024386 |
| 04 | Central | Office of District Election Officer, District Central, 14 Darya Ganj, Delhi 110002 | Sh. Rattan Pal, ACP | 9868557172 |
| 05 | South-west | Room No. A1, Multipurpose Hall, Office of District Election Officer (South-West), Old Terminal Tax Building, Kapashera, Delhi-110037 | Sh. Jaldhari Meena, ACP | 8527026535 |
| 06 | East | Civil Defence Training Hall, B-Block, Irrigation and Flood Control Department Complex, L.M. Bhandari, Shastri Nagar, Delhi-110031 (Near VREC, AC-58, Laxmi Nagar) | Sh. Brijesh Namboori, ACP | 9811917994 |
| 07 | West | Room No. 1, Ground Floor, Plot No. 3, Shivaji Place, Office of District Magistrate (West), Raja Garden New Delhi-110027 | Sh. Devender Kumar, ACP | 9968488783 |
| 08 | North | Room No. 3, Court Room, Office of the District Magistrate (North), Near Swami Saradanand College, GT Karnal Road, Alipur, Delhi-110036 | Sh. Joginder Singh, ACP | 6828402312 |
| 09 | New Delhi | Room No. 6, NDRC Building Complex, 12/4 Jam Nagar House, Shahjahan Road, New Delhi-110011 | Smt. Sanghmitra, ACP | 7011858485 |
| 10 | Shahdara | A-Block, DC Office Complex, Nand Nagri. | Sh. Gurdev Singh, ACP | 7678360538 |
| 11 | South-East | Office of District Election Officer, District South East, Old Gargi College Building, Lajpat Nagar-IV, New Delhi-110024. | Sh. Rajesh Dogra, ACP | 9599951091 |

This is being issued for the information, guidance and compliance of all concerned including political parties/candidates.

For voting, your name in the Electoral Roll is mandatory

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Race against time in Assam to rescue miners, ops intensified

Utpal Parshar

letters@hindustantimes.com

GUWAHATI: Anxiety mounted in a remote corner of Assam on Tuesday as army and navy personnel joined operations to rescue people trapped 300 feet under the ground in a flooded coal mine in the Dima Hasao district. It was the second day of frantic but still unsuccessful efforts to save the workers.

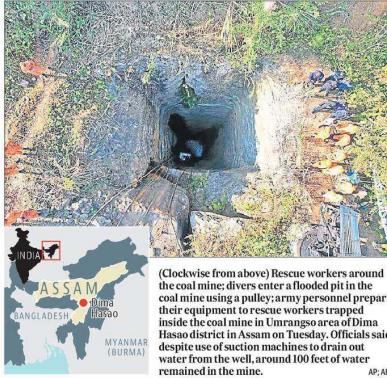
Confusion prevailed throughout the day as some officials suggested that nine people were trapped in the mine and others said that the number could be as high as 12. Despite the rescue efforts, hours after personnel from the Indian Army, National Disaster Relief Force and State Disaster Relief Force spotted some helmets and flippers floating on the water.

This is just one to speculation that as many as 12 people were dead; but officials denied an earlier report from the state information department that said three bodies were spotted on the surface of the water.

The only suspicion that gathered was that the deceased might have been illegal, as a result, potentially unregulated operations and no proper stocktaking made it difficult to ascertain the exact number of people trapped.

"Prime facie, it appears to be an illegal mine," said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, adding that an enquiry was launched and a case of culpable homicide not amounting to murder filed against the man who operated the mine.

"Teams from the Indian Army, NDRF, SDRF reached the site early on Tuesday morning.



(Clockwise from above) Rescue workers around the coal mine; divers enter a flooded pit in the coal mine using a pulley; army personnel prepare their boat to rescue miners trapped in a flooded coal mine in Dima Hasao in Assam on Tuesday. Officials said despite use of suction machines to drain out water from the well, around 100 feet of water remained in the mine.



AP/ AFP

Their divers have gone down the mine, but there's no trace yet of the workers," Dima Hasao deputy commissioner Shantanu Kumar Das said.

According to locals, around 40 people entered the well-shaded mine at around 9 am on Monday. The workers likely entered the mine because of flooding which soon flooded the mine. While most workers managed to escape, between nine and 15 people are believed to be stuck.

Officials said that despite the use of suction machines to drain out water from the well, around

100 feet of water remained in the mine.

A team of deep divers of Indian Navy from Visakhapatnam equipped with a remotely operated vehicle (ROV), a highly maneuverable underwater machine used for exploring ocean depths, arrived at the spot around 1 pm on Tuesday.

The divers from the navy did an underwater recce early on Tuesday evening. They have arranged for lighting in the area so that rescue operations can continue at night as well.

A 35-member NDRF team, led by commandant HPS Kandari, is

conducting rescue operations. The team has been deployed and engaged to rescue the nine labourers and a relief task force reached the site in Unmragong, a defence spokesperson said.

An FIR under sections 3(5) of the CrPC act done by several persons in furtherance of common intention (and the culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of BNS and Section 2(2)(v) of the Mines and Minerals Development (and Regulation) Act was registered at the Umragong police station, the CM said.

"I also spoke to Union coal minister G Kishan Reddy seek-

ing assistance for our rescue operation. He has promised to extend full support to Coal India to extend full support to the Assam government in this mission," Sarma said on X.

Dima Hasao superintendent of police Mayank Kumar said that the arrested person, identified as Purnendu Baruah, was in the mine and rescued the trapped workers. "A case has been registered, and an investigating officer is following the leads. The focus remains to rescue the workers," Assam Police Special DGP Harmeet Singh told reporters, at the site.

Top court warns against interfering in bail orders

Utkarsh Anand

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has delivered a strong message on judicial consistency, cautioning that it cannot "preach over the shoulder" when dealing with bail orders. Observing that interfering with bail orders without strong justification would undermine the principle that "bail is the rule, jail the exception," the top court emphasised the need to align its actions with its own established jurisprudence.

"Every day, we have been saying that high courts and other courts are reluctant in granting bail. If this court starts intervening in all such cases now, we will be pre-empting something else," remarked a bench of justices Bhushan R Gavai and AG Mashru on Monday, while dismissing a plea challenging an ODISA high court order.

The appeal, filed by the complainant in a cheating case, sought to overturn the high court's October 2024 decision granting bail to the accused. The Supreme Court, however, upheld the high court's ruling, emphasising that there were no "compelling reasons" or instances of perversity warranting intervention.

The charge sheet in the case has also been filed and the investigation is over. Why should be keep the man behind bars?" asked the bench, dismissing the appeal. It added that interfering with bail orders without cogent reasons could

court for one offence could still seek anticipatory bail in another case, underscoring the importance of preserving personal liberty in line with constitutional guarantees.

Similarly, in another high-profile case involving the Delhi excise policy investigation, the court scrutinised the use of arrests, asserting that bail must not be denied unless the prosecution provides substantial grounds.

The court also stressed that special statutes such as PMLA and UAPA should not be weaponised in ways that violate fundamental rights. It reiterated that the legal process must balance the prosecution's needs with the individual's right to a fair trial.

A September 2024 judgment by the top court underscored the importance of ensuring that the legal process does not itself become a form of punishment for the accused. This ruling highlighted the need for a prolonged criminal detention, even in cases involving stringent laws like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, or UAPA.

In a series of rulings, the court held that the right to liberty enshrined under Article 21 of the Constitution must be protected unless restricted by law. It has called upon courts to adopt a balanced approach, ensuring that judicial processes do not turn punitive in nature.

For instance, in September 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that an individual already in

THE APPEAL, FILED BY COMPLAINANT IN A CHEATING CASE, SOUGHT TO OVERTURN ORISSA HC'S OCTOBER 2024 DECISION GRANTING BAIL TO THE ACCUSED

set at a contradictory precedent.

This observation reflects the apex court's growing emphasis on ensuring judicial consistency, particularly in bail matters, where the personal liberty of individuals hangs in balance. The apex court has repeatedly emphasised the need to prioritise granting bail unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise.

Throughout 2024, the Supreme Court has consistently reinforced the principle of personal liberty over criminal detention, even in cases involving stringent laws like the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, or UAPA.

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For instance, in September 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that an individual already in

custody for one offence could still seek anticipatory bail in another case, underscoring the importance of preserving personal liberty in line with constitutional guarantees.

Similarly, in another high-profile case involving the Delhi excise policy investigation, the court scrutinised the use of arrests, asserting that bail must not be denied unless the prosecution provides substantial grounds.

The court also stressed that special statutes such as PMLA and UAPA should not be weaponised in ways that violate fundamental rights. It reiterated that the legal process must balance the prosecution's needs with the individual's right to a fair trial.

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HC suspends all mining activities in Bageshwar

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com



Cracks on the walls of a house in Bageshwar district.

The high court, which was hearing a suo motu case over reports on cracks developing in houses due to soapstone mining activities, has summoned the secretaries of mining and industrial development departments to appear before it to explain why mining was to be permitted during the new regime, removing the protection against the mining ban to the extent given to them.

Late in the night, KTR, as son of former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is popularly known, told reporters that he had approached the court and the Supreme Court, hoping he will get "relief" in the top court.

On December 31, the high court received its order on the petition filed by KTR seeking the dismissal of the FIR registered by the Andhra Pradesh Bureau of Crime, which alleged that the former minister authorised payments of ₹55 crore, most of it in foreign currency, to Formula E Organisation Ltd — the race organiser — without approvals.

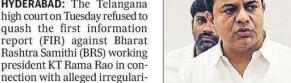
"After being appointed as stock commissioner to take realistic stock of mines in Bageshwar on December 28, I got to know that in four days later and visited mines at Kanda Kandu, Kama Tarp and of Kanda sub-division and mines of Reema area in Kapot," Dhulia, one of the court commissioners, said.

{ FORMULA E CASE } BRS LEADER MOVES APEX COURT

HC refuses to quash FIR against KTR, removes arrest protection

Srinivasa Rao Apparasu

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KTR Rao

High court judge Justice K Lakshman refused to quash the FIR, saying the allegations indicate that KTR directed the Hyderabad metropolitan development authority (HMDA) to pay huge sums of money to a foreign company without any approval from the state cabinet or the finance department.

"Whether the petitioner directed the said payments with a desire to help the petitioner to carry himself or for other purposes is required to be investigated. The allegations when read together make out a prima facie case of wrongdoing and misappropriation of funds of the HMDA," the court said.

"With my words, our complaint will be stronger than this setback. Your lips won't shatter me. Your words won't diminish me. Your actions won't obscure my vision. This cacophony won't silence me," he wrote on X.

Asking the BRS leader to come before the court, the judge said the ACB should have a reasonable opportunity to investigate the allegations and collect evidence. "Therefore, this court cannot thwart the investigation in the present case," he said.

On December 20 last year, the court had issued a notice to arrest KTR, a protection removed the court on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the ACB filed a caveat petition in the apex court in the Formula E case.

KTR has been booked for criminal conspiracy and criminal attempt to commit a cognisable offence by paying sums of money to a foreign company without any approval from the Central Board of Direct Taxes and the Finance Ministry.

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HT

LS Speaker Birla to chair CSPOC meeting in Guernsey on Jan 10

New Cong headquarters in Delhi to be inaugurated on Jan 15

NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla accepted the invitation to attend the opening ceremony of the House of Commons of Parliament, UK. Birla will also chair the Standing Committee of Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Commonwealth (CSPOC) in Guernsey on January 10.

Pranab Mukherjee's memorial to be held in Guernsey on Jan 10

Centre accepts demand for Pranab Mukherjee's memorial to be held in Guernsey on Jan 10

NEW DELHI: The Union government decided to establish a memorial for former president Pranab Mukherjee, the Centre accepted the demand for Pranab Mukherjee's memorial to be held in Guernsey on January 10.

The Centre is yet to decide on the land on which the memorial of former PM Manmohan Singh will be built.

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Bharatpol will help bring fugitives to justice: Shah

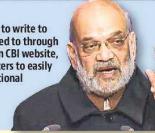
New platform for police assistance

Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday launched the Bharatpol portal to facilitate faster international assistance for agencies and speed up investigations

BHARATPOL

Broadcast Hub for Assistance and Real-Time Action against Transnational Crimes via International Police Cooperation

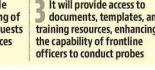
WHAT IS IT?
A platform which integrates CBI (which is the National Central Bureau or nodal agency of Interpol in India) with state law enforcement agencies and the Centre, for sharing information on fugitives, criminal matters and processing requests for Interpol notices



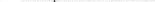
WHAT CHANGES?
Earlier, states/UTs' police used to write to CBI and any queries were replied to through letters. The portal, available on CBI website, will allow direct communication between officers to easily and promptly request international assistance from 195 member countries using standardised templates.

THINGS OF NOTE

1 The entire process will become paperless and faster now
2 It will enable easy drafting of Red Notice requests and other notices of Interpol



3 It will provide access to documents, templates, and training resources, enhancing the capability of frontline officers to conduct probes



4 Resources: Provides access to relevant documents and capacity building resources



The government has already introduced the provision of "trial in absentia" in the three new criminal laws. Bharatpol will facilitate prosecution of fugitive criminals even in their absence through court orders while ensuring a fair judicial process. "This provision will simplify the process of extracting convicted criminals from foreign countries to India. Considering the capabilities of the Bharatpol system, it is a step in the right direction," he said.

Bharatpol, developed by CBI, will bring all central and state law enforcement agencies on a common portal, streamlining the processing of all requests for international assistance through one portal, including the issuance of Red Notices and other colour-coded Interpol notices.

Shah stated that the five key modules of Bharatpol—Connect, Interpol notices, references, broadcast and resources—provide a technological platform to support all our law enforcement

agencies. "The government has already improved the overall law enforcement and effectiveness of law enforcement efforts."

Bharatpol is a paperless, real-time platform for assisting the prosecution of fugitive criminals from the states' police and central agencies seeking international assistance through CBI instead of using traditional methods of letters, emails and faxes.

Developed by the CBI, which is the nodal agency of Interpol in India, Bharatpol portal has been created for the states' police and central agencies seeking international assistance through CBI instead of using traditional methods of letters, emails and faxes.

At the launch event at Bharatpol, Shah also presented policy models to 35 award-winning CBI officers, who were honoured with the President's police medal for distinguished service and the home minister's medal for excellence in investigation, including agency's former joint director (policy) Amit Kumar — currently posted in Chhattisgarh police.

Rajith was the NCB (National Central Bureau) to rapidly share criminal intelligence and inputs from 195 countries with all law enforcement agencies. It will facilitate easy drafting of Red Notice requests and other colour coded notices of Interpol. This will lead to effective tracking of crime, criminals and proceeds of crime globally.

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Rajith was killed on October 3, 2005, allegedly over a dispute regarding the opening of an RSS branch.

In January 4, the additional district sessions court in Thiruvananthapuram found the nine of the accused guilty in the case while another accused, Ajesh, had died

in a road accident during the pendency of the case.

The nine convicted are — KT Jayesh (41), PP Ajendran (51), PV Rajesh (46), VV Sreeth (43), PV Srikanth (47), VV Sudhakaran (57), CP Ranjith (44), IV Anil Kumar (52) and PV Rajesh (51).

They were found guilty under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including murder (Section 302), attempted murder (Section 307),

unlawful assembly (Section 143), rioting (Section 147), wrongful restraint (Section 341), and voluntary homicide during hurt with weapons (Section 323B).

CPI(M) leader Jayavaran said, "He was just a young DYFI worker who was going home with his friends when he was hacked to death by the criminal elements within RSS/BJP."

DYFI leader Ranjith said, "In court, we have shown that he was not a RSS person. But the party and the families will together appeal against the verdict and prove their innocence."

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas platform to display arts, crafts of Odisha: EAM

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Pravasi Bharatiya Divas platform to display arts, crafts of Odisha: EAM

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KOCHI: Pravasi Bharatiya Swagamans (RSS) workers were sentenced to life imprisonment by a court in Kannur district of Kerala on Tuesday for the murder of Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) worker Rajith Sanikar in 2005.

Rajith (25), a member of CPM (ML), was killed in Kannur on October 3, 2005, while visiting the town from Kanyakumari.

Rajith's mother Janaki said she had expected the accused to get the death sentence. "Political parties must desist from picking up the bloody knife," she said.

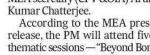
Advocate Arvind Jaisankar, representing the nine accused, said they were found guilty under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including murder (Section 302), attempted murder (Section 307),

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With PTI inputs



External affairs minister S Jaishankar visits Jagannath Temple, in Puri on Tuesday.

Odisha has chosen the dragon's S as the overarching dream of the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, said MEA secretary (CPV&O&IA) Arun Kumar Chatterjee.

According to the MEA press release, the PM will attend five thematic sessions on "Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers Stories of Migrant Skills", "Green Connections: Diaspora's Contributions to Sustainable Development"; "Diaspora Divas Celebrating Women's Leadership and Influence - Nam Sairi" and "Diaspora Dialogues: Stories of Culture, Connection and Belongingness".

"The Indian diaspora has an important role to play in the vision of 'Vibrant Bharat'. It acts as a living bridge between their motherland and their adopted homeland. That is why the government

is an apt occasion to showcase the rich and diverse arts & crafts of Odisha. Hope our Pravasi will also visit and appreciate our heritage and traditions," said Jaishankar commented on X.

A large number of Indian diaspora members from over 50 different countries have registered to participate in the event. Trinidada and Tobago President Christopher Carria Kangalo will also be present.

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With PTI inputs

US indicted 2 Indian firms for import of ingredients for opioid fentanyl

THE TWO FIRMS, BASED IN GUJARAT, WERE EACH CHARGED WITH DISTRIBUTING THE INGREDIENTS AND CONSPIRING TO DISTRIBUTE THEM

Pending trial, after prosecutors called it a fight risk and a substantial danger to community.

The Justice Department is targeting the supply chain in fentanyl trafficking, supply chains that span countries and continents and too often end in tragedy in the United States," US Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement.

Ramachandran, senior executive Bhawesh Lathiyang, 36, were charged with smuggling, and introducing misbranded drugs into interstate commerce. Lathiyang was arrested on Saturday in New York and ordered detained

for allegedly importing ingredients for the highly addictive opioid fentanyl into the United States and Mexico, the US Drug Enforcement Agency said Monday. Athos Chemicals and Raxuter Chemicals, both based in Gujarat, were each charged with conspiracy to distribute them.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid about 50 times more powerful than morphine and 100 times more powerful than heroin.

Opioids accounted for about 82,000 deaths in 2022, ten times the number in 1999, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Prosecutors said since February, the two companies imported "precursor" chemicals they knew would be used to make fentanyl, and hid their efforts by mislabeling packages, falsifying customs forms, and making false declarations at border crossings.

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MEHBOOBA SLAMS
NC FOR 'SILENCE'
ON CRITICAL ISSUES

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

SRIKAR: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday criticised the National Conference (NC) government in Jammu and Kashmir saying that despite having a clear majority in the assembly, it has done critical issues, including "unjust" employee terminations, rising unemployment, and has been resorting to policies that "divide and alienate" the youth.

Addressing PDP supporters on the occasion of its 9th death anniversary of her father, party founder and former chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayed, Mehbooba called for an end to what she said was "injustice against open merit students" while ensuring that the rights of marginalised and under-represented communities across J&K are safe.

Mufti said, "Despite holding just 16 seats, his policies focused on the people, establishing security and laying the foundation for a new era of development." Today, despite a clear majority, the government is silent on critical issues like unjust employee terminations and a harrowing process of verification."

With the sanctioned strength of 34 judges, the Supreme Court is currently short of two judges. Justice Chandran's appointment, if approved by the government,

Collegium recommends justice Chandran for SC; transfers 2 CJs

Utkarsh Anand



VINOD CHANDRAN AUGUSTUS BINO
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court collegium on Tuesday recommended the appointment of Patna high court justice K. Chandran as one of the two new top court. The recommendation came after days of justice CT Ravikumar, the only judge from Kerala in the apex court, retired on January 5, leaving a vacancy on the bench.

The collegium also recommended the transfer of two sitting high court judges—Justice S. R. Laxmi and Justice Upadhyay of the Bom bay high court was recommended for appointment as the chief justice of the Bombay high court in July 2023.

Justice Chandran, 61, earned his law degree from the Kerala legal college and began practising in 1991. He served as a special government pleader (Taxes) for the Kerala government from 2007 to 2011 before being appointed as an additional judge of the Kerala high court in November 2011. He became a permanent judge in August 2014 and served as the senior judge of the Kerala high court in June 2023, and was elevated as the chief justice of the Patna high court in March 2023.

Justice Upadhyay, born in

June 1965 in Ambedkar Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh, pursued his legal education at Lucknow University and began his practice in 1991. His legal career was primarily centred on civil and constitutional law at the Allahabad High Court. After serving as the chief standing counsel for Uttar Pradesh from 2007 to 2011, Justice Upadhyay was appointed a judge of the Allahabad high court in November 2011 and was elevated to a permanent judge in August 2014 and served as the senior judge of the Lucknow bench before being appointed the chief justice of the Bombay high court in July 2023.

Justice Aradhna, 60, began his legal practice in 1988, specialising in civil, criminal, arbitration, and company law. Over the years, he gained recognition for his contributions to legal scholarship, revising seminal works on administrative law and statutory interpretation. In July 2023, he took oath as the chief justice of the Patna high court. His proposed transfer to the Bombay high court is seen as a move to strengthen the judicial leadership of one of India's busiest high courts.

Justice Chandran's extensive experience and seniority.

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Kharge targets Centre, PM over inflation, GST

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Ahead of the Union budget, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday launched an attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the central government, saying that the inflation and GST burden, which was there if was a plan to increase public savings in the budget.

"Is there any plan to increase public savings in the budget? Or will there be a reduction in the赤字 rates and tax rates?" Kharge asked. "India fell

over. India is worried about economic slowdown. Nine budget consultations have no importance, when you do not intend to discuss how will the inflation reduce," the Congress leader said.

Kharge's political attack assumes significance as it comes ahead of the General Budget, which is likely to be presented on February 1.

Targeting the Bharatiya Janata Party, Kharge accused the ruling party of "looting" the public. "BJP's job is to loot the public and benefit its corporate friends," the leader of the Opposition said.

Kharge also mentioned the lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimate of 6.4% in the financial year 2024-25, terming it "a bad news for the country's economy." "The GDP growth estimate for 2024-25 has been revised downwards. It is expected that how the GDP growth will be able to reach 6.4%. This will be the slowest pace of GDP growth in the last 4 years," he added.



MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

ing the public will teach the BJP a lesson in the upcoming polls.

"Every person is troubled by the赤字 rates and tax rates. India fell over. India is worried about economic slowdown. Nine budget consultations have no importance, when you do not intend to discuss how will the inflation reduce," the Congress leader said.

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भारतीय स्वर्ग बँक
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA
www.rbi.org.in



Centralised Insurance of Bank's Assets -
FY-2025-26

The Reserve Bank of India intends to take Insurance Policy for all its properties (Office and Residential) and the contents thereof for the year 2025-26 (April-March). Tendering for the same would be done through e-tendering portal of MSTC Ltd. For further details, all the interested companies are requested to visit the RBI website (www.rbi.org.in). Any corrigendum/addendum/announcement etc. shall be posted on Bank's website only and no separate notification shall be issued in the press.

Chief General Manager- In-Charge,
Premises Department, Central Office,
RBI, Mumbai - 400 001.

Don't get cheated by E-mails/SMS/Calls promising you money"

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation
Kolkata Municipal Corporation - Sustainability, Hygiene and
Resilience Project (KMC-SHARP)

E-Tender Notice

INVITATION FOR BID Date : 08.01.2025

Kolkata Municipal Corporation represented by Project Director, KMC-SHARP, 1, Sector 1, Sector 1 Road, 2nd Floor, Kolkata-700 017, West Bengal, India invites eligible bidders to submit bids online in the e-Tendering platform of the Government of West Bengal (<http://wbtenders.gov.in>) for the Works of :

Development of S&D Network in Adjoining Area of Jada Ghosh Road & Salt Market in Bolpur Jagh XIV & XVI (Part of Ward 126 & 127) including Construction of New Water Treatment Station; Contract Package No: KMC-SHARP/OCB/SD/09/2024-25

Bidders may download the tender document from [https://wbtenders.gov.in](http://wbtenders.gov.in). Bid submission start date (online) : From 09:30 hours on 04.02.2025 Bid submission closing date (online) : Up to 14:30 hours on 11.02.2025

Min: Scheme for road accident victims soon

Soumya Chatterjee

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Union government will come up with a modelled scheme by March this year to provide cashless treatment for road accident victims across the country, under which each such survivor will be entitled to up to ₹15 lakh. Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari announced on Tuesday.

The scheme will be applicable to all road accidents caused by motor vehicles on any category of road, the minister said.

"The broad contours of the pilot programme are—victims entitled to cashless treatment up to a maximum of ₹1.5 lakh,"

he said. "The scheme is expected to cover a period for a maximum of seven days from the date of the accident," Gadkari told reporters, after the conclusion of a two-day workshop organised by MORTH, also attended by transport secretaries and commissioners of all states. So far, 6,480 people have been treated from the scheme in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, and Haryana, he said.

The statement comes soon after the Centre released the draft rules for public consultation, setting the stage for operationalising India's data protection rules. The act was notified in August 2022.

In an interview to HT, Krishnan emphasised that the data localisation provision is limited in scope and will not automatically apply. "This could potentially only be for certain limited categories of personal data and for certain limited purposes," he said, but disagreed with its broad localisation mandate.

Earlier versions of the bill had classified data into personal, sensitive, and critical categories, with different rules and obligations for each. The current approach, however, empowers the government to specify countries where data cannot be transferred under the act and through the rules allows a committee to recommend what personal data and "traffic

data" significant data fiduciaries must keep within India. "Traffic data" here refers to "flow pattern of traffic, speed, location, and other information" and the bill also worries that for certain kinds of data, we have to protect Indian interests. And this is true of every country in the world, and other western countries," Krishnan said.

"There could be concerns about how much data is held," he said.

Sectional registers like SEBI and RBI will retain their authority over cross-border data flows, in line with section 16(2) of the Act, and will not have to come to the committee proposed in the rule, he confirmed. Currently, financial data protection rules are in place for each. The current approach, however, empowers the government to specify countries where data cannot be transferred under the act and through the rules allows a committee to recommend what personal data and "traffic

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{ OUR TAKE }

Bruised Delhi heads to polls

The Capital goes to the polls after five years of acrimony that hamstrung governance. The new government might not be able to do better

For a city-state with a modest electorate, Delhi has always commanded outsized heft on the national political stage — due to the prestige associated with ruling the Capital and the fact that its population reflects the diversity of broader national demographics. It is in this city that a generation of senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders such as Madan Lal Khurana and Sushma Swaraj built their careers; it is Delhi that cemented the stature of three-time former chief minister (CM) Sheila Dikshit in the Congress; and it is the Capital that acted as the cradle for the anti-corruption agitation, the birth of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and the launch of former CM Arvind Kejriwal.

These elections will be fiercely fought. The AAP — whose frontline leadership battled jail terms over the past five years — will fight to regain its anti-corruption sheen and pitch itself as the party of civic governance. The polls will be a referendum of sorts on the AAP, which was born in this city and which remains central to the party's national ambitions. The BJP, hoping to repeat its Lok Sabha victory, has fielded senior leaders in what is expected to be an aggressive campaign. The Congress will aim to regain some foothold in a state it ruled for 15 years but one where it has nearly been wiped out. With the campaign already turning ugly, expect welfare, communal bars, and intense electioneering to dominate the next month.

This time, roughly 15.5 million voters in Delhi will head to the polls against the backdrop of unprecedented acrimony between the elected state government and the lieutenant governor who has derailed local governance and plunged the Capital into a morass of toxic air, crumbling infrastructure, rising crime and policy dysfunction. On issues big and small, the two centres of power clashed repeatedly and bitterly, unfortunately eschewing the welfare of the ordinary citizen. As a result, Delhi not only lost its sheen but also faced heightened vulnerability to problems such as urban flooding, power cuts, potholed roads, and water shortages, even as leaders of all shades appeared interested in scoring political points instead of serving their constituents. With a bouquet of petitions pending before the Supreme Court, there appears to be no end in sight to the tangle. A new government — whether it be the AAP scoring a third full term, the BJP ending a 27-year long drought or the Congress springing a surprise for the ages — may well find itself hamstrung with at least some of these problems. That is the depressing but seemingly inevitable reality of the Delhi elections.

Post Trudeau, Canada should reset India ties

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has decided to step down following a revolt within his Liberal Party and public opinion polls showing that the party is expected to be swept out of power by the Conservatives. Discontent with his leadership has grown within his party — a no-confidence motion was scheduled for this month — and his end was hastened by the surprise resignation of Chrystia Freeland as deputy prime minister (PM) in December. This marks a departure from the way Trudeau was feted when he came to power in 2015. The son of former PM Pierre Trudeau led his party to victory in 2019 and 2021; the shine had begun wearing off after his government narrowly survived a string of no-confidence votes.

It was under Trudeau that India-Canada relations plunged to their lowest point ever in several decades. Many experts believe that bilateral ties suffered a body blow during his disastrous visit to India in 2018, when a Canadian national convicted of trying to assassinate an Indian politician, was invited to official receptions by Ottawa, an outcome of the Liberal Party's dalliance with Khalistani separatists back home. The relationship cratered following Trudeau's allegation in 2023 that Indian agents were linked to the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The Indian side has maintained that Canada has not provided evidence to back up its accusations and that the Trudeau government provided space and haven to Khalistani elements.

The change in leadership in Canada offers an opportunity for a reset in bilateral ties. However, a real thaw is possible depending on the outcome of the Nijjar case, in which some Indians have been indicted, and when Ottawa acts against pro-Khalistani elements whose activities are inimical to the interests of both countries.

The Soros, Musk models of politics

Two billionaires, with two value systems, and two different modes of doing politics dominate public imagination. Rarely have two private citizens held this influence

Elon Musk's net worth is \$20 billion. George Soros's net worth is \$5.7 billion. Musk and Trump are both vying for the 2024 presidential elections, almost all of it in the past six months. Soros has given \$32 billion of his wealth to promote "open societies" globally over the last 40 years.

Both the world's richest man and the world's second-richest man are strong conservatives. Both claim to believe in free speech, democracy and individual rights. Both believe their convictions have universal value. Both are naturalised American citizens who appear to passionately believe in the idea of America as a home of freedom and opportunity. And both think they can change the world.

Musk is 53. Born to a White South African father and a Canadian mother in Pretoria, Musk moved to Canada and then the United States (US) in his 20s. Skipping a graduate course, he worked as an American in his start-ups before moving on to set up Tesla, SpaceX and Starlink, all of which reveal a remarkable

ability to think big and combine science, technology, geopolitics, Green energy and art. He gave his parents the Nazi occupation of Hungary, studied and worked in London, and then moved to New York. A refugee-turned-financial investor, he understood the markets, made the right bets and accumulated wealth.

Soros is a Democrat at home. He is a political liberal who believes in exporting his ideological worldview gleaned from his tutor in London, the philosopher Karl Popper. Those whose work on open society and its enemies remains a classic. Musk is a Democrat at home and a Republican abroad. He is a mix of a political conservative and political libertarian who too believes in exporting his ideological worldview, gleaned largely from his personal experience, to the rest of the world.

Since Musk's political donations to Democratic candidates at home. But his broader mode of functioning globally rests on shaping societies. Open Society Foundations support civil society organisations and individuals espousing values of human rights, democracy and social justice.

Through training and education, advocacy and exposure, institution-building and dialogue promotion, Soros promotes individuals, shapes through that, somewhat more indirectly, aims to alter politics to create what he thinks are open and just societies.

The American Right sees Soros as the invisible hand behind the Democ-



Prashant Jha

ratic Party machine, behind "woke" policies and independent activists. The global Right holds Soros responsible for promoting dissent in their polities, interfering in sovereign jurisdictions, and being a part of a wider liberal and American conspiracy to destabilise societies. The global far-Left, incidentally, is no fan of Soros either and sees him as a part of the broader liberal capitalist and climate-denial establishment by promoting incremental reform. Soros's sweet spot lies in the liberal and the centre-Left constituencies which see in him an ally in these adversarial times, called to justice, equity and minority rights.

Musk shattered all records with his personal donation to Donald Trump this season. In terms of possible American policy. With his ownership of X, the world's premier platform for political activists, Musk has the ability to directly influence conversations on a real-time basis both with his own posts and what people get to see on their timelines. And with his willingness to spend his money to bully Republicans in the US Congress to vote Trump into office, Musk is instrumental in the next election and donate to the Reform Party in the US. Musk can tangibly change outcomes. This combination of political influence, control over key technological levers, and financial muscle has given Musk the ability to decide what matters, whom, and who he favours to deal with.

Both American liberals and the Left see Musk as a representative of the dark finance of politics and money (and technology) that has enabled Trump's return and are horrified at the thought of him being a central figure in the conflict of interest in the dynamic.

The American Right was thrilled with Musk's backing for Trump, but as the recent debate in the H-B visa issue showed, the nativist base doesn't quite trust Musk's independent thinking. Globally, liberals and the Left view Musk as a threat to their societies, as a reckless and irresponsible conspiracy theorist and a relentless promoter of misinformation, and as a White

chauvinist backing the most extreme Right wing formations in their countries. Many have split into centre-Right and far-Right constituencies who see in him their most powerful ally ready to take on "political correctness", as someone committed to free speech, and a brave warrior against State overreach, and with younger somewhat non-political folks who admire the science entrepreneur in him.

This week, Joe Biden, in one of his final acts as president, awarded George Soros the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honour. But the broadly liberal Left political worldviews are 92 per cent Black and Brown who decided on the award and the 94-year-old recipient of the award believe in today faces its gravest challenge. Last week, Donald Trump ushered in the New Year with Elon Musk at his private resort, as both men continue to make political gains and reshape the nature of the American government in decades and to reshape the world in their tech-conservative-libertarian vision, one that is not just on the ascendant but is set to cause the greatest disruption of our times. In the story of Soros and Musk then is the story of the rise and fall of the dominant political ideologies of the 20th and 21st century.

The views expressed are personal



Elon Musk shattered all records with his personal donation to Donald Trump this season. REUTERS

Empowering women with cash guarantees

The launch of Jharkhand Mahila Samman Yojana (JMWS) marks a transformative moment for our state's journey toward women's empowerment and rural economic revitalisation. Now in its fifth month, this universal basic income initiative will provide ₹2,500 to 56 lakh women aged 18-50 every month, marking a bold step in continuing the legacy of Dishon Guru Shibu Soren's historic struggle against exploitative moneylenders.

The significance of this scheme must be understood against the backdrop of Jharkhand's unique socio-economic landscape. For decades, our state has faced a devastating impact of poverty, widespread debt, and families, with women bearing the disproportionate burden of debt-induced poverty. The movement led by Dishon Guru Shibu Soren in the 1970s highlighted how informal debt trapped generations in cycles of poverty, often leading to bonded labour and loss of ancestral lands. Through JMWS, we are taking a significant step forward in this struggle for financial liberation while specifically targeting women's economic independence.

Malaya Samman recognises the critical role of women in our tribal heritage while providing concrete means for economic agency. Women spend countless hours on domestic work, childcare, and agricultural activities. But their contributions have historically gone unrecognised and undervalued. JMWS not only provides a cash transfer acknowledging their vital role in the care economy and provides some measure of economic recognition for their work.

The digital infrastructure supporting Malaya Samman deserves mention. By leveraging technology for direct benefit delivery, we are ensuring transparency and efficiency while reducing leakages. This approach promotes financial and technological literacy among women and prepares them for an increasingly digital economy. The combination of financial inclusion and digital empowerment positions our women to participate more effectively in the care economy, particularly in rural areas where financial autonomy of women has traditionally been severely limited.

Studies indicate that women-directed cash transfers consistently lead to improved outcomes in family health, education, and nutrition. Women typically invest a higher proportion of their income in the welfare of their families compared to men. This multiplier effect transforms Malaya Samman from a simple welfare scheme to a strategic investment in Jharkhand's future.

The financial inclusion aspect of this initiative deserves special attention. By necessitating bank accounts of women for transfers, we are bringing millions of women into the formal banking system for the first time. This inclusion has cascading benefits — from building credit histories to enabling access to formal credit at reasonable rates. The impact extends beyond individual beneficiaries; it strengthens the entire financial ecosystem of rural Jharkhand while systematically weakening the grip of moneylenders.

The launch of Malaya Samman is particularly crucial in our post-pandemic context. The economic impact of Covid-19 has been notably gendered, with women bearing a disproportionate burden of job losses and reduced income opportunities. Beyond providing a crucial safety net, the scheme stimulates local economies through increased consumer spending. When women have more income, they are more likely to invest in their families, creating a virtuous cycle of economic growth.

Those who question the fiscal implications of such a universal programme must recognise this as an investment rather than mere expenditure. The scheme's cost is offset by multiple factors — reduced spending on crisis intervention, decreased health care costs due to better pre-

vention care, and improved educational outcomes reducing future social-welfare needs. Furthermore, the economic activity generated through increased consumption will boost tax revenues and create a more vibrant local economy.

Our approach represents a fundamental shift from a top-down, paternalistic model to a bottom-up, participatory one. Rather than imposing a paternalistic approach of deciding what beneficiaries need, we trust women to make the best decisions for their families. This respect for individual agency is fundamental to real empowerment. The regular income stream enables women to plan, save, and invest in ways that best suit their unique circumstances, fostering financial independence and economic resilience.

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We implement this groundbreaking initiative, we remain mindful of the challenges ahead. Ensuring smooth delivery, maintaining transparency, replenishing the state exchequer and increasing impact requires constant vigilance. We're committed to regular evaluation and adjustment based on feedback and outcomes, ensuring the scheme evolves to meet its objectives effectively.

Malaya Samman represents more than just a government scheme — it's a statement of our values and vision for Jharkhand's future. By empowering women economically, we're not only lifting up Suhbu Soren's dream of freedom from exploitative moneylenders; we're laying the foundation for a more equitable, prosperous, and just society.

Jai Jharkhand, Jai Hind

Hemant Soren is chief minister of Jharkhand.
The views expressed are personal

[VOLKER TURK] UN HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF

It is deeply disturbing that yet again we see an increase in the number of people subjected to the death penalty in Iran year-on-year



HT

The global dimension in New Orleans terror strike

The deliberate ploughing of a truck into a group of revellers in New Orleans in the United States (US) on New Year's Eve indicates how motivated and brutal the ISIS-inspired attack was. At least 14 people were killed in the attack by Shamsud Din Jabbar, the 42-year-old US army veteran who had hired the vehicle to commit the act of terror in the city's crowded Bourbon Street.

The incident comes at a time when most of the world's counter-terror agencies have declared that ISIS is gone. It confirms that enhancement with terror has come despite all the efforts of counter-terror agencies. The claimed actual numbers of ISIS followers and sympathisers in the world may be low. But statistics are neither accurate nor relevant. What is relevant is the depth and intensity of indoctrination that is directed against the young mind.

New Orleans once again demonstrates that law enforcement can never afford to relax its vigil. One needs to be alert to the signs of the ISIS-like cults and doomsday groups. The attacker's only qualification for enlisting with the IS was his willingness to die for the cause of his religion. What kind of safety measures can we, therefore, build against such limitless focus on the outcome rather than effort? Ethics do not figure at all here.

It is interesting to note that Volker Turk, the UN's World Trade Center twin towers, known commonly as 9/11, tells us that we cannot underestimate the prowess or venom of the modern terrorist who fights for their religion. The smartest and most well-trained law enforcement officer knows that even a tightly structured security system cannot withstand a coordinated attack of the New Orleans kind. Terrorists always have the upper hand because they pack an invincible and invisible element of surprise before the act of terror. This is particularly so when the militant is a so-called lone wolf and not part of a team. A terrorist's objective is to die for the cause of his religion. Criticism of security agencies for failure to prevent such attacks is often demanded because most recent acts of terror are the work of a sole deranged mind. A group operating in tandem is easier to infiltrate by any counterterrorism agency looking for information, but not so a madcap carrying out his design without any aide. Infiltration of a group no doubt earns enough advanced

intelligence on the plans of terrorist conspiracies. That is not available to outfit a determined terrorist who acts solo and is more than willing to give up his life to achieve his ends. Awareness and sophistication, combined with available technology, also pose the utmost challenge to the modern policeman.

Driving a motor vehicle recklessly into a crowded area is no new modus operandi of terror groups. Recent history is replete with examples of such attacks. This has now become a favoured form of attack by the terrorist who is looking for a gap in security arrangements but is unable to find one. He, therefore, resorts to the desperate act of driving into a hapless crowd. The added advantage for the offender is that he is able to cause maximum damage with minimum effort. This also satisfies the craving of a sick and indoctrinated mind constantly looking for opportunities to harm society.

A study of the attacker's profile every time an incident takes place is absorbing and is often useful to protect ourselves. There are however anomalies between the aggressors, but they are not identical.

Generally speaking, the offender has a disturbed home that contributes to early mental aberrations leading to a fascination for terror. The New Orleans attacker was born and raised in the US. He had no college degrees, computers, or a job. He was a fan of computers and regularly attended prayers at the local mosque. Interviewed after the incident, Jabbar's brother was categorical that Jabbar was a quiet and gentle person and had shown no propensity to violence.

However, our fellow citizens face the reality of this kind of threat. They are defenceless, unarmed, and law enforcement forces equal to the task of ferreting out lone adventurers determined to strike terror? These are poorly reasoned questions raised ad nauseam in public debate and newspaper columns. A credible response is that such incidents will continue to happen as long as animosity and religious intolerance persist. There are far too many fragile minds across the globe that believe violence is the only way to establish religious hegemony or eliminate economic inequality.

RK Raghavan is former director, CBI.
The views expressed are personal

RK
Raghavan

WORLD

Trump certified as 2024 election winner, set to become President

Prashant Jha

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WASHINGTON: America's capital woke up to heavy snow and freezing temperatures on Monday. The weather authorities issued an advisory warning people not to travel unless absolutely essential. Federal offices were officially closed. And private companies asked employees to work from home. But there was a corner of Southeast DC that was making history.

Up on the Capitol Hill, exactly four years ago, on January 6, hundreds of protesters, egged on by the then President Donald Trump, who lost the 2020 election but refused to concede it, attacked the US Congress. The first attempt in American history to block the peaceful transfer of power had been stalled because Trump's own vice president defected him. Mike Pence did what he had to do in his capacity as the president of the Senate — he presided a joint session of the US Congress at the end of a violent protest by a far-right electoral outcome in favour of Joe Biden. Trump lost, in disgrace.

On Monday, even as it snowed outside, lawmakers trudged up to inside of the US Congress and American democracy returned to the ceremonial, somewhat boring, ritual of the certification of the electoral results. But it contained in it were multiple ironies — the man who lost last time, and the woman who lost this time had to certify her rival's win.

Donald Trump, who lost the 2024 election and his won legitimacy. The US Congress that refused to certify him as the winner in 2020 went through its time-tested process, where the results from each state's electoral vote was certified. In the American system, where there is no room for a presidential candidate, they are actually voting for a slate of electors from the candidate's party in their respective states. Whoever wins the state gets to send the electors to the electoral college. And while the results were a major win in the electoral college is declared. The vice presidential election was certified by the US Congress on Monday.

Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee, who is the vice president and is the president of the Senate in that capacity, lost the election. But it was on her to certify the results. After the electoral vote all states were held be authentic and in form, and after they were tallied up, Harris said,



US Vice President Kamala Harris certifies the Electoral College vote as US Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (right) and Congressional clerks applaud during a joint session of Congress to ratify the 2024 Presidential election at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on Monday.



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau addresses a news conference at Rideau Cottage in Ottawa, on Monday.

AFP

{ CANADA } JUSTIN TRudeau RESIGNS

Ruling party to start process to pick successor

Anirudh Bhattacharya

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TORONTO: The process to select the successor of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will commence this week, but that person will face the twin challenges of a severely tarnished reputation and as well as the prospect of facing a confidence vote almost immediately into their tenure.

Following Trudeau's announcement on Monday morning in Ottawa that he intends to resign as PM once the next Liberal leader is elected, former cabinet member Sophie Ménard, in a statement, said its National Board will meet "later this week" and "begin the nationwide democratic process of selecting a new leader".

Parliament has been prorogued till March 24 and that will be the party with two-and-a-half months to complete the process.

This country deserves a real choice in the next election and it has become clear to me that if I run, I would not be the best option in that election," Trudeau said during his press conference on Monday.

But his successor will have to deal with a party that has grown considerably more divided over the past few years. As Union of Toronto political scientist Andrew McDougall said, "Avoiding the worst outcome is maybe all they can do."

"Can they turn it around?

Maybe, but I think it will be a very hard lift," he added.

Long-time allies will be former deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland, who may have precipitated the crisis with her shock resignation on December 16. Freeland entered politics in 2015 as a member of the Liberal Party and is closely associated with him and the incumbent government so "that will hurt her," McDougall said. What may help is that "she broke with him in such a public way".

Other Cabinet ministers face the same problem of association, including Dominic LeBlanc, Anita Anand, Mélanie Joly and François-Philippe Champagne. Former Bank of Canada (and Bank of England) governor Mark Carney is another potential choice, but the question will be whether he is still interested in "retail politics". Carney said on Monday he is considering running for the leadership.

The opposition is in no mood to oblige, as Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre posted,

"Now that Justin Trudeau's Liberal MP and Leadership contender supported EVERYTHING Trudeau did for 9 years, and now they want to trick voters by swapping in another Liberal face to keep ripping off Canadians for another 4 years, just like Justin."

New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh said, "The Liberals do not deserve another chance, matter who is the leader."



Investigators get new warrant to arrest Prez Yoon

SEOUL: South Korean anti-corruption investigators got a new court-ordered arrest warrant on Tuesday for impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, whose failed martial law bid threw the country into turmoil.

AFP

Kim says new

hypersonic missile

will deter 'rivals'

SEOUL: North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un said it tested a new hypersonic missile on Monday and aimed at deterring the country's Pacific "rivals", state media reported on Tuesday, as Washington's top diplomat visited the region.

REUTERS

B'desh: Khaleda Zia visiting London for medical treatment

DHAKA: Bangladesh's former prime minister Khaleda Zia left the nation's capital for London on Tuesday for medical treatment, leaving behind a nation grappling with uncertainty over its political future.

AFP

Zelensky says nearly 15,000 Russians killed in Kursk ops

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday that Russia had suffered heavy losses in five months of fighting. Ukrainian forces in southern Russia's Kursk region, with nearly 15,000 killed.

REUTERS

U.S. RECORDS ITS FIRST HUMAN DEATH LINKED TO BIRD FLU

Agence France-Presse

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WASHINGTON: Louisiana health authorities on Monday reported the first human death in the United States linked to bird flu, with noting the patient had underlying health conditions and that general risks to the public remained "low".

The patient, aged over 65, had been hospitalized in the southern state since at least mid-December, when the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced it as the country's first serious case of human infection from the H5N1 virus.

"While the current public health risk for the general public remains low, people who work with birds, especially live or cooked, or have recreational exposure to them, are at higher risk," the Louisiana Department of Health said in a statement announcing the death.

It said the patient had "contracted H5N1 and experienced a combination of fever, chills, back pain, diarrhea, and difficulty breathing", but had detected no further H5N1 infections nor evidence of person-to-person transmission in the state.

The news comes just days after the federal government awarded a total of almost \$300 million to bolster H5N1 surveillance programmes and research, amid some criticism for President Joe Biden's administration over its response to the emerging issue.

The far-right figurehead Jean-Marie Le Pen died



FRANCE } DIES AGED 96

Far-Right figurehead Jean-Marie Le Pen dies

Agence France-Presse

letters@hindustantimes.com

PARIS: Jean-Marie Le Pen, who died on Tuesday aged 96, was the far-right bogeyman of French politics, infamously missing the Holocaust and spending a lifetime of history and spending a half a century whipping up xenophobia.

The co-founder of the far-right National Front — later renamed the National Rally (RN) — was eventually booted out of the party by his daughter Marine for anti-Semitism.

A former paratrooper, Le Pen sent shock waves through the far-right when he claimed the Nazi occupation of the northern half of France in World War II was "not particularly inhumane".

But it was comments on the Holocaust — a detail of history that caused the most shock.

The remark earned him the nickname the "Devil of the Republic" and one of a string of convictions for anti-Semitism and racism.

Le Pen, who seemed more a threat in the role of provocateur than would be president, appeared surprised as ever, one day after his spectacular breakthrough.

Years later, he boasted that the rise of the far-Right around Europe showed his ideas had gone mainstream.

Indonesia joins Brics bloc

SAO PAULO: Indonesia will formally join Brics as a full member, Brazil's government said on Monday, further expanding the group of major emerging economies that also includes India, China and South Africa.

Indonesia's foreign ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that it welcomed the announcement and that "Brics membership is a strategic way to increase collaboration and partnership with other developing nations".

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, had previously expressed its desire to

join the group as a means of strengthening emerging countries and furthering the interests of the so-called Global South.

Brazil, which holds the bloc's presidency in 2025, said in a statement that member states approved Indonesia's entry by consensus as part of an expansion push initially endorsed at the 2023 Brics summit in Johannesburg.

The South American nation noted that Jakarta's bid got the green light from the bloc in 2023 but the Southeast Asian country asked to join following the need for a formal invitation.

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AGENCIES

{ WEATHER } OVER 2,500 U.S. FLIGHTS CANCELLED

Winter storm hits vast swathes of east, central US, 5 killed



National Park Service workers shovel a pathway during a winter storm at the White House, in Washington, on Monday.

Agencies

letters@hindustantimes.com

WASHINGTON: A major storm system blanketed a large swathe of the central and eastern United States in snow and ice — disrupting travel for millions and contributing to at least five deaths.

Over 2,500 flights were cancelled on Monday with 6,500 more delayed amid the winter storm, tracking website FlightAware showed, compounding similar air travel headaches from the day before.

Round-trip flight fares at National Airport reported that about 58% of arrivals and 70% of departures had been canceled.

Meanwhile, nearly 250,000 customers remained without power in Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, West Virginia, Illinois, and Missouri as frigid temperatures settled on Monday night, according to Poweroutage.us, another tracking site. The National Weather Ser-

vice (NWS) said the event, the country's first major winter storm of the year, "will be quickly exiting eastward into the western Atlantic tonight", but that some small snowfall accumulations would continue to be possible in some mountainous areas of Mid-Atlantic.

Behind those areas, there was expected to be frigid temperatures for days, with cities such as Kansas City expecting wind-chills below zero degrees Fahrenheit (-17 degrees Celsius).

The mercury could sink tens of degrees below seasonal norms in the Gulf Coast.

President Joe Biden was closely monitoring the severe weather and ready to support affected states, a White House spokesman said.

Several governors and local officials issued alerts in Kentucky, Missouri, Virginia and Maryland, have declared states of emergency and urged residents to stay home while emergency management works to clear roads.

Government of Punjab

| The Department of | Punjab Water Supply and Sewerage Division No. 2 Amritsar invites Bid for Civil Work. |
|--|---|
| Sr. Tender Reference No. and Dated | Pre-Bid Meeting work wise |
| 1. Tender Reference No.:~ EE PWSSD/2/Amritsar/ 01/2025 Date: 07/01/2025 | Dated 13.01.2025 Time: 11:00 PM At O/o Superintendent Engineer, Pb. W/S & Sew. Circ. Amritsar, National Multispeciality Hospital, Hide Market, Amritsar. Mob. 83609-07229, Email - sewgsender2@gmail.com . |
| 2. Tender Reference No.:~ EE PWSSD/2/Amritsar/ 02/2025 Date: 07/01/2025 | Dated 18.01.2025 Time: 11:00 PM At O/o Superintendent Engineer, Pb. W/S & Sew. Circ. Amritsar, National Multispeciality Hospital, Hide Market, Amritsar. Mob. 83609-07229, Email - sewgsender2@gmail.com . |

For Detail login to : <https://ezos.naukri.aawz.in>
Note:- Any Corrigendum(s)/addendum, to the Tender notice shall be published on the above website only.

Executive Engineer
Punjab W/S & Sew. Division No. 2
Amritsar
40543

THE COURT OF SPECIAL JUDGE, ANTI-CORRUPTION, CBI WEST LUCKNOW/SPECIAL COURT PMLA

NOTICE UNDER SECOND PROVISO TO SUB-SECTION 8 OF SECTION 8 OF PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT, 2002

In compliance of Hon'ble High Court Order dt 16.12.2024 in the matter of Criminal Misc. Writ Petition No. 1834 of 2021 and on request of Directorate of Enforcement, Lucknow Zonal Office, Lucknow; in exercise of the power conferred by second proviso to sub-section 8 of section 8 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (15 of 2003), to consider the claim of the claimants under second proviso to sub-section 8 of section 8 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (15 of 2003) for the purpose of restoration of properties prayed for confiscation by the ED, Lucknow in case of Shincity Group & Others (Session Case No. 1008/2024, 1321/2024, 2249/2024, 1386/2024 and 2352/2024) this proclamation is hereby made for claimants who claim to have a legitimate interest in such properties of Shincity Group & Others or part thereof, to be submitted alongwith the requisite documents to the concerned court and establish their claim, if any, for restoration of such properties or part thereof within two months from the date of publication of this proclamation.

Place: Lucknow

Date: 08.01.2025

Special Judge
Anti-Corruption, CBI (West)/
Special Court, PMLA

कार्यालय नगर निगम, बरेली।

पत्रक: 11/50 संभिका (दस्तावेजोंपैरी) 2024-25

दिनांक: 07/01/2025

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा आवधन सुचना

ई-निविदा सुचना सामाजिक दृश्य-03-3890 / गौ-5-14934 / 2019 नम्र विवाह अनुभाग-05 उत्तरप्रदेश नगर निगम दिवाकर 2024 के अनुसार मेरे टेक्निकल से निम्न कारों हैं इन्विडियों द्वितीय पहली (ताकानी प्रथा विविदा) के माध्यम से निम्न प्रकार से आवधन की जाती है। ई-निविदा प्रत्र उत्तर प्रदेश की ई-प्रक्रमेन्ट की वेबसाइट <http://etender.upnic.in> व नगर निगम की वेबसाइट www.nagarnigambareilly.com पर देखी जा सकती है।

नेशनल कॉर्स एवं प्रोग्राम (N-CAP) के अन्तर्गत चंचल वार ई-निविदा क्रमांक: संख्या 01 से 06 तक)

ई-निविदा अल्पकालीन प्राप्ति की विधि/समय 09.01.2025 - (03:00 PM)

ई-निविदा अल्पोड़ की प्राप्ति विधि/समय 09.01.2025 - (04:00 PM)

ई-निविदा अपलोड की अनिवार्य विधि/समय 17.01.2025 - (03:00 PM)

ई-निविदा खाली जाने की विधि/समय 17.01.2025 - (04:00 PM)

फॉइनेशियल ई-निविदा खाली जाने हेतु After Technical Evaluation

कार्यालय का विवरण, निम्न व वारे नगर निगम वर्तनी के वेबसाइट www.nagarnigambareilly.com पर ई-निविदा लिंक पर्याप्त है। फिरी पर्याप्त, संशोधन व अतिरिक्त सुचनाओं के लिये उत्तर वेबसाइट पर देखी जा सकती है।

प्रभागी अधिकारी (NCAP)
नगर निगम, बरेली।

16

Hindustan Times

NEW DELHI
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 08, 2025

Office of the Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project, Directorate of Skill Development, Madhya Pradesh Request for Quotation for Goods (RFQG)

Date: 03.01.2025

Letter Of Award: Date: 03.01.2025
Subject: Request for Quotation for Goods (RFQG)

1. The Government of India has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) towards the cost of "Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project" and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this financing to the payment under the Contract Package named above. RFQG is open to suppliers from eligible source countries of ADB.

2. The Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project, Directorate of Skill Development, Madhya Pradesh ("the Purchaser") invites only eligible suppliers participating in the bid process. Request for Quotation for Goods (RFQG) for the Procurement of Goods item given in following packages at the Sant Shrimati Ravidas Global Skills Park, Main Campus.

3. The RFQG will be conducted in accordance with the ADB's single stage quotation and open for all eligible suppliers. RFQ document are available on the website <https://mpsdp.mp.gov.in/tenders>. free of cost.

4. To obtain further information and inspect the RFQG documents, Suppliers should contact The Project Director, Madhya Pradesh Skills Development Project (MPSDP) Office of Skill Development, Floor 1, Global Skills Park, City Campus, Utkal Campus Compound, Chhatarpur, Distt. Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, ZIP code: 462023, Country : India. Phone: +91-9863621011 and 0755-4862006, Email: proc.mpsdp@gmail.com. The MPSDP reserves right to change/amend the RFQG, which will be uploaded on the project website <https://mpsdp.mp.gov.in/>.

5. The Purchaser will not be responsible for any cost or expenses incurred by the supplier in connection with the preparation or delivery of RFQG.

-ad- Project Director

"रघुभान संस्कृता, संस्कृत रघुभाना" Project Director

कार्यालय का अधियंतरा का कार्यालय लघु सिंचाई प्रसंदर्भ, पटना

निविदा आवधन सुचना संख्या-01/2024-25 के पुरुष संख्या-01 के निविदा को आवधन करना से अवधि वित्तना की जाएगी।

1. निविदा का नाम विवरण करने की विधि

2. निविदा का नाम विवरण करने की विधि

3. पर्याप्त विवरण प्राप्त करने की विधि एवं समय

4. शुल्क विवरण का लाभ लेने की विधि एवं समय

5. निविदा अपलोड करने की विधि एवं समय

6. ई-निविदा विवरण करने की विधि एवं समय

7. विवरण करने की विधि एवं समय

8. निविदा की विधि एवं समय

9. निविदा की विधि एवं समय

10. कार्य की विधि

निविदा आवधन सुचना संख्या-01/2024-25 की रोप रात्रि पूर्वक रहेंगी।

कार्यालय का अधियंतरा
लघु सिंचाई प्रसंदर्भ, पटना

नरो से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दूद संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार।

PR-016346 (MWRD) 2024-25

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GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION NO.1 THANE

STATION ROAD, THANE (W) - 400 601

www.mahapwd.com Fax - (022) 25377240 email-thane.1ee@mahapwd.gov.in

Outward No. 109 Tel. Phone. 022-25369293 Date: 06/01/2025

E-Tender Corrigendum No.1 (Time Table)

WORK NAME:- Improvement of Manor Wada Road (SH 34) from

km.29/550 to Km.53/800 and Wada Bhiwandi Road

(SH-35) from Km.49/000 to Km.89/070 Tal.Bhiwandi,

Dist - Thane. (Authority Engineer)

Ref:- E-Tender Notice No. 63 Year 2024-25 letter Dated No. This

Office Letter No. Tender/ 12406 Date. 04/12/2024

Sr.No Tender Before Publish Date Now Publish Date

1 Selling Date 13.12.2024 to 06.01.2025 13.12.2024 to 09.01.2025

2 Tender Opening Date 07.01.2025 10.01.2025

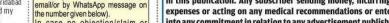
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
P. W. Division No. 1, Thane

DIPIR/2024-2025/ROC 5501

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MANISH Kumar F/0 Pranav Kumar
No. 10/1, Sector 10, Bhopal, M.P.
Pratip Gali Basanti Nand Kotha
Maharaj Puri N.D.-110001, have
changed my name from Pranav Kumar
to Manish Kumar for all purposes, and
Dhananjay Kumar for all future purposes.

LOKENDER Thapa, am of No. IC-200, Sector 10, Bhopal, M.P.
have changed my name from Lokender Thapa to
Rakesh Babu for all purposes, and Ramchandra Babu
for all future purposes.

I, MAHENDRA Kumar S/o Sh. Bhupinder
Lal B/10-1-73, 3rd floor, Prema Nagar
Complex, Sector 10, Bhopal, M.P.
have changed my name from Mahender
Kumar to Mahender Kumar for all
purposes.

I, RAJESH Kumar S/o Prof. Singh
Rita Flt No. 1003, A-2/2, Sector 10, Bhopal
have changed my name from Rajesh
Kumar to Rajesh Kumar for all
purposes.

I, SHIVLALI Sachdeva W/o Visha
Kumar, resident of 85, Sector 10, Bhopal
have changed my name from Shivlal
Kumar to Shivlal Sachdeva for all
purposes.

I, PARMESHWARI Devi M/s Sh. Rakesh
Kumar, resident of 1003, Sector 10, Bhopal
have changed my name from Parmeshwari
Devi to Rakesh Kumar for all
purposes.

I, SURESH Kumar S/o Sh. Rakesh
Kumar, resident of 1003, Sector 10, Bhopal
have changed my name from Suresh
Kumar to Rakesh Kumar for all
purposes.

I, SUMAN Singh wife of Suresh
Kumar, resident of 1003, Sector 10, Bhopal
have changed my name from Suman
Singh to Rakesh Kumar for all
purposes.

I, SUKUMAR Singh S/o Sh. Rakesh
Kumar, resident of 1003, Sector 10, Bhopal
have changed my name from Sukumar
Singh to Rakesh Kumar for all
purposes.

I, TANUSHREE Singh wife of Suresh
Kumar, resident of 1003, Sector 10, Bhopal
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Kumar, resident of 1003, Sector 10,

Microsoft to invest \$3 bn in AI, cloud expansion in India

The tech giant also plans to train 10 mn people in AI skills in India by 2030



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella during a meeting in New Delhi.

Infosys and Wipro

Nadella said the \$3 billion investment in India will have the single largest economic impact done in the country. "The diffusion rate of AI in India is exciting." He, however, did not give a time frame for the spending.

Microsoft provides its cloud computing services under the Azure brand. It has over 60 Azure regions comprising more than 300 data centres.

"In India, we are excited about all the regions that we have. We have Central India, South India, West India, and South Central India. We also have the capacities that we have with Jio. We have a lot of regional expansion happening,"

Nadella said.

When Nadella last visited India in February 2024, he said, "We have the potential to provide 2 million people in the country with AI skillsing opportunities by 2025, focused on training individuals in smaller cities and rural areas."

The Microsoft chairman also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Moradabad in Delhi.

Nadella said his vision on the artificial intelligence mission, India stack, and entrepreneurial aspirations in the country, among others.

He had posted a picture of the meeting on X, formerly Twitter, and said, "Excited to

build on our commitment to making India AI-first".

Prime Minister Modi responded, saying he is "glad to know about Microsoft's ambitious expansion and investment plans in India".

Nadella said that after a few years, there will be discussion around correlation between GDP growth in a country and even at a country level on their growth on efficient levels derived between energy consumed per token per dollar.

"We are building world-class AI infrastructure. This is golden for systems when it comes to innovation," Nadella said.

He said that the company is doing a lot of regional expansion in India.

"India is rapidly becoming a leader in AI innovation, unlocking new opportunities across the country. The investments in infrastructure are there and we are committed to further refining our commitment to making India AI-first, and will help ensure people and organisations across the country benefit broadly," Nadella said.

He said that Microsoft's mission to empower every person and organisation in India drives the company. The money will

Capex allocation likely to rise 10% for roads, rlys

Subhash Narayan

subhash.narayan@livenew.com

NEW DELHI: The Centre proposes to keep focus on rapid infrastructure growth in the next financial year, with plans for much larger investments in ministries of road transport and highways, and railways in the upcoming budget by up to 10%, two persons aware of the development said.

The proposed modest increase in capital outlay on the backdrop of the government targeting a big increase in private investments into the highway sector in projects being awarded under the build-operate-transfer (BOT) toll model.

Also, the railways will continue to focus on major projects with a focus on capacity augmentation and safety measures that will not require any additional capital. Meanwhile, the spending on manufacturing new generation trains such as Vande Bharat would be made in a staggered manner that reduces the pressure on capex.

"We are expecting 20-25% of highway project awards next year to be BOT (toll) model. This would relieve pressure on the government to make additional capital investments to keep up the building momentum. Along with increasing the budgetary allocation, the Cen-



The proposed hike comes against the backdrop of govt push to private investments in highway sector. (STOCKPHOTO)

tre will need to ensure that the building process for highways is expedited as it is very slow in the past few quarters.

Additionally, railways needs to take urgent steps to structure PPP projects for fostering private investments as there is no reason why the private sector cannot replicate the PPP success, which NHAII has achieved in the highway sector, Kuljit Singh, partner and infra leader, EY India said.

The Centre provided capex of about ₹2.64 lakh crore (proposed estimate) for the ministry of road transport and highways in FY24. In the budget FY25, MoRTH's capex was increased moderately from ₹2.64 lakh crore to ₹2.72 lakh crore. This may increase further to ₹2.90 lakh crore in FY26.

Similarly for railways, which has been getting almost its entire capex requirement from the budget for the past few years, may see a marginal increase in capital allocation for FY25, above ₹1 lakh crore. In the base case scenario, against ₹2.52 lakh crore gross budgetary support (GBS) provided by the government.

BoT (toll) projects allow private sector bidders to take construction risk and invest in developing road projects, thereby relieving pressure on the government to make additional capital investments to keep up the building momentum. Along with increasing the budgetary allocation, the Cen-

META GOES FOR COMMUNITY NOTES, ENDS FACT-CHECKING

Shouvik Das

shouvik.das@livenew.com

NEW DELHI: Meta Platforms chief executive officer (CEO) Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday announced a decision to do away with the company's long-standing fact-checking system, choosing instead to establish a 'community notes' mechanism akin to Elon Musk's X, formerly Twitter. In a video posted on his Instagram account, Zuckerberg labelled the move as "time to get back to our roots of free expression" on Facebook and Instagram".

"I started building social media to give people a voice... I still believe this today. We've built a lot of complex systems to moderate content, but the problem with those systems is that they make mistakes. Even if they accidentally censor just 1% of posts, that's millions of people. We've now reached a point where it's too many mistakes and too much censorship," Zuckerberg said in his statement.

To avoid the censorship, Meta is "getting rid of fact checkers and replacing them with Community Notes", a format where the users of a platform themselves flag content that could have misinformation.

The new system will start rolling out over the next two months in the US, and be expanded in the next one year.

Part of this implementation, Meta's apps will henceforth check for harmfulness of user content mostly if it is reported by its users—and not by default, barring exceptions such as terrorism.

"The recent elections feel like a cultural tipping point towards platforms like us. So, we're going back to our roots, simplifying our policies, and restoring free expression on our platforms," Zuckerberg said.

To be sure, the Meta Platform founder and CEO has been under fire since US president Donald Trump, and also donated \$1 million on behalf of the company towards his inauguration.

Infosys taps staff to build ideas factory

Jas Bardia

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Infosys added 2,456 employees to reach a headcount of 317,788 at the end of September. MINT

Established companies often create in-house incubators to foster innovation and explore new business opportunities, allowing them to experiment with emerging technologies and develop solutions that address future market needs. Two of the most prominent examples in the global technology industry are Google's Area 120 and Microsoft Garage, both known for incubating experimental projects that often evolve into successful products or services.

Infosys added 2,456 employees to reach a headcount of 317,788 at the end of September. At present, the company is 12% up compared with 12.7% in the preceding June quarter.

"Participating in incubator is a full-time role. So, the employee will need to move out of his/her current role," the company says in a release. "The incubator will consider ideas for platforms and service lines. The ideas need to be digital in nature, unique from existing offerings, and should align with Infosys model and business strategy."

Employees can pitch ideas in teams of three to an incubator council, which includes leaders across various domains in the company. The number of people working for an idea can be increased as per the business plan.

An email sent to Infosys on Sunday went unanswered.

"This is a form of employee engagement booster and possibly from Infosys' standpoint, the ability to participate in the upside if the idea sees greater uptake," said a Mumbai-based analyst with a domestic brokerage.

Employees whose ideas will receive the same salaries as before and their job level will remain the same. However, they stand to gain a reward.

Dhirendra Kumar & Rinku Khil

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NEW DELHI: The plan to make over half of New Delhi's 14-year-old goods trade port with ASEAN may take longer than expected as members of New Delhi's fourth largest trading partner press to negotiate tariffs individually, two people aware of the development said.

The review, which was expected to be finalised at next month's Jakarta meeting of India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has

stalled since India's offer of a unified duty structure does not find favour among ASEAN members, two people aware of the development said.

The review shift in ASEAN's approach in response to India's proposal for a unified tariff schedule for all member states—a suggestion that has met with resistance from several countries within the bloc,

one of the two people cited anonymous and on the condition of anonymity.

While the trade agreement has boosted economic ties, differing priorities between India and ASEAN members could prolong the review, leaving the future of the pact uncertain.

The ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) was signed in 2009 and implemented a

year later. Following repeated demands from members, a review was agreed and its scope finalized in September 2022, with beginning in May 2023.

The review aims to enhance the pact's trade facilitation measures and maximise benefits for businesses.

A commerce ministry spokesman didn't respond to emailed queries.

One person, who is keen to revise tariff concessions granted under ATIGA, particularly those favouring Vietnam. These concessions currently

Cloud over review of 14-yr-old trade pact with Asean

Alisha Sachdev

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NEW DELHI: India's automobile registrations accelerated by 9.1% in 2024 despite headwinds in the form of extreme weather, uneven monsoons and state electricity cuts, according to the Automobile Dealers Association (FADA).

The annual growth in automobile sales was fuelled by strong performances in the two-wheeler, three-wheeler, passenger vehicle (PV), and tractor segments. Commercial vehicles (CV) however, stalled.

FADA dealers struggled with tepid demand in the latter half of 2024.

Vehicle and tractor segments hit record highs in 2024, while two-wheeler sales rebounded strongly, nearly returning to their 2018 peak. The CV segment lagged and is yet to surpass the 2018 levels.

FADA president C.S. Vigneshwar said that in 2025, two-wheeler sales are likely to make a new record, after purchases were hit in the aftermath of covid-19 and due to price hikes undertaken to offset expenditure on technology upgrades to meet tighter emission norms.

"We're seeing a few key trends. Rural demand is crucial for the industry, as it accounts for nearly 60% of the market share for the segment. This fell substantially in December. On the other hand, we saw strong results from the tractor segment, which indicates that the market is recovering," he said.

He said that auto dealers reported a dip in sales during the last week of December, which is unusual since typically 30-40% of retail sales for the month occur in that period across all vehicle categories—two-wheeler, commercial vehicles, and passenger vehicles.

He added that despite the dip, dealers are optimistic about the future.

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On a lighter note, Toyota Chairman Akio Toyoda said during his keynote speech that "the future of mobility shouldn't be limited to just Earth, or just one car company". One could argue

that it was a reference to Elon Musk and his companies Tesla and SpaceX, but more to the point, this signals the Japanese automaker's undisclosed investments in Interstellar Technologies, a Japanese spaceflight company.

The aim is to leverage Toyota's manufacturing scale, with the Japanese carmaker looking to expand its operations beyond Earth.

Nvidia and Toyota are working to integrate autonomous driving capabilities to a new fleet of the latter's vehicles, with Nvidia's Drive AGX Orin supercomputer and DriveOrvis providing the software.

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SPORT

Djokovic: At his happy hunting ground, with an old foe in tow

The Serbian has worked with Becker, Agassi and Ivanisevic. In Murray he has access to the mind of a master tactician

Shahid Judge

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MUMBAI: With trembling hands Novak Djokovic touched the fabled red dirt of Court Philippe Chatrier at Roland Garros. A list of accomplishments – the only thing pending had now been accomplished. He was, finally, an Olympic champion.

It was the last piece of the puzzle for a player who really had nothing more to prove. He was a 24-time Grand Slam champion – the joint record holder for most singles Slams with Margaret Court. He had spent 428 weeks as the world No.1 – more than any other singles player. And in August, at the Tokyo Olympic Games, he won the only title he had never won before.

Djokovic has gone made it clear that he is driven by records. The 2024 season was the first time since 2017 that he had failed to win a Grand Slam title. There was a gap. And as the four-year cycle of his fiercest rivals on tour, he has found the missing piece. A new coach, Andy Murray.

At the Australian Open next week, the tennis world will see arguably the best player ever to play on such combination there has been. Murray, a three-time Grand Slam champion, and Djokovic will be sitting in the Djokovic box watching the man just a week younger than him to rediscover the form that once made him become the greatest Grand Slam player in the Open Era.

One more Major for the Serbian will make him the most successful Grand Slam singles champion of all time. Djokovic will be 37 when he reaches that milestone. But, as he saw throughout last season, it will be difficult.

Djokovic's peak came in the era where the Big 3 of tennis dominated the circuit. But with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal now retired, he remains alone in a world where 23-year-old Janik Sinner and 21-year-old Carlos Alcaraz are ruling the roost.

At 37, however, Djokovic is not done. With Murray on his side for a change, he has access to the mind of a master tactician. "He is very competitive on my game as one of the greatest rivals that I've had," Djokovic told the ATP. "He knows the pros and cons of my game. He has also played up to recently on the Tour, so he

knows all the other best players currently in the world, the youngsters and the weaknesses and strengths in their game."

At the same Olympics where Djokovic completed the career Golden Slam, Murray called time on a long and illustrious career. He had competed against Djokovic since their junior days and that rivalry spilled out onto the biggest stages of the sport.

Djokovic was the opponent in seven of Murray's 11 Major final appearances – the Brit managed to beat the Serb only at the 2012 US Open and the 2013 Wimbledon final, losing four Australian Opens and one French Open final.

Djokovic had a 25-11 overall record against his now coach. A coach who would help him cover those marginal gaps in his game. "Definitely am looking to improve, even if it's the slightest percentage, every single shot that I play," says Murray. "I think maybe something that people don't necessarily see is this court positioning, the transition play, the tactics," Djokovic said to the Australian Associated Press.

Though Djokovic is there as much as is get to be truly tested, there is no denying the knowledge he brings to the table. And in many ways, the Djokovic-Murray combination may serve the Serb well.

For Murray, though, to employing a star coach, he has been with six-time Grand Slam winner Boris Becker in the past, with eight-time major winner Andre Agassi briefly, and more recently with 2001 Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic.

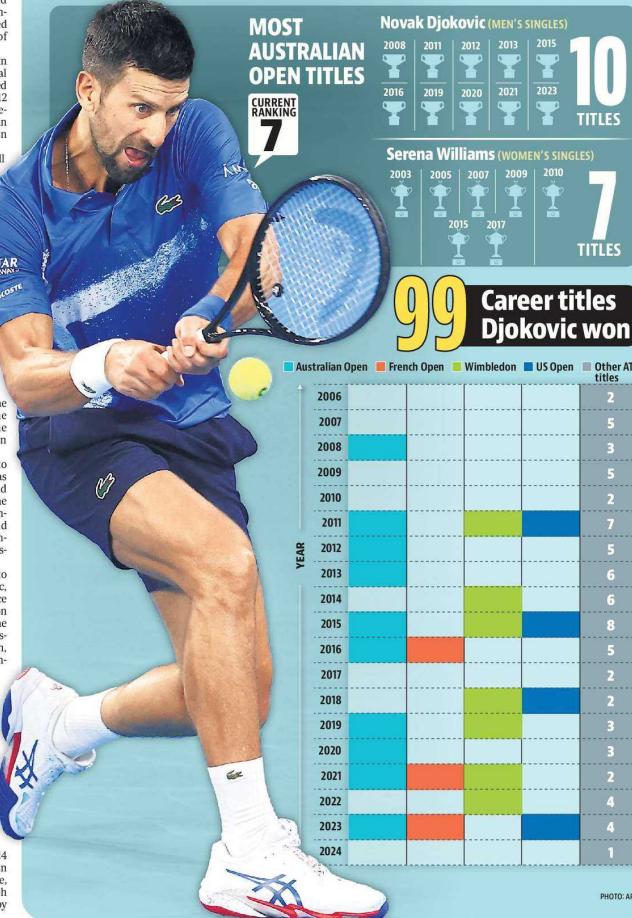
Murray however, belongs to the same vintage as Djokovic, and as such has the experience of what it's like to be playing on slower courts compared to the era of Becker, Agassi and Ivanisevic. And he was like the Serbian, who was also a gritty defensive baseliner.

Djokovic though, was possibly the best. A perennial chaser of lost causes who could rock the ball back into play. Often with interest, often with passion, but often difficult for Djokovic. He may not have won a Slam, but he cannot be written off – consider that he reached the Wimbledon final just a few weeks after undergoing a knee surgery.

"I'm getting stronger though, where he has won 10 of his 24 Majors, he's coming back to an old stomping ground. This time, he's armed with newbie coach Murray, an untested weapon by his side.

Ageless Serb for another Slam

Novak Djokovic, 37, eyes a record 25th Grand Slam and the 100 career mark – only Connors and Federer have it in the Open Era – at Melbourne.



Shooter Tomar finds fresh high after domestic double

Avishek Roy

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NEW DELHI: Varun Tomar's dream of shooting gold in the Paris Olympics was washed when he lost in the domestic selection trials to pick the final squad. Tomar had won the quota in 10m air pistol by winning gold at the Asian Championships last year. But he was edged out by Arjun Singh Chauhan.

Tomar did not let it sit in his stride and made an impressive come-back in the just-ended National Championships, winning both the senior and junior (U-21) titles. "There was disappointment but then I was focusing on my shooting. I try to win and lose in my stride and learn from every tournament. This tournament was a fresh start," says Tomar.

Arjun shooter Tomar, who trains in Mhow, came into the Nationals with specific targets in mind. He shot 85% in the qualification. His coach, former national shooter Saubir Singh, who shot a national record score of 391. In the final on Sunday, Tomar won his maiden national title of 238 points. His Army teammate Pradyuman Singh was second. Tomar was runner-up in the junior final, bagging the title with an impressive 246.2 points.

"I had certain targets and though I did not achieve them fully, it's been a good beginning in the new year," said Tomar. "After

the Olympic trials, I wanted to prove to myself. I got back to the basics and worked on my technical part and mental strength."

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"You look at the field and it makes it so tough. The qualifying

Indian hockey players bonding with the best in relaunched HIL

Sandip Sikdar

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ROURKELA: Skipper Sumit Wal-miki and Australian Tim Brand walked to the dressing room, sharing laughs and banter after Hyderabad Toofan's victory. Neeraj, an awe-struck Amandeep Lalra was listening with rapt attention to Gonzalo Pelletta as Germany's drag-flick legend gave the Indian youngsters tips to take PCs.

It was the 10th edition of the HIL that folded due to financial issues after five seasons in 2017. Then too, Indian players played alongside the best in the world, sharing the dressing room with legends like Merturz Furste, Jamie Dwyer and the Knives.

While the amateur league has retained its cosmopolitan nature in its revamped avatar, there are marked changes too, that are noticeable for someone who has witnessed both versions.

Even though Sumit isn't fluent in English, the two-time Olympic bronze medalist Surender Kumar, who plays for U.P. Rudras, concurs. "Earlier, German legend Furste said that it took them weeks to even have basic conversation with some Indians because they were shy."

"He was so good here. To have someone like that around helps us a lot." Tomar is on a comeback after a low following the Tokyo Olympics. He finished fifth in the final after topping qualification.

He is going on for 14 days and the scores were so good. I was in the last qualification relay and kept looking at the scores. To be able to fight with many countries in such a competitive field, keep your focus, it gives you confidence."

Tomar knows the road ahead will be tough with many more overseas players, some that wasn't the case earlier. German legend Furste said that it took them weeks to even have basic conversation with some Indians because they were shy."

"He was so good here. To have someone like that around helps us a lot."

Saurabh, 22, is on a comeback after a low following the Tokyo Olympics. He finished fifth in the final after topping qualification.



Maninder Singh, Belgium's Victor Wegnez and Vivek Sagar Prasad of the Soorma Hockey Club.

three seasons in HIL earlier.

"There is a lot of improvement. Our confidence has increased because we have won back-to-back Olympic medals," adds Surender Kumar, who plays for U.P. Rudras, concurs. "Earlier, German legend Furste said that it took them weeks to even have basic conversation with some Indians because they were shy."

"He was so good here. To have someone like that around helps us a lot."

Saurabh, 22, is on a comeback after a low following the Tokyo Olympics. He finished fifth in the final after topping qualification.

the Olympics with skipper Harmanpreet Singh and the Knives. Much has changed in four years, in whatever broken English I know. Most importantly, hockey language is the same, right? They understand everything. If there is any team activity, we encourage the juniors to take part. It boosts their confidence."

"The change has been in the way they play. We have a statue in our village and one can see Indian and overseas players hanging out together. While some Indians play overseas, hockey stars to places of worship, others play cricket with them during their off time; some ventured

out to local tea shops for chess sessions. We try to understand their culture while they try to comprehend ours," says Paris Olympics bronze medalist Jarnampreet Singh, who is playing for Delhi SG Pipers.

Arjan Lalage is perhaps the best example of a youngster who is not afraid to reach out to foreign teammates such as Tomas Domenech and SG Pipers skipper Jake Whelehan. "I am a long, tall, dark and handsome one-millennium-old, the 21-year-old is making the most of the opportunity."

"It was my dream to play in HIL. I used to watch the tournament when I was a kid. I never thought I would be playing HIL one day with international players. I never thought I would get a chance. I am grateful that I have learnt from them as much as I can," says the striker. "I have learnt from their mindset. Whatever happens in a match, their thought process remains the same. They are not tensed, which is not the case with us. We get nervous when we lose, but they remain calm and composed."

"We try to understand their culture while they try to comprehend ours," says Paris Olympics bronze medalist Jarnampreet Singh, who is playing for Delhi SG Pipers.

"The change has been in the way they play. We have a statue in our village and one can see Indian and overseas players hanging out together. While some Indians play overseas, hockey stars to places of worship, others play cricket with them during their off time; some ventured

Lakshya crashes out in Malaysia 1st rd

KUALA LUMPUR: Lakshya Sen lost to Chi Yu-jen of Chinese Taipei 14-21, 7-21 in the first round of the men's singles in the Malaysia Open 2024.

Sen had started well, winning his opening match against France's Nicolas Hendrikx (97), Nicolas Bandaruk (29), and Bobby Singh Dhami (49) all scored to help Lancers to an easy win.



Neeraj Chopra at the Museum of Solutions by JSW, in Mumbai. HT

Neeraj to star in a world javelin event in India

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: India's two-time Olympic medalist and reigning world champion Neeraj Chopra will be the star attraction in a marquee International Javelin tournament held in New Delhi this year, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said on Tuesday.

It is understood that Chopra himself will be canvassing for the home event and will personally extend an invitation to top throwers. As is the norm in international track and field events, global stars drum up support for their home event that helps the organisers.

Chopra has emerged as a global track and field star on the back of his stupendous international success that includes back-to-back medals at the Olympics and World Championships.

After his historic gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 2022, Chopra won a silver (2022, Eugene) and a gold (2023, Budapest) at the World Championships before pocketing an Olympic silver in Paris this year. Bengaluru will host the India leg of the Diamond League without consecutive podium finishes in the last three years. He won the title in Zurich in 2022 and returned with silver in 2024 Eugene and 2024 Brussels.

However, Chopra has competed on and off at home during the intervening period. In May last year, he appeared in Fed Cup in Bhubaneswar where he won with a throw of 82.27m. Since the Tokyo high, Chopra has been training overseas and competing in internationals. The AFI is looking to bring an international event at home to cash in on his global popularity to give the sport a push in India.

"We are looking to hold a top javelin competition in India in which the top-10 javelin throwers in the world will compete. This will be the first time to do so here," said Adilene Coo, president of the AFI. "We have been invited to stage an international event at home to cash in on his global popularity to give the sport a push in India. We are looking to hold a top javelin competition in India in which the top-10 javelin throwers in the world will compete. This will be the first time to do so here," said Adilene Coo, president of the AFI.

"Neeraj Chopra will be there. He is part of the team that is organising the event, along with JSW, a foreign firm, and the AFI are coming together to create this competition. This is being done as there is

so much interest in javelin with August 7 – the day Neeraj won gold in Tokyo – being observed as National Javelin Day," Sunarwalla added.

AFI is looking to organise the event after the World Championships in Tokyo which is scheduled to be held later this year.

It is understood that Chopra himself will be canvassing for the home event and will personally extend an invitation to top throwers. As is the norm in international track and field events, global stars drum up support for their home event that helps the organisers.

Chopra is hugely popular on the circuit and shares great camaraderie with the bunch of top javelin throwers. Last year, he withdrew from the Golden Spike meet in Czech Republic due to a shoulder injury. But he recovered quickly and won the javelin thrower of the year award at the Asian Championships (in 2017), and it's a good sporting year. Bengaluru will host the India leg of the Diamond League without consecutive podium finishes in the last three years. He won the title in Zurich in 2022 and returned with silver in 2024 Eugene and 2024 Brussels.

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Chief selector Ajit Agarkar. AP
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**AGARKAR TO
BRIEF SELECTORS
AHEAD OF BCCI
MEET ON SUNDAY**

Rakesh Mandani

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MUMBAI: The selection committee will be in full attendance for the knockout rounds of the Wijer Hathra Trophy one-dayers in Vadodara, which start with the pre-quarterfinals on Thursday. The getting together of the five selectors holds significance as this is where former India captain Anil Kumble, who was in Australia during the tour, will brief his colleagues.

After taking the collective view from the committee, Agarkar is expected to meet BCCI officials in the coming days for the series-review meeting with chairman Sourav Ganguly and head coach Ravi Shastri. Ganguly will be present. The board's Special General Meeting (SGM) is scheduled in Mumbai on Sunday where Devajit Saha will assume charge as the new BCCI secretary.

The Australian tour, which immediately followed the ODI at home to New Zealand, was expected to decide the fate of many senior players. The 3-1 loss shut the door on India's WTC final hopes, which was a big setback. Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's mid-tour retirement, in turn, led to a team discontent on the Rohit-led team in form that resulted in his sitting out the final Test at Sydney and the prolonged leave run of Virat Kohli who has left Indian cricket faced with several questions. All these likely to be discussed in a number of meetings among selectors and the administrators.

The selectors will soon picking the squad for the white-ball matches at home against England — five T20s and three ODIs between January 22 and February 12 — before they firm up the squad for the ICC Champions Trophy starting next month.

Cummins, the pace spearhead driving Australia's serial success

Somshuvra Laha

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KOLKATA: Knock for wickets, unparalleled control and a never-say-die attitude for which Glenn McGrath will be revered as possibly the greatest Australian fast bowler in the last four decades. Among Australia's international fast bowlers, few could match the aura and achievements of Steve Waugh.

Pat Cummins, though, is getting there almost unnoticed, one season at a time. In the three years since he was appointed Australia's Test team first in November 2019, Cummins has won the Ashes, the World Test Championship final, the ODI World Cup, and now the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Not highlighted enough is a last-curtain-calling spell of fast bowling as skipper where Cummins has taken 130 Test wickets at an average of 23.50. Only off-spinner Nathan Lyon has taken more wickets (40) in this phase.

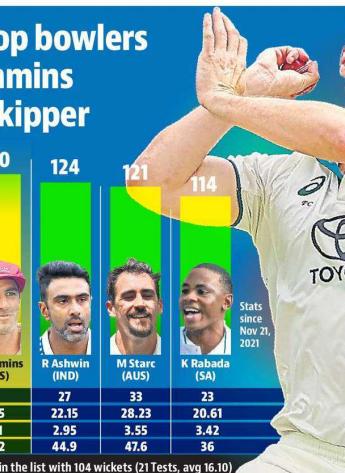
Of the seven bowlers to take more than 100 wickets in the period, only R Ashwin (21.15), Kagiso Rabada (20.58) and Jasprit Bumrah (16.10) have better averages.

Bumrah's record-equalling tally of 32 wickets (for an average of 16.10) in his first professional career took on responsibility as captain and thrived in the role as fast bowlers faded away as quickly as they rise points to a level of resilience still rare in athletes.

All this while bolstering his bowling credentials as well. Despite not being their pace spearhead, Cummins bowled 25.42% of the deliveries for Australia — ahead of 24.40% by Bumrah — in a recent analysis. Series after series was the second-innings bowler, 5/57 by Cummins at Adelaide.

It included forcing a tie-off KL Rahul's bat by aiming at his ribs and then bowling possibly the ball of the series, opening up Rohit Sharma with a length delivery that angled in before holding its line to peg back his off-stump.

Before the skies opened up at



Jasprit Bumrah is seventh in the list with 104 wickets (21 Tests, avg 16.10)

For him to overcome that initial jitters and then make a professional career takes on responsibility as captain and thrive in the role as fast bowlers faded away as quickly as they rise points to a level of resilience still rare in athletes.

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Brisbane, Cummins had raised his game to another level. The fast bowler Pant caught behind besides dismissing top-scorer Ravindra Jadeja when India were still 32 runs short of the follow-on mark.

Similar returns awaited at the SCG, where Cummins delivered his most impressive spell by twice at the MCG — by featuring in a 12-run seventh-wicket partnership with Steve Smith before salvaging the second innings with a gritty 41 that pulled Australia from 9/6 to 173/9.

Cummins is by no means an allrounder. But he is clearly more than the sum of his runs or the manner of his run-making, especially when that thrilling win at Edgbaston, or at Brisbane in January last year when Cummins nearly took Australia past West Indies in the first innings with an unbeaten 84.

In a year when Kagiso Rabada failed for being the quick to reach 200 Test wickets (he is at 322 in 70 Tests), 294 wickets in 67 Tests is extraordinary for the captain of a side that was forced to go through an unprecedented leadership transition. Goodeluck kept shifting too. First with the Sabre, then with the subcontinent, then the World Test Championship final, and so on. Till India came touring with Usman Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne searching for big scores.

With his bat injured, the series couldn't have got tougher. To emerge victorious from there, and as a result the holder of every bilateral Test trophy, was every bit an Australian renaissance. And it may not have been possible without Cummins chipping in at every

responded by silencing a packed crowd with a 100% win rate, that thrilling win at Edgbaston, or at Brisbane in January last year when Cummins nearly took Australia past West Indies in the first innings with an unbeaten 84.



Olympic champs Axelsen, An top the field for India Open

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: Reigning Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen and An Se Young will be among the star attractions at the latest iteration of the Yonex-Sunrise India Open that marks the capital's 10th anniversary this week. The January 14-19 event will also have a strong Indian presence with double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu, 2022 champion Lakshya Sen and former world No.1 pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty competing in the Senior 750 competition.

The tournament, which was elevated as a Super 750 in 2023, is part of the BWF World Tour and offers participants a prize pool of \$950,000 along with 11,000 points in the championship race. From an Indian perspective, it will be interesting to see how the pair of Satwik and Chirag bounces back after the latter's injury and the Paris Olympics heartbreak.

The men's doubles line-up is bolstered by the likes of Olympic silver medal winning combination of Liang Wewin and Wang Chang along with Paris bronze medallists Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik of Malaysia. Danish combination of Kim Astrup and Anders Rasmussen and Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto also in action.



Lakshya Sen. PTI

2024.

Two players from the top-20 ranked men's singles players will be missing the event with injuries. The tournament will have 14 of the top-20 players competing. With many top players in doubles categories announcing retirement after the Paris Olympics or changing partners, the paired events are expected to come up with a few surprises. From an Indian perspective, it will be interesting to see how the pair of Satwik and Chirag bounces back after the latter's injury and the Paris Olympics heartbreak.

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