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## INSIDE



BJP expels eight leaders for going solo in Haryana

### CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Minister Ranjith Singh Chautala and seven other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders were expelled from the party on Sunday after they decided to contest the Assembly poll as independent candidates. » PAGE 2

Wrong incentives led to huge loss in Southern Railway'

### CHENNAI

Southern Railway has suffered a loss of ₹20.58 crore due to a series of wrong incentives, including wrong payment of overtime allowances and non-reassessment of land, as per a CAG report. » PAGE 4

Campaigning for last phase of J&K polls ends

### JAMMU/SRINAGAR

The campaigning for the final phase of polling in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election concluded on Sunday, with major political parties, engaging in fierce exchanges over critical issues, including Pakistan, Article 370, terrorism, and reservation. » PAGE 5

Navy chief visits Greece, discusses ways to boost ties

### NEW DELHI

India and Greece discussed avenues for cross-training in niche technologies and advanced courses, as well as ways to strengthen strategic and operational ties, during Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi's just-concluded visit to Greece. » PAGE 6

# Israel pounds Lebanon, 2 more Hezbollah leaders among dead

Hezbollah confirms death of Nabil Kaouk, a veteran member, and Ali Karaki, a senior commander; Sunday's strikes across Lebanon killed over 50 people, left dozens injured; Israel says at least 20 Hezbollah militants were killed in Friday's strike

Associated Press  
JERUSALEM

Two days after taking out Hezbollah's chief Hassan Nasrallah, Israel continued its airstrikes on Lebanon well into Sunday evening and said it struck nearly 120 Hezbollah targets. Hours after the first wave of attacks, Israeli military announced it had killed Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of Hezbollah's Central Council, in a strike on Saturday.

At least 24 people were killed in Israeli airstrikes that hit two adjacent buildings east of Sidon, the Lebanese Health Ministry said. In Baalbek-Hermel, 21 people were killed and at least 47 injured. Four more died in a raid targeting Joub Jenin in the Bekaa area. The con-



Deadly strike: A building flattened by an overnight Israeli strike in Shiah in Beirut's southern suburbs on Sunday. AFP

secutive strikes on Sunday on Ain el-Delb, east of Sidon, were caught on camera by neighbours.

Hezbollah confirmed Kaouk's death, making him the seventh senior Hezbollah leader slain in Israeli strikes in a little over a week. They include founding members who had

evaded death or detention for decades.

Kaouk was a veteran member of Hezbollah going back to the 1980s and served as the group's military commander in southern Lebanon during the 2006 war with Israel. He often appeared in local media, where he would com-

Israeli air strikes kill 11 persons across Gaza Strip

### CAIRO

Israeli military strikes across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 11 Palestinians, health officials in the enclave said on Sunday. A school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip was among buildings hit, Gaza medics said. » PAGE 14

ment on politics and security developments, and he gave eulogies at the funerals of senior militants. The United States had announced sanctions against him in 2020.

Hezbollah had earlier confirmed that Ali Karaki, another senior commander, died in Friday's strike

that killed Nasrallah. The Israeli military had said that Karaki was killed in the strike that targeted an underground compound in Beirut where Nasrallah and other Hezbollah figures were meeting.

The military said at least 20 other Hezbollah militants were killed in the strike, including two close associates of Nasrallah.

Hezbollah has also been targeted by a sophisticated attack on its pagers and walkie-talkies that was widely blamed on Israel. A wave of Israeli airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon has killed at least 1,030 people in less than two weeks.

ISRAEL STRIKES YEMEN TOO  
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ISRAEL'S PENETRATION  
» PAGE 15

# Opposition targets CPI(M) fearing loss of minority votes'

Sobhana K. Nair

NEW DELHI



Pinarayi Vijayan

The allegations of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) colluding with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are being levelled by the Opposition that is worried by the prospect of losing the minority vote bank to the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala, said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*.

Not only the Opposition, Mr. Vijayan said both the RSS and Muslim extremist elements that want to sow divisions in the society and encourage communalism in Kerala are attacking the government. These allegations, he said, are also motivated by the discomfort caused by police crackdown on the smuggling of gold and *hawala* money.

At the same time, he said, the BJP's increased

vote share is a cause for worry. For that too, Mr. Vijayan held the Congress responsible. "The BJP won Thrissur, not because we lost ground, but because the Congress polled 86,965 fewer votes in 2024 in comparison to the 2019 general election. On the other hand, LDF's vote share had registered a small increase of 16,196 votes," he said.

INTERVIEW ON  
» PAGE 4  
ANVAR'S CHARGES  
» PAGE 3

## Green goddess



Plants for puja: An environment-friendly puja pandal is being readied using a variety of plants and bamboo ahead of the Durga Puja festival, at Lalabagan Nabankur in Kolkata, on Sunday. PTI

# Two abducted Manipur youth seek help from Chief Minister

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

Two of three Meitei youth abducted by Kuki extremists on September 27 have appealed to Manipur Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh to save their lives.

Their appeal came through a video that surfaced on social media platforms early on Sunday, following which the Chief Minister held a meeting with the MLAs from various parties. In the video, one of the abducted youth urged Mr. Singh to save them by fulfilling the demands of their abductors. The demands were not immediately known.

Mr. Singh said the State was taking steps to secure

Their appeal came through a video that surfaced on social media platforms early on Sunday

Singh, Oinam Thoithoi Singh and Thokchom Thoithoiba Singh were reported missing on Friday.

They had left their homes in Thoubal district to take part in an Army recruitment rally at New Keithelmanbi in the Imphal West district.

Wrong destination  
Mr. Johnson Singh, who escaped from the abductors, said they relied on Google Maps but set their destination as Keithelmanbi Kuki village instead of New Keithelmanbi.

On Saturday, local people in Thoubal formed a Joint Action Committee and met district administration officials and demanded action to trace and rescue the two youths.

the release of the two youth. "Held a meeting with all the MLAs from both the ruling and Opposition parties at my Secretariat, today. Addressed the current situation in the State, particularly focusing on the rescue of the abduction of two innocent youths by Kuki militants," he posted on X. "We condemn such heinous acts and our government is working to secure the safe release of the victims," he added.

Ningombam Johnson

# 92% of workers cleaning urban sewers, septic tanks from SC, ST, OBC groups: survey

Abhinav Lakshman  
NEW DELHI

In a first-of-its-kind attempt to enumerate people engaged in the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks in India's cities and towns, government data gathered from over 3,000 urban local bodies in 29 States and Union Territories shows that 91.9% of the 38,000 workers profiled so far belong to Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), or other backward class (OBC) communities.

Of the profiled workers, 68.9% were SC, 14.7% were OBC, 8.3% were ST, and 8% were from the general category.

Between 2019 and 2023, at least 377 people across the country have died from hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. It draws

ers and septic tanks, according to government data tabled in Parliament.

### Hazardous cleaning

The profiling of sewer and septic tank workers (SSWs) is being carried out by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as part of its NAMASTE programme, a scheme to mechanise all sewer work and prevent deaths due to hazardous cleaning work. In 2023-24, this scheme was brought in to replace the Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS).

The Union government's rationale is that manual scavenging as a practice has ended across the country and what needs to be fixed now is the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. It draws

this distinction based on a technical difference in how manual scavenging and hazardous cleaning are defined in the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act.

The NAMASTE programme targets "workers directly associated with sewer and septic tank cleaning including drivers of desludging vehicles, helpers, machine operators and cleaners", the Ministry says.

Its goal is to profile such workers in a nationwide enumeration exercise, give them safety training and equipment, and offer capital subsidies that could turn sewer and septic tank workers into "sanpreneurs", or sanitation entrepreneurs.

Since the scheme began

### Skewed shares

The caste-wise share (in %) of the workers engaged in cleaning of sewers and septic tanks across the country

Scheduled Castes	68.9
Scheduled Tribes	8.3
Other Backward Classes	14.7
General	8

% of workers

Source: Government data tabled in Parliament



a year ago, 3,326 urban local bodies (ULBs) have begun the process and profiled around 38,000 SSWs. So far, 283 ULBs have reported zero SSWs, and 2,364 ULBs have reported less than 10 SSWs each.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs estimates that there are 100 core sanitation workers for an urban population of five

lakh. Based on this, the government used decadal growth rates to estimate that as of 2021, there are likely to be one lakh SSWs employed by India's 4,800 ULBs. The NAMASTE programme intends to profile all SSWs across the country to create a central database.

Twelve States and UTs, including Kerala, Rajas-

than, and Jammu and Kashmir, have completed the profiling process, while the exercise is still under way in 17 States, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya, and West Bengal are among the States that have yet to begin the profiling process. Tamil Nadu and Odisha are running their own programmes for SSWs, and are not reporting data to the Centre under this programme.

### State efforts

States such as Kerala and Karnataka are holding information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns to profile workers at special camps. In Andhra Pradesh, ULBs are visiting

nual

scavengers have been identified, claiming that none of the 6,500-plus complaints reporting manual scavenging could be verified.

Of the identified manual scavengers, the government said it had data on the social categories of 43,797, showing that 97.2% of them were from SC communities. The share of STs, OBCs, and others were each around 1%.

Ministry records showed that all the 58,098 people identified as manual scavengers till 2018 had been given a one-time cash transfer of ₹40,000. While 18,880 of them had opted for skills training in alternative occupations, 2,051 had opted for loans under the scheme's subsidies to start alternative businesses as of 2022.

## IN BRIEF



## 5 suspended over wall collapse deaths near Mahakal Temple

Five officials, including two police officers, were suspended on Sunday for lapses in connection with the collapse of a wall near Mahakal Temple in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain. Collector Neeraj Kumar Singh told *The Hindu* that action has been taken against the officials who were responsible for clearing the encroachment in the area but did not perform their duties properly. Two street vendors, Ajay Yogi, 27, and Farheen, 23, had died and two others, including a three-year-old girl had been injured after a boundary wall of a government school-turned heritage hotel near the temple's gate collapsed following incessant rain on Friday evening.

## Punjab Chief Minister Mann discharged from hospital

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who was diagnosed with leptospirosis, was discharged on Sunday around 2 p.m. from Fortis Hospital in Mohali. Head of Department of Cardiology Dr. R.K. Jaswal said all parameters and pathological tests of the Chief Minister were normal following which the doctors decided to discharge him. Earlier in the day, State Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan, and Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains met Mr. Mann in the hospital to inquire about his health. Congress MLA Pargat Singh also met the Chief Minister. PTI

## IT staffer dies in Nagpur office; emergency care given: firm

An employee of HCLTech died after suffering a cardiac arrest in the firm's office in Nagpur city, with the IT major sharing that he was provided emergency care at the campus clinic before being rushed to the hospital. According to the police, Nitin Edwin Michael (40), who worked as a senior analyst, was found unresponsive after he entered the washroom of the office of HCL Technologies Ltd. in the city's Mihani area around 7 p.m. on Friday. His colleagues rushed him to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Nagpur where doctors pronounced him dead upon arrival, said an officer from Sonagao police station on Sunday. Police sent the body for post-mortem and registered a case of accidental death. Initial autopsy findings indicated Michael died of cardiac arrest, the officer said. PTI

## How a new movie is setting the narrative for Maharashtra election

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit  
MUMBAI

As political campaigning moves away from the traditional methods to the realm of social media and audio-visual medium, political parties have shifted their focus accordingly.

The recently released movie, *Dharmaveer 2*, in Maharashtra is an effort to set the narrative for the upcoming Assembly election.

Apart from serving as the biography of late Shiv Sena leader Anand Dighe, the movie justifies the rebellion that split the Shiv Sena.

The relationship between Matoshree (undivided Sena's seat of power and residence of Uddhav Thackeray) and the party MLAs, the internal dynamics of party politics, and the run-up to the Guwahati trip after which the BJP formed a government with the Eknath Shinde faction of the Sena form the storyline of the movie.

**Contemporary history**  
Considering that the movie tries to set a narrative about the incidents related to contemporary history, each character has been chosen carefully to suggest similarities with the current MLAs and leaders.



Uddhav Thackeray and Aaditya Thackeray with Eknath Shinde before the split in 2022. PTI

In many scenes, real-life venues, including the Chief Minister's residence, a five-star hotel, which was a favourite haunt of the political party, have been used. In some instances, political leaders have played their own part in the movie.

Be it allegations about being 'traitors' or having allegedly taken ₹50 crore to switch over from the Thackeray-led Sena to the Shinde faction, the movie tries to set a counter-narrative. But the biggest issue it seeks to address is the sympathy wave for Mr. Thackeray after the MLAs walked away from him and joined Mr. Shinde. The climax has

legedly wanted to finish it. Drawing parallels between Dighe and Mr. Shinde, the movie portrays the current Sena chief as the carrier of the mantle of Hindutva.

"If you ask me what is the most prominent theme of the movie, it is self-respect," says the film's producer, Mangesh Desai.

Using movies for political propaganda is fairly common in south India. Even in Maharashtra, we have seen similar attempts, said senior political journalist Abhay Deshpande. "Now, parts of the movie will be used on social media," Mr. Deshpande said.

## Ranjit Chautala among 8 leaders expelled by BJP for going solo in Haryana

Rebels removed for six years with immediate effect, says State party unit after their decision to contest poll as independent candidates; Rahul Gandhi to begin second leg of campaigning today

Press Trust of India  
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and seven other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders were expelled from the party for six years on Sunday after they decided to contest the October 5 Assembly poll as Independent candidates.

The BJP State unit said its chief Mohan Lal Badoli has expelled the leaders with immediate effect. Besides Mr. Chautala, the expelled leaders include Sandeep Garg (contesting from Ladwa constituency), Zile Ram Sharma (As-sandhi), Devender Kadian (Ganaur), Bachan Singh Arya (Safidion), Radha Ahlawat (Meham), Naveen Goel (Gurugram), and Kehar Singh Rawat (Hathin). Mr. Chautala decided to quit the party after he was denied the ticket from Ra-



Ranjit Singh Chautala

nia, the seat he represented in the Assembly when he was an Independent MLA. He had quit the membership of the Assembly before joining the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha election held earlier this year. He had unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary polls from Hisar.

The State Congress unit had also expelled 13 leaders on Friday for "anti-party activities" following their decision to contest

the election as Independent candidates. Several leaders of both the BJP and the Congress were upset over being denied tickets to contest the election, but the parties have managed to pacify most of them.

## Rahul to take out yatra

With the Congress looking to go all out to wrest power from the BJP, which is eyeing a third consecutive term in the State, party leader Rahul Gandhi will embark on the second leg of his campaigning for the Assembly poll. Mr. Gandhi will cover several districts during his Haryana Vijay Sankalp Yatra and is likely to be joined by party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

The State Congress said Mr. Gandhi will address a public meeting at Narainagar in Ambala district and then the *yatra* will pass through Yamunanagar district and Mullana in Amba-

la. It will also pass through Rajeev Chowk, Saha, Ambala, Shaheed Udham Singh Chowk, Shahabad, and Babain, Ladwa in Kurukshetra, where party workers will welcome Mr. Gandhi at various points.

Another public meeting will be held at Kurukshetra's Thanesar on Monday evening. Mr. Gandhi is likely to campaign in the State till canvassing ends on the evening of October 3.

## Cong. means 'kushasan'

Meanwhile, addressing a rally in Haryana's Rohilkhand, BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Sunday alleged that the Congress means 'kushasan' (misgovernance), corruption, and criminalisation. The Union Minister urged voters in the State to make the 'lotus bill' for a third time. The results for the election to the 90-member Assembly are slated for October 8.

## T.N. Cabinet rejig: Stalin gives plum portfolios to SCs

## B. Kolappan

CHENNAI

served constituency, has become the Minister for Higher Education.

Earlier, the DMK had made A. Raja, from the SC community, the Union Minister for Telecom.

## More for Vanniyars

Salem North MLA R. Rajendran has secured a place in the Cabinet. "There is a need to have one more Vanniyar [in the Cabinet]. Salem is a big district. His elevation will gear up the party for the next Assembly election," a senior DMK leader said. Ministers Duraimurugan, M.R.K. Panneerselvam, Ma. Subramanian and S.S. Sivasankar are other Vanniyars in Cabinet.

Mr. Rajendran, a five-time legislator, will hold the portfolio of Tourism, which was handled by Mr. Ramachandran (who has been made the party whip).

Minister for Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj has been made in charge of Human Resources Management, a portfolio that was held by Finance Minister Thangam Thenmarasu.

## On the run for 5 days for rape of minor, accused tries to kill self

Mehul Malpani  
BHOPAL

began on September 23 and covered an area of about 250 kilometres in three districts - Harda, Khandwa and Betul. He was nabbed from Mohanpura area in Betul on Sunday morning.

Mr. Chouksey said that the accused had thrown away his phone after committing the crime and had been constantly moving.

"He first went to Khandwa then came back to Harda and fled to Betul but was nabbed near the border," the SP said.

Mr. Chouksey said, "We

located him on Sunday morning in a maize field. When we caught hold of him, he said that he had drunk some medicine from a bottle he found in a field out of fear of getting arrested. Upon checking, we found out that the bottle contained pesticide."

The SP said the accused was admitted to a hospital in Harda and was referred to Bhopal for treatment.

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

## MVA to finalise seat-sharing deal by next week, says will win 180

Abhinay Deshpande  
MUMBAI

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar), and the Congress, is expected to finalise its seat sharing arrangements for the upcoming Maharashtra Assembly election by early next week.

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said on Sunday that MVA leaders would meet on September 30 and October 1 to con-

clude discussions.

"We are contesting the elections as a united MVA. There is no disagreement on this issue, and talks are progressing smoothly," Mr. Patole said, while taking a swipe at the ruling Mahayuti alliance, questioning whether it even has a chief ministerial candidate to project.

## Pawar confident

Earlier in the day, NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar also echoed confidence, stating that the MVA will wrap up its seat-sharing talks

within the next 8 to 10 days.

Meanwhile, Congress legislature party leader Balasaheb Thorat, speaking in Pandharpur, said that the Mahayuti alliance should start preparing for the role of Opposition after the Assembly election. He expressed confidence that the MVA would secure over 180 seats in the 288-member Assembly, with the election likely to be held in November.

So far, the alliance has reportedly reached a consensus on 125 seats.

## Hemant Soren luring voters with govt. schemes ahead of poll: Jharkhand BJP chief

Amit Bhalari  
RANCHI

Jharkhand BJP president Babul Marandi on Sunday accused Chief Minister Hemant Soren of luring people by rolling out several schemes ahead of the Assembly election. Mr. Marandi also alleged that Mr. Soren had cheated the people of Jharkhand.

"He cheated the people of Jharkhand for five years and when the election is near, Hemant Soren *dana daal rahi taki bholihali janata phas jaye* (Hemant Soren feeding the bait so that the innocent public is trapped in his hook)," Mr. Marandi said.

In recent times, Mr. Soren has launched several schemes, including the Jharkhand Mukhyamantri Maiyan Samman Yojana (JMMSY), a major scheme providing financial assistance of ₹1,000 to eligible women in the age group of 21 to 50, from families living below the poverty line. Mr. Soren recently doubled that sum to ₹2,000 per month.

Earlier this week, Mr. Soren waived agricultural loans of ₹1,69,977 farmers worth ₹400.66 crore by



Babul Marandi

loot it, be it land, sand, coal or drainage system," Mr. Marandi said.

He alleged that the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Acts had been violated the most in Jharkhand, and land documents had been forged on a large scale.

## Scam in every scheme'

"The time has come to change the government as only loot is taking place in Jharkhand. I had raised the issue of the liquor scam and written a letter to the government. I had suggested to the government that the tribe be made the owner of 26% of the total [number of] liquor shops. Even the cycle which the government gave to the children is in bad condition. I have seen on social media that every day there is some problem with the cycles; it is of a low standard. I have been told that 40% commission has been taken in the cycle scheme. In every scheme, there is a scam," Mr. Marandi alleged.

He added that the BJP's 'Parivartan Sabha' would conclude in Hazaribagh with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally on October 2.

## Badlapur case accused buried in Ulhasnagar

Press Trust of India  
THANE

The body of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde, who was shot dead by the police, was buried in a crematorium at Ulhasnagar in Thane district of Maharashtra on Sunday, a police officer said.

The burial took place at Shantinagar crematorium amid heavy police bandobast in the wake of protests from local residents and outfits opposing the move.

Shinde was arrested on August 17 for allegedly sexually assaulting two minor girls at a school in Badlapur. He was shot dead on September 23 on the Mumra Bypass while being taken to Badlapur from Taloja Jail in connection with the probe into a complaint filed by his former wife.

As per the police, he snatched the pistol of a police officer and fired, injuring the latter. He was then gunned down by an officer leading the escort team. Since then, his body had been kept in the Kalwa civil hospital morgue, with efforts by the police and kin to find a burial place facing hurdles, including protests from residents and a few political parties.

# Anvar goes all out against CPI(M) leadership

In public meeting in Nilambur, MLA calls Pinarayi 'a liar' and says his popularity waned and people now hate him; Anvar says he gave proof against ADGP's illegal wealth amassment, claiming RSS has done many things using the official; he reiterates SP Sujith Das was involved in gold smuggling

## The Hindu Bureau MALAPPURAM

P. V. Anvar, Independent MLA of Nilambur, lashed out at the ruling CPI(M) at a massive rally convened to explain his stand on Sunday. "Nobody is anyone's slave. You will not get any more slaves in Kerala," he said, referring to the CPI(M).

Terming Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan a liar, Mr. Anvar said he had met Mr. Vijayan, who was a fatherly figure for him, for 37 minutes and not five minutes as claimed by the Chief Minister. "I sat with him for 37 minutes. My complaint had nine pages. He asked me everything and I told him everything I

knew," said Mr. Anvar. The Chief Minister had a halo around him which had brought the Left Democratic Front (LDF) back to power in 2021, he said. "I told Mr. Vijayan that halo has vanished, and his graph has gone down to zero. People hate him now," he said.

**Land of lawlessness'** In an all-out attack on the CPI(M) leadership, Mr. Anvar asserted that he was not against the party and its cadre. He said the State had become a land of lawlessness and about one-fourth of the police force had been criminalised.

The role of ADGP M.R. Ajith Kumar in the disappearance of Mami, a real-



**Lone fight:** PV. Anvar during a public meeting in Malappuram on Sunday against LDF government. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tor in Kozhikode, should be investigated, he said. He said the Chief Minister ignored the solid pieces of evidence he had submitted to incriminate the ADGP. "I gave documented proof on Mr. Ajith's illegal wealth amassment. Nothing hap-

pened. The RSS has done many things in the State using Mr. Ajith," he said.

**'Communal venom'** Reasserting the secular credentials of his family, Mr. Anvar said the State was plunging into a pathet-

ic condition where people were being branded by their names. "Believing in a religion is not communalism, but hating and opposing others is," he said. "They branded me communal just because I pray five times a day."

He said people like Shajan Scaria, editor of a YouTube channel, were spiting communal venom and trying to destroy the secular fabric of society with the support of those in power. The ADGP helped Mr. Scaria go scot-free after committing an 'anti-national' crime of tapping the police wireless system.

He said the police led by former SP Sujith Das were involved in a large gold smuggling racket centred

around Karipur airport. He described how the police team of Mr. Das snatched the gold illegally brought in by carriers in connivance with the Customs at Karipur.

## FIR against Anvar

The Kottayam Police registered a first information report against Mr. Anvar based on an illegal wiretapping complaint filed by a private citizen.

Mr. Anvar had triggered a political storm that caught Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's office (CMO) and law enforcement in its dead centre by broadcasting a contemporaneous electronic recording of a mobile phone conversation with Mr. Sujith.

# L-G should focus on curbing crime in Delhi: Bharadwaj

## The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday slammed Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena over the crime situation, saying he should perform his primary duty of maintaining law and order in the city instead of "interfering" in works of its government.



Saurabh Bharadwaj

Bharadwaj said Mr. Saxena "likes to interfere" in the works of the Public Works Department, which does not come under his jurisdiction.

"He does not have any interest in improving law and order that has gone from bad to worse, which is his primary duty," he said. The Minister claimed that thousands of Delhi residents have quietly paid money to gangsters.

"If you go to any businessman's party in Delhi, you will get to know that 80 out of 100 people present there have paid an extortion amount at one point of time," he added.

The L-G office did not offer a reaction to the allegations but the BJP, which rules at the Centre, accused AAP of trying to mislead people to escape anti-incumbency against its government ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls.

The L-G's criticism came in the wake of three firing cases reported in the city on Saturday, with the police suspecting that these were carried out to extort "protection money" from businessmen.

The Capital's law and order comes under the Union Home Ministry that manages it through the L-G.

Delhi Urban Development Minister Saurabh

**Exaggeration: BJP** Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor dismissed the accusations, saying the Minister is trying to mislead people by exaggerating occasional incidents related to law and order".

The L-G's criticism came in the wake of three firing cases reported in the city on Saturday, with the police suspecting that these were carried out to extort "protection money" from businessmen.

Meanwhile, the Congress held both AAP and the BJP responsible for the "jungle raj" in Delhi.

# Karnataka plans to act on caste census report, says CM

## The Hindu Bureau MYSURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said his government will take steps to implement the caste census report in the coming days. Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the Alumni Association of Backward Class Hostels here on Sunday, he said his earlier government had conducted the census to identify persons from the backward classes, who had been deprived of opportunities, and give them



Siddaramaiah. PTI

preferential treatment.

The report of the census could not be implemented before his earlier tenure came to an end in 2018, but the report had recently been submitted. "I will place the report before the Cabinet and take steps to implement it," he said.

He pointed out that the implementation of the report was part of the Congress' principle.

He said caste census was part of the country's population census before 1931, adding that the caste-based data could not be gathered in 1941 as the World War had started.

Stating that deprived and poor may exist in all castes, he said B.R. Ambedkar made provision for equal opportunities for people from backward classes, Dalits, and minorities in the Constitution.

## The Hindu Bureau THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Police booked several Malayalam YouTube news channels, some focusing on the film industry, for allegedly broadcasting defamatory statements and videos against veteran actor and director Balachandra Menon.

Mr. Menon had petitioned Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and State DGP Sheikh Darvesh Saheb on Saturday, stating that he was the target of a blackmail and defamation bid

by an actor and a person claiming to be her lawyer.

Mr. Menon stated that a person claiming to be the woman's lawyer had approached him seeking an amicable settlement as a *quid pro quo* for the woman not raising accusations of sexual exploitation against him on conventional and social media.

The caller also threatened to file at least three criminal miscellaneous petitions against Mr. Menon in courts, seeking registration of FIRs on the charge of sexual assaulting the ac-

tor if the movie maker did not comply with the duo's demands.

In his complaint, Mr. Menon said that calls from various numbers beset him, and he stopped attending them.

Subsequently, Mr. Menon said, the woman defamed him in interviews with several online news channels. The YouTube broadcasts went viral, causing the actor and his family intense distress.

The case registered under the IT Act and relevant sections of the IPC.

# HYDRAA not to raze houses till Deepavali

## R. Ravikanth Reddy HYDERABAD

but illegal constructions engaged in business would not be spared.

The Intelligence Department is said to have presented a report to the government on the positive feedback of the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA), but political parties are trying to mix HYDRAA actions with Musi river bed evictions to confuse people and instil fear. The report also revealed a builders' lobby backing the agitations to fuel anger. "Some real estate lobbies are working behind fuelling fear among people," a senior official said.

Sources in the government said till Deepavali, there would be no demolition of residential structures falling under the Full Tank Level (FTL) of lakes,

## Beach lessons



**Honing skills:** Youth playing football on the Shangumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, on Sunday evening. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

# SIT starts investigation into ghee adulteration complaint

The SIT formed by the Andhra Pradesh government met in Tirupati on Sunday to deliberate on the ghee adulteration controversy. The nine-member team, which had been tasked with investigating the case pertaining to alleged adulteration of ghee used in making the Tirumala laddu *prasadam*, met at the police guest house. IGP Sarvashreshth Tripathi said the team was acting upon the case filed against Tamil Nadu-based AR Dairy Foods Private Limited, based on a complaint by the TTD, after formally taking it over from the jurisdictional police.

# Cauvery Aarti to be held in Srirangapatna on October 3

## The Hindu Bureau BENGALURU

The Congress government in Karnataka has decided to symbolically launch Cauvery Aarti on the lines of Ganga Aarti on October 3, the first day of the Dasara celebrations, at Srirangapatna in Mandya.

The decision was taken after Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar held discussions with a delegation that visited Varanasi and Haridwar to study the manner in which the ritual is performed on the banks of the Ganga. "After construction of the permanent structures on Cauvery banks, the aarti will be done at least five days a week," said Congress MLC Dinesh Guligowda.

# Landslide-prone areas of Wayanad to come under ESAs

The Kerala government would bring the landslide-prone areas of Wayanad under the Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) as a precautionary measure while finalising the list. The final list of ESAs, which may see a further reduction of land where curbs on development activities could be imposed, would be submitted to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change shortly. The National Centre for Earth Science Studies had identified the landslide-prone areas of Wayanad earlier.

# Glaciologist digs deep into permafrost to gauge future climate change disasters

## The Hindu Bureau THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Possible collapse of permafrost, which are permanently frozen rock or soil formations, is an emerging climate change-induced issue in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. Glaciologist S.N. Remya from Kerala, who is part of this year India's Arctic Expedition, currently based at the Himadri research station in Norway, says that her work is aimed at identifying the probability of disasters due to the collapse and help provide early warnings to local communities.

"Soil or rock that remains frozen for at least two consecutive years is considered as permafrost. Underneath the surface, there would be regions of ice. Due to global warm-

ing, this layer of ice will melt leading to a permafrost thaw, causing fluctuations or collapse of the ground. There have been cases in Canada and other places where buildings or other infrastructure have collapsed. We still do not have proof whether permafrost had a role to play in some of the disasters in the Himalayas and it is so-

mething that has to be studied," says Remya, from the Himadri station, hosted by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) at the International Arctic Research base in Ny-Alesund.

**Data gaps** "I have conducted studies in a rock glacier located closer to our station. We

# ADGP probing 2007 mining case criminal, says Minister

## The Hindu Bureau BENGALURU

Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on Sunday called ADGP of Lokayukta M Chandra Sekhar, who heads the SIT probing the 2007 mining lease case, as a 'blackmailer' and 'criminal'.

Speaking to mediapersons, he accused the Congress government of trying to protect itself by using such tainted officials. He also stated that he would submit documents related to the alleged illegal activities of the official to the Union Home Secretary. Mr. Chandrashekhar in a letter had said: "an accused, however, high and mighty he may be, is an accused".

(With PTI inputs)



**Understanding nature:** Glaciologist S.N. Remya during her research as part of India's Arctic Expedition. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# 'CPI(M) has always stridently opposed RSS, other Hindutva forces in Kerala'

The Kerala Chief Minister says the CPI(M) will examine the Lok Sabha election results in the State; he says that it is for the party to decide if he should step down before the next Assembly election, and that the next general secretary of the CPI(M) will be picked according to the laid-down procedures

## INTERVIEW

### Pinarayi Vijayan

Sobhana K. Nair

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who is in Delhi to attend the Central Committee meeting of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), rejects allegations that the party has not effectively countered Hindutva politics in the State and has been "soft on the RSS". He also spoke on various issues. Edited excerpts:

**A review of the 2024 general election by the CPI(M)'s Central Committee noted "erosion" in the party's "traditional base in several constituencies to the BJP" and also found that the party did not pay sufficient attention to counter "Hindutva politics", which resulted in the CPI(M) yet again being limited to only one seat. Your comment.**

I don't think that is what the review said. It is not correct to say that CPI(M) in Kerala did not effectively



votes at our cost too.

**Do you see the BJP emerging as the third pole in an otherwise bipolar polity of the State?**

Not yet. But we cannot deny the fact that the BJP has set itself a long-term goal to capture Kerala. When the BJP won the Nenom Assembly constituency in the 2016 election there was a similar chorus about its onward march to Kerala. But at that point too we had said that it was only episodic and due to active collusion of the Congress. Thrissur is no different. At the same time, we are not ignoring the fact that BJP's vote share has grown in every constituency.

**In this context, when you are facing a resurgent BJP, how do you react to the allegations that top**

**ranking police officers and your staff members have been meeting RSS functionaries in secret and that the CPI(M) is soft on RSS?**

The Left, especially CPI(M), has always stridently opposed the RSS and other Hindutva forces. Many of our comrades have lost their lives standing up against them. No one in Kerala can believe these canards. We must understand the reasons why such allegations are being levelled. Minority communities form a significant proportion of Kerala's population. For a long time, these communities stood by the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). But that has changed. The minority groups are now supporting the LDF. Knowing fully well that this will electorally hurt them, the UDF is deliberately trying to create confusion, levelling

ing these false allegations that we are soft on the RSS. This campaign is only aimed at political gain. There are other extremist elements too at work, who are promoting communal divisions. When our government acts against Muslim extremist elements, these forces try to project that we are acting against Muslims. For example, 150 kg of gold and hawala money worth ₹123 crore were seized by the State police in the last five years from Malappuram district. This money is entering Kerala for "anti-State" and "anti-national activities".

The allegations that you are referring to are a reaction to such action by our government. As for Mr. Anvar, we have already constituted a special investigation team, to probe his claims.

**The 23rd Party Congress fixed an age ceiling. Members of the CC who are above the age of 75 will have to retire to make way for younger colleagues. Keeping this in mind, ahead of the next Assembly election in Kerala, will you too offer to step down?**

It is not for me to answer this question. An individual cannot decide; the party runs on collective de-

cisions. We will continue with the age-ceiling and as far as my case is concerned, it is for the party to decide. I have always worked for the party and as per the broader consensus.

**Rahul Gandhi said Sitaram Yechury was the bridge between Opposition parties, who held together the architecture of INDIA bloc, because he was flexible. Do you believe that his successor should be able, much like him, to engage with other parties?**

Sitaram had that unique ability. He could reach out to anyone irrespective of ideological differences and work closely with everyone. In the present Indian political context, it is essential that secular democratic forces work together. We will continue to cooperate with other Opposition parties under the banner of INDIA bloc. But we cannot pick our general secretary according to the wishes of other parties. I don't think his successor needs to be compared to Sitaram. The best candidate, who will safeguard the party's interests, will be picked as the general secretary according to the laid-down procedures.

# 17 fishermen from Tamil Nadu arrested by Sri Lankan Navy



Family members of arrested fishermen staging a protest at Thangachimadam near Rameswaram on Sunday. L. BALACHANDAR

## The Hindu Bureau

RAMESWARAM

As many as 17 fishermen from Thangachimadam near Rameswaram were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy while fishing near the Neduntheevu island in the early hours of Sunday. They had set sail on two boats on Saturday.

According to police sources, the registered boats, belonging to P. Selvam and S. Uyirtharaj, of Thangachimadam, had set out from the fish landing centre at Rameswaram. There were eight fishermen on one boat and nine on the other.

When they were fishing near Neduntheevu, a Sri Lankan naval patrol ship apprehended them around 3.30 a.m.

As the news of the arrests spread, the family members of those arrest-

**The women relatives of the fishermen said that frequent arrests of fishermen by Sri Lanka were making their lives miserable**

ed, along with other fishermen, blocked the Madurai-Rameswaram Highway at Thangachimadam to register their protest.

## Frequent arrests

The women relatives of the fishermen said that frequent arrests of fishermen by Sri Lanka were making their lives miserable.

"Our men venture into the sea in search of livelihood, and not for stealing. Even smugglers are treated properly, while the fishermen are facing hardship," said Ansasia, wife of Sesu- raja, one of the arrested fishermen.

# 'Southern Railway suffered losses due to wrong incentives'

S. Vijay Kumar  
CHENNAI

Southern Railway has suffered a loss of ₹20.58 crore by way of granting ineligible concession to a firm for transporting vehicles to destinations in the north-east; wrong payment of overtime allowance to staff; and non-reassessment of its land, housing the office of a Superintendent of Police (SP).

The recently published report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India for the fiscal ending in March 2022 states that Southern Railway had granted a concession of 6% to the operator for transporting automobiles to northeastern States in the specially designed Bogie Covered Autorack Double Decker Wagon (BCACBM) rakes. This ineligible concession resulted in a loss of ₹9.25 crore.

The Ministry of Railways had accorded concession on freight for commodities and motor vehicles transported in the Newly Modified Goods (NMG) rakes to the northeastern States. However, the incentive was not meant to be extended for transportation of motor vehicles in the BCACBM rakes.

When asked about the action taken to recover the ₹9.25 crore, a top Southern Railway official said booking of freight and availing of discounts were online mechanisms where there was no manual intervention. All freight bookings were done through the Freight Operations Information System.

Zonal Railways had no role in either facilitating freight bookings or providing concessions. "The question of initiating any recovery proceeding [to compensate for the loss] does not arise at the zonal



**Karat to be interim leader of CPI(M)**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Former CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat will be the coordinator of the Polit Bureau and the Central Committee of the party as an interim arrangement until the 24th party congress to be held in April 2025 in Madurai, the party said in a statement here.

The decision was taken on the first day of the Central Committee's two-day meeting in Delhi. Party general secretary Sitaram Yechury's demise recently left the post vacant.

Southern Railway also incurred a loss of ₹4.66 crore due to the non-assessment of rent for a railway property measuring 3.70 acres allotted to the SP of Tirunelveli, the report said.

The non-assessment, as per the revised procedure in 2018, had resulted in a rent of ₹75,480 per year instead of ₹1.17 crore per year, causing a loss of ₹4.66 crore (excluding the rent of buildings) during the period from July 2018 to June 2022.

It was recommended that the losses may be recovered at the earliest and necessary steps be taken to revise the rent agreement.

**'Train-18' rakes**  
Referring to the stoppage of production of 'Train-18' rakes, the Ministry's decision to change the traction system after approving the production programme for 240 coaches over two years resulted in idling of six unusable coach shells for 'Train-18' manufacture, against the earlier specification, at a cost of ₹8.57 crore. It also led to idling of materials worth ₹46 crore at the Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai.

# Previous governments lacked vision for urban development, says Modi

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday criticised previous governments for their "lack of vision and planning" for urban development. He said the Pune Metro project would have been stalled under the "old work culture" which his government had moved away from.

Mr. Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for projects worth ₹11,200 crore in Maharashtra, via video conferencing, highlighting the completion of Phase 1 of the Pune Metro as a key step in enhancing the quality of life in the city. He lauded the work done for the expansion of Pune Metro from 2016 till now because of faster decision-making

and removing obstacles. The Prime Minister's scheduled visit to Pune on September 26 was cancelled due to heavy rain in the city. Recently, NCP(SP) leader Supriya Sule criticised Mr. Modi for inaugurating the 'same' project five times.

**New ambitions**  
Mr. Modi stressed that Maharashtra needed new

ambitions and large-scale goals, particularly in transforming Pune into a hub for urban development. Addressing the city's growing population, he said enhancing modern public transport and connectivity were crucial for accelerating urban growth, a priority of the current government in Maharashtra.

"Unfortunately, previously there was lack of vi-

sion and planning for urban development. Due to the old work culture of delays, the country and the State had to suffer. The Pune Metro project was conceived in 2008 but the foundation was laid by us in 2016 and now it is expanding. The previous government couldn't even set up one pillar of metro project in eight years," he said.

Mr. Modi also praised Chief Minister Eknath Shinde for removing obstacles to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, calling for infrastructure to be built with future needs in mind. "Various stalled projects, from Metro initiatives to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train and critical irrigation projects for farmers, were delayed before the advent of the double-engine government," he said.

Centre hasn't helped Bengal fight floods, says Mamata

## The Hindu Bureau

KOLKATA

Claiming that the Union government had not extended any help to West Bengal for flood prevention and relief, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday blamed the Farakka Barrage for the deluge in parts of north Bengal.

Ms. Banerjee, who is on tour of north Bengal, accused the Centre of "not performing its role to help the State fight the calamities". She said, "The Centre did not take up maintenance work of Farakka Barrage and its water-bearing capacity has reduced to a great extent despite our repeated reminders to them".

She also highlighted that the Centre had not allocated funds to the State for flood prevention.

# Centre hell-bent on inflicting ecological disaster: Congress on Nicobar project

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Jairam Ramesh has again written to Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, cautioning the Centre against "ecological and humanitarian disaster", in view of a counter-affidavit filed by the Ministry in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on the Great Nicobar Island Development Project.

"It is also a matter of grave concern that while the NGT deliberates on petitions before it, ANIIDCO (Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation) has already invited expressions of interest that is a pre-



sor for the clearing of around 65 sq km of biodiversity-rich forests. I believe the Government of India is hell-bent on inflicting an ecological and humanitarian disaster on our country," said Mr. Ramesh.

He expressed shock that the High-Powered Committee (HPC) constituted to review environmental and Coastal Regulation Zone

clearances did not associate any independent institution or expert. He raised questions on the credibility and integrity of the HPC. Mr. Ramesh accused the Ministry of diluting the NGT's directive and giving limited terms of reference to the HPC. He said the HPC did not carry out any meaningful and comprehensive reassessment as directed.

"The HPC report has been kept secret. I don't understand this: when the original process for grant of clearances itself was not classified as 'privileged and confidential', how can a review however flawed and that too mandated by the court be classified

# Congress demands FM's resignation over electoral bond case

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday demanded the resignation of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman after a case was filed against her and others on the directions of a special court in Karnataka, which was hearing a complaint relating to the now-scraped electoral bonds scheme.

Addressing a press conference, senior Congress leaders Abhishek Manu Singhvi Jairam Ramesh reiterated the party's demand for a Supreme Court-monitored inquiry through a Special Investigation

Team (SIT) into the whole electoral bond scheme.

They alleged that four ways were used to extort money through "pre-paid bribery", "post-paid bribery", and through "shell companies". Mr. Ramesh said the Finance Minister should immediately resign as she was "guilty" politically, legally and morally.

Mr. Singhvi said it was obvious that the Minister could not do it on her own as the script and direction came from only one place and "we know who has done it and on whose instructions it has been done".

# Jobs, development high on wish list in Ahirwal belt of Haryana

In many Assembly constituencies, voters say BJP govt. has brought in development through infrastructure projects and also provided jobs on merit; however, the Agnivipath scheme and rising prices have led to some resentment in parts of the region

## GROUND REPORT

**Ashok Kumar**  
REWARI/MAHENDRAGARH

**H**aving finished their morning shift, a group of bus drivers working for a prominent private school in Haryana's Rewari are busy playing cards under a tree on Friday morning. Further away, a few more drivers are seated on a makeshift bench at a tea stall, caught in a heated political debate, with barely a week to go for voting in the high-stakes Assembly election.

Gajender, a resident of Bharawas village in Bawali Assembly constituency, says the mood in his village "is largely pro-BJP". He claims that some 40-odd youth in his village, which has over 2,500 voters, got jobs on merit during the BJP rule.

Stressing how one of them, appointed as a clerk, was from a poor Scheduled Caste family that could not afford even ₹10 as bribe, he adds that "this was unthinkable in the previous regimes". Nodding, Raj Kumar, of Gokalpur in Rewari Assembly segment, says many youth from his village too had landed jobs as teachers and police personnel on merit. But he says that the number of jobs is inadequate.

Backing his claims, Rajaendra, a resident of Sihra



**Poll mood:** Villagers playing cards at Dhanonda in Mahendragarh district of Haryana. The State will go to the polls on October 5. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

village in the Kosli Assembly constituency, says the Ahirwal belt – a reference to the Gurugram-Rewari-Mahendragarh region dominated by the Yadavs (Ahirs) – has seen all-round development over the past decade. The Yadavs are classified under the Other Backward Classes.

The National Highway 152D now connects this region to Chandigarh, the State capital, and the Delhi-Mumbai highway is also partially open. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of AIIMS at Majra Mustil Balkhi village, just 25 km from here," says Mr. Rajendra.

Several projects left incomplete by the Congress, such as the Kundli-Manesar Expressway, were completed, Rakesh, the tea

stall owner, pitches in.

The Ahirwal belt, mostly bordering Rajasthan, lies in the southern part of the agrarian State. The BJP made a clean sweep, winning all 11 Assembly seats in this region in 2014 after prominent community leader Rao Inderjit Singh, Union Minister and Gurugram MP, joined the party quitting the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha election. In 2019, the BJP retained eight Assembly segments, with the Congress winning two and an Independent emerging victorious in one.

In the Jat-dominated Rathiwala village in Pataudi, where the Congress's Pearl Chaudhary is pitted against the BJP's Birma Chaudhary, Jagbir rues the lack of job opportunities. He is also critical of the ris-

ing prices and hassles caused by the BJP government's e-initiatives such as Parivar Pehchan Patra and Property IDs, saying "these are some of the major issues in this part of south Haryana". A small-time farmer, Mr. Jagbir says the Agnivipath scheme had dashed the hopes of several young aspirants for permanent jobs in the Army.

In Ateli, one of the four Assembly constituencies in Mahendragarh district, Mr. Rao Inderjit Singh's daughter Arti Rao fights the "outsider" tag. She is caught in a multi-cornered contest with the Congress's Anita Yadav and the Bahujan Samaj Party's Thakur Attar Lal.

A resident of Dhanoda village in Ateli, Rattan Lal Sharma, a former journalist, says the farmer and

wrestler protests have had little impact in this region. Sitting next to him, Krishan Kumar, 47, claims the region remained neglected during the previous Congress regime, with the government's only focus being the Sonipat-Rohat-Jhajjar belt, the bastion of former Congress Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

"Over the past 10 years, basic amenities like drinking water, roads, and power supply have improved in these parts, though depleting groundwater still remains a concern," says retired police Sub-Inspector Anoop Yadav.

In Nangal Chaudhary, caste equations do not seem to favour bureaucrat-turned-politician and Haryana Minister Abhe Singh Yadav, the BJP nominee facing a tough contestant in the Congress's Manju Chaudhary. The latter is the wife of former Janayak Janta Party leader Mula Ram.

Poor urban infrastructure leading to severe waterlogging during monsoon, pollution, traffic jams, civic woes are some of the grievances of the voters in predominantly urban constituencies of Gurugram and Badshahpur.

Mr. Rao Inderjit Singh's oft-repeated claim to chief ministerial office has resonated with the electorate in this region.

# At Ambala Cantonment, BJP's Vij faces farmers' fury, but all is not well for Congress too

**Sobhana K. Nair**  
AMBALA



Anil Vij

Angry farmers are picketing election meetings of BJP leader and former Haryana Minister Anil Vij in villages falling under the Ambala Cantonment constituency, from where he is seeking re-election for the seventh time. But the Congress, the key challenger to Mr. Vij, also does not have its house in order, with a rebel candidate in the fray dividing the anti-BJP votes.

Mr. Vij was dropped from the Haryana Cabinet after BJP leader Nayab Singh Saini replaced Manohar Lal as the Chief Minister in March.

A video of Mr. Vij taking up responsibility for the police firing on protesting farmers on the Punjab-Haryana boundary in February, when 21-year-old Shubhkaran Singh from Patiala died, has been widely circulated on social media groups. In the video he is heard saying, "Firing may have been on anyone's orders, but I was the Home Minister at that point and I take responsibility. I cannot run away."

## Clash at Garnala

Earlier this week, at a corner meeting in Garnala village under the constituency, hundreds of farmers descended to shout slogans "BJP murdabad". Mr. Vij was forced to leave midway after a clash broke out between the farmers and BJP workers.

Speaking to *The Hindu*,

Manjeet Singh, the block president of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Shaheed Bhagat Singh) who led the protest at Garnala, explained the reasons for the farmers' anger. "We wanted to just peacefully speak to Mr. Vij. There were hundreds of us, but to keep things in order, we picked just 10 of us to speak to Mr. Vij. But that too was not allowed. The BJP workers trailing him started shouting 'BJP zindabad' and attacked us," he said.

Mr. Singh said the farmers needed answers on why the government was using oppressive measures against the protesting farmers and why the government was not keeping its promise of providing legal guarantee for minimum support price. He added, "When Mr. Vij has himself confessed that he was responsible for firing on peacefully protesting farmers then why is there no case against him?"

Mr. Singh said that he and other farmers are not with any party but are "definitely anti-BJP". At Panjokra Sahib vil-

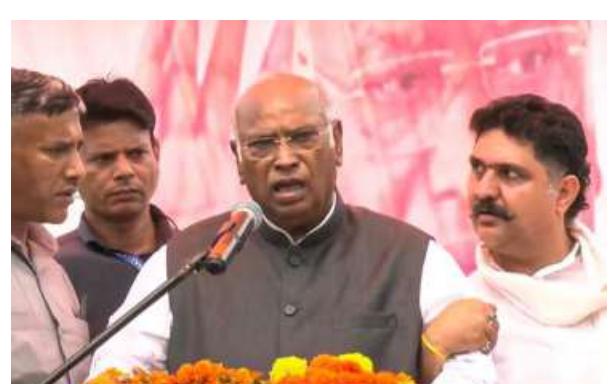
lage, Tejpal Singh lists what he calls the "anti-farmer" measures taken by the BJP. "The government has imposed steep taxes on agricultural goods. A tractor, which used to cost ₹5 lakh-₹6 lakh, is now available for ₹10 lakh. Every year, we slip into further debt, as we are unable to recover the cost of production but the government refuses to give legal guarantee for MSP," he said.

The Congress's Parimal Pari and Independent candidate Chitra Sarwara are also in the fray. Ms. Sarwara is the daughter of Congress leader Nirmal Singh. Mr. Nirmal is contesting from Ambala City. "He wanted Congress ticket for himself and his daughter. But the party has a clear policy of one ticket for one family. When his daughter was denied ticket, she decided to contest as an independent. This two-way split in the Congress vote bank will prove costly," a Congress worker said.

On the ground, especially in the villages, Ms. Sarwara is a more recognisable face. At Khatali village, Risal Singh, a small grocery shopkeeper, says he has not yet made up his mind on whom to vote for, but is sure that he will vote against the BJP. "We know Chitra, we know her father. But we have never heard of the Congress candidate, till he was fielded in this election. We will vote for the person who we trust will stand with us through thick and thin," he said.

## + Will remain active in politics till PM is ousted from power, says Kharge

**Press Trust of India**  
JASROTA/JAMMU



**Hitting out:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge addressing a public meeting in Jasrota region of Jammu and Kashmir. PTI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge vowed to fight for the restoration of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that he would remain active in politics until Prime Minister Narendra Modi was ousted from power.

"We will fight to restore Statehood. We are not going to leave it. I am 83 years old, I am not going to die so early. I will stay alive until Prime Minister Modi is removed from power. I will listen to you. I will fight for you," he told a public rally here after he was provided medical assistance at the rally venue.

The Congress chief complained of dizziness while

speaking and had to be provided medical help.

"He was addressing a public rally in Jasrota when he felt uneasy and dizzy. His colleagues helped him into a chair," Congress general secretary Gulam Ahmed Mir said.

Later, Mr. Kharge's second rally at Udhampur was cancelled.

At the Jasrota rally, Mr.

Kharge alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party was "running Jammu and Kashmir through remote control".

"These people never wanted to conduct elections. They only started preparing for elections after the Supreme Court's order," he said.

## On Statehood

He accused the BJP of failing to restore Statehood despite having the authority to do so, and criticised the party for allowing outsiders to dominate critical sectors such as mining and liquor contracts.

He condemned Mr. Modi's governance, claiming, "Modiji was shedding crocodile tears for the future of the youth in J&K."

## Rahul's poll guarantees have come a cropper, says Amit Shah in Haryana

**Press Trust of India**  
CHANDIGARH



**Key battleground:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah waving to the crowd during a meeting at Nangal Chaudhary on Sunday. ANI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday kept up the attack on the Congress in poll-bound Haryana, alleging Rahul Gandhi's election guarantees have come a cropper in States such as Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka where the grand old party is in power.

Addressing an election rally in Gurugram's Badshahpur, he said that at the time of polls, the Congress made tall promises. But they were not able to fulfil their poll promises in Himachal, Karnataka and Telangana, Mr. Shah said.

On the other hand, the BJP did not make any promise which it cannot fulfil, he said.

Referring to the Waqf Bill, Mr. Shah told the rally, "You have a problem with the current legislation on Waqf Board... we will amend it in the Winter Session of Parliament."

Several Opposition leaders had alleged that the

NDA government's Waqf Amendment Bill aims at creating a divide in society. Mr. Shah said every 10th soldier in the Army came from Haryana. From Indira Gandhi to Manmohan Singh, the Congress did not fulfil the demand for

'One Rank One Pension' and it was the Modi government that granted it in 2015, Mr. Shah said.

Criticising Mr. Gandhi over the Agnivipath scheme, Mr. Shah alleged that the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha had claimed that Agniveers would not get jobs. The scheme had been introduced to ensure a youthful profile of the armed forces, he said.

With the Congress consistently targeting the BJP over the issue, Mr. Shah told the gathering, "Don't hesitate to send your children to Army. Haryana and the Centre will give pensionable jobs to every single Agniveer."

Haryana goes to polls on October 5 and results will be declared on October 8.

## Campaigning ends for final phase of key Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election

**Press Trust of India**  
JAMMU/SRINAGAR

The intense campaigning for the third and final phase of polling in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election concluded on Sunday evening, with major political parties, engaging in fierce exchanges over critical issues, including Pakistan, Article 370, terrorism, and reservation.

Voting for this crucial phase, covering 40 Assembly segments across seven districts – Jammu, Udhampur, Samba, and Kathua in the Jammu region and Baramulla, Ban-

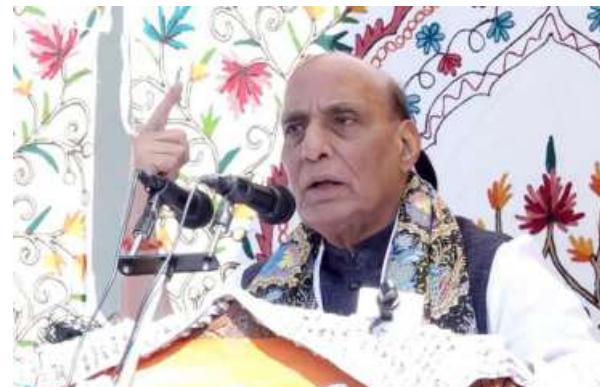
pora and Kupwara in north Kashmir – is scheduled for October 1.

The electoral fate of 415 candidates, including former Deputy Chief Ministers Tara Chand (Congress) and Muzaffar Beig, are at stake in this phase.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spearheaded the Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign, emphasising

## At rally in J&K, Rajnath takes jibe at Pakistan

**Press Trust of India**  
SRINAGAR



**Outreach effort:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressing an election rally in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. PTI

the party's initiatives over the past 10 years.

Congress leaders also campaigned vigorously, promising to restore Statehood and provide a "people-friendly" government in a coalition with the National Conference.

Addressing an election rally in Gurez Assembly segment of Bandipora, Mr. Singh referred to the Prime Minister's development package for Jammu and Kashmir announced in 2014-15 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**Special package for J&K** "Modiji in 2014-15 announced a special package for development of Jammu and Kashmir which has

now reached ₹90,000 crore. The amount is much bigger than what Pakistan was seeking from the IMF [as bailout package]," the senior BJP leader said.

Mr. Singh referred to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous

statement that "we can change friends but we cannot change the neighbours".

"...my Pakistani friends, why have strained relations, we are neighbours. If we had good relations, we would have given more

money than the IMF," he added.

Mr. Singh said the Centre gives money to Jammu and Kashmir for development while Pakistan has been misusing financial aid for a long time. "It seeks money from other countries to run a terror factory on its soil."

The Defence Minister said Kashmir will again become a paradise on earth when Mr. Vajpayee's dream of restoring "Insaniyat, Jamhooriyat and Kashmiriyat" in the Valley is achieved.

**Isolated at forums?** He said Pakistan, which has used terrorism as a tool against India, has been isolated at international forums with some of its trusted allies stepping back.

"Whenever we have in-

vestigated terrorism, we have found Pakistani involvement. Our successive governments have tried to make Pakistan understand that they should stop terrorist camps but to no avail. Pakistan is frustrated after revocation of Article 370 and is making attempts to revive terror. They do not want democracy to take root here. [But] India is strong enough that it can take on Pakistan on its soil. If anyone in Pakistan carries out an attack on India, we can crossover and respond," he added.

The BJP leader said since his party's government came to power at the Centre, peace has returned to Jammu and Kashmir.

"The business of terrorism is not going to last very long now," he added.

## IN BRIEF



## Terrorist killed in Kathua; encounter begins in Rajouri

A terrorist, suspected to be affiliated to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, was killed in a remote village of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, officials said on Sunday. Another encounter also broke out in the Thanamandi area of Rajouri district on Sunday evening when security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation after getting information about the presence of two terrorists, the officials said. "Based on specific intelligence about the presence of terrorists, a joint search operation was launched by security forces at Manial Gal in Thanamandi.

## 5 CRPF personnel injured as Naxalites trigger landmine

Five Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, including an officer, were wounded in an IED (improvised explosive device) blast triggered by Naxals in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Sunday, officials said. The incident occurred in the Tarren police station area around 7 a.m., a police official said. During the demining exercise, security personnel spotted a wire connected to a pressure IED. While they were searching for the bomb connected to the wire, it exploded, causing splinter injuries to five personnel, he said.

## Navy chief holds talks on strategic ties with officials in Greece

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India and Greece discussed avenues for cross-training in niche technologies and advanced courses, as well as ways to strengthen strategic and operational ties, during Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi's just-concluded visit to Greece.

Adm. Tripathi, who was in Greece from September 26 to 29, held talks with General Dimitrios Choupis, Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, at the Salamis Naval Base. "Discussions focused on strengthening strategic and operational ties, enhancing bilateral military cooperation, and tackling evolving maritime challenges through a collaborative approach towards a stable and secure Mediterranean and Indian Ocean Region," the Navy said in a statement.

His talks with Greece's Deputy Minister of De-

fence Ioannis Kefalogiannis focused on the criticality of open sea trade routes. They laid the groundwork for advancing Indo-Greek defence collaboration with a focus on strategic naval opportunities, capacity building, shared training initiatives, and enhancing interoperability, the Navy added.

The Navy chief was received in Athens by Vice-Adm. Dimitrios E. Kataras, Chief of the Hellenic Navy General Staff, with a ceremonial Guard of Honour at the Papagos Camp and also held talks with Vice-Adm. Polychronis Koulouris, Commander-in-Chief of the Hellenic Fleet. "Discussions focused on enhancing operational interactions and interoperability. He was also briefed on the Hellenic Fleet's capabilities and evolving security challenges, reinforcing the shared commitment to maritime security," the Navy said.

## PM urges participation in 'Create in India' challenges, says it is a huge platform

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that with changing times, the nature of jobs was also changing and new sectors, including gaming, animation, reel- and film-making were emerging. He encouraged people to participate in the 25 challenges under the 'Create in India' theme launched recently by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to promote talent and creativity.

"If you can perform well in any of these skills, your talent can get a very big platform. If you are a part of a band or working for community radio, then there is a huge opportunity for you," Mr. Modi said in his monthly *Mann Ki Baat* radio programme.

He said that some of the 'Create in India' challenges focussed on music, educa-



tion, and even on anti-piracy. "There are many professional organisations associated with this aim and are providing full support to these challenges. In order to participate, you can log in to wavesindia.org. I specially urge the creators in the country to ensure participation and bring their creativity to the fore," Mr. Modi said.

Describing the episode as an emotional one for him, he said *Mann Ki Baat*

would be completing 10 years on October 3, the first day of Navratri. He said the programme had proved how hungry the people of the country were for positive information. He added that September 2024 also marked 10 years of the 'Make in India' campaign that benefited the poor, the middle-class and the micro, small, and medium enterprises, turning India into a manufacturing powerhouse.

The country had also seen a spike in foreign direct investment inflows, he said.

He urged people to promote and buy local products during the forthcoming festive season, citing an initiative in Maharashtra's Bhandara, where over 50 self-help groups were working to preserve the old textile tradition of Bhandara tussar silk handloom.

## Constable dragged to death after he told car driver to slow down

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Jimmy Chiram said. The constable was immediately taken to Sonia Hospital and later shifted to Balaji Hospital in Paschim Vihar, where he was declared dead.

"CCTV footage showed that Sandeep took a left turn in the street and indicated the vehicle to slow down," Mr. Chiram said. Sandeep received head injuries that led to his death, he added.

A video that went viral on social media showed that two men on another motorcycle were seen behind the car. They stopped their vehicle and went to check on the constable.

The police said a case under Section 103 (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita had been registered, and a probe had been taken up to nab the absconding accused.

Sandeep is survived by his mother, wife, and a five-year-old son, the DCP said.

## Flood alert issued for north and central Bihar

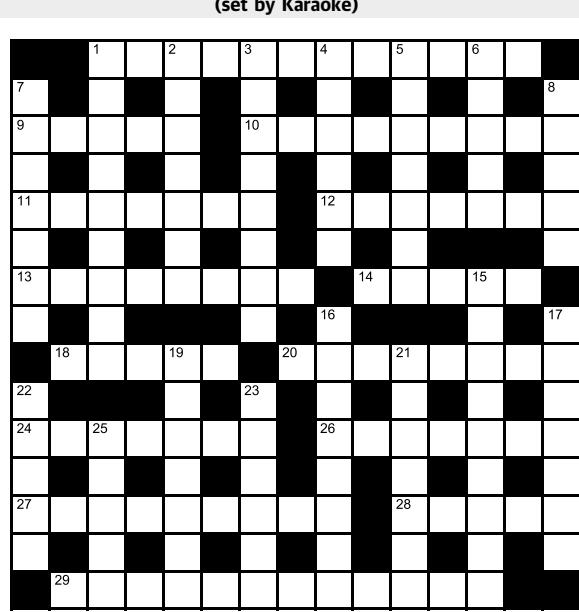
**The Hindu Bureau**  
RANCHI

The Bihar government on Sunday sounded an alert for floods in northern and central parts of the State following heavy discharge of water from the Birpur and Valmikinagar barrages.

A total of 6.61 cusecs of water was discharged from the Birpur barrage till 5 a.m. on Sunday, the highest since 1968, the State Water Resources Department said in a post on X.

On Saturday, 5.38 lakh cusecs was released from the Valmikinagar barrage on Gandak river.

The discharge of water could aggravate the condition of over 16 lakh people, who are already affected by inundation following heavy rain. The Gandak, Kosi, Bagmati, Budhi Gandak, Kamla Balan, Mahananda, and Ganga rivers saw a rise in water levels following the discharge.

TH CROSSWORD + 14293  
(set by Karaoke)

## Across

- Highest robbery of police car in Royal England? Perhaps yes (5,7)
- Unwell mostly assumes to remain unemotional (5)
- You old saint! Get ready for once (9)
- Maybe cricket ball in climatic condition claims wicket for league (7)
- See them in courts in groups chopping head (7)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/ijpTn>



## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

BUSTS SYMBIOSIS LPTOYNTC INLIERSTITRATE NUAOQWEETP TIRADE FOGGIES ZGYLCER EVILWIREBRIDGE EFMNSI TERRACOTTA ASKS PRECINCT NOFEAR COGE TBM ASUSUALIGNOBLE RALELM OBE TIELESSCOPE BIRTH

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

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## FAITH

## Krishna for two-fold faith

The Bhagavad Gita teaches everyone to live well, but one should develop the correct perspective and develop the knowledge that can awaken one's inner being and transform one. Chapter III of the Gita shows us how to achieve this, said Swami Mitranaandaji in a discourse.

When Arjuna was caught on the horns of a dilemma over the terrible Kurukshetra war, he asked Lord Krishna to show him clearly which path to pursue, whether the one of action or that of knowledge. Lord Krishna points out that a two-fold faith has been declared by Him for the human race even earlier than the Mahabharat war: the way of knowledge for the Sankhyas and the way of action for the Yogis. The path of a sankhya however calls for a logical, rational mindset, with a completely still inner core, which not many of us possess. The mere act of meditation or pursuit of knowledge without mastery over senses is a futile exercise. Krishna says fix your mind upon Me and remain there. Most devotees, aspiring for a calm mind, find it tough to achieve that meditative state. This state of restlessness is natural since each one conducts himself on earth as per his *prakriti* (guna). When one channels his restlessness into work, one is well on the path to spiritual progression. Having well managed the senses and the mind, he who pursues karma yoga by involving senses of action, into work and in that work remain detached, such a person is on the right path to reach God. Hanuman dedicated his entire life to service, and did what he had to do, with complete detachment but full focus. It is Rama who came to him and embraced him time and again.

## Doctors threaten fresh stir over Bengal hospital violence

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

on the road," Mr. Pathak said. "We are now coordinating with Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra Police to contact the families of victims...We have identified all nine bodies," he said.

## Financial assistance

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his Madhya Pradesh counterpart, Mohan Yadav, expressed grief over the incident.

The district administration has been directed to provide proper treatment to the injured and the families of the deceased will be provided financial assistance by the government as per rules," Mr. Yadav said.

"The loss of life in a road accident in Maihar, Madhya Pradesh is extremely sad. My condolences are with the grieving families of the deceased. Instructions have been given to the officials to establish contact with the Madhya Pradesh administration and provide all possible assistance to the victims," Mr. Adityanath said.



Junior doctors said they would continue strike if the situation did not improve. PTI

not improve. "We want to give some time to the government. If the situation does not change, we will start a complete cease-work again from Monday evening," a representative said.

After a 42-day strike in protest against the rape and murder of the on-duty woman resident doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, junior doctors had partially called off their cease work on September 21.

Junior doctors had on Saturday written an email to Chief Secretary Manoj Pant, reiterating their demands which were "yet to be fulfilled" by the State government.

## SCIENCE

# Not just nothing, dark matter quests close in on dire ‘neutrino fog’

Scientists have placed the tightest restrictions yet on the identity of the particles that make up dark matter. It was a null result: it didn't say what the particle's identity was but suggested which identities the particle couldn't have. It prompted a sense of resignation. Similar experiments have been turning up empty-handed for decades

Nirmal Raj

**I**n August 28, two members of an experiment at conferences in Chicago and São Paulo had an announcement to make.

They were representing about 200 of their colleagues involved in the design, building, and operation of the LUX-ZEPLIN (LZ) experiment located 1.5km below the earth's surface at the Sanford Underground Research Facility in South Dakota, U.S. Their news: their band of scientists had placed the tightest restrictions yet on the identity of the particles that made up dark matter.

It was a null result: it didn't say what the particle's identity was but suggested which identities the particle couldn't have. And it didn't prompt disappointment from the physics community. Instead, it prompted resignation.

Experiments similar to LZ – such as XENON-nT in Italy, PandaX-4T in China, and dozens of others around the world – have been turning up empty-handed for decades now despite heroic efforts.

**Dark matter and its handshake**

Dark matter is the invisible stuff making up most of the mass in the universe, responsible for giving the cosmos its current looks. Stars, gas, and planets contribute only 15% to the universe's mass.

The simplest contender for the make-up of dark matter is a previously unknown type of particle that doesn't interact with photons and lives – i.e. without disintegrating, unlike most particles – for at least the age of the universe, about 14 billion years.

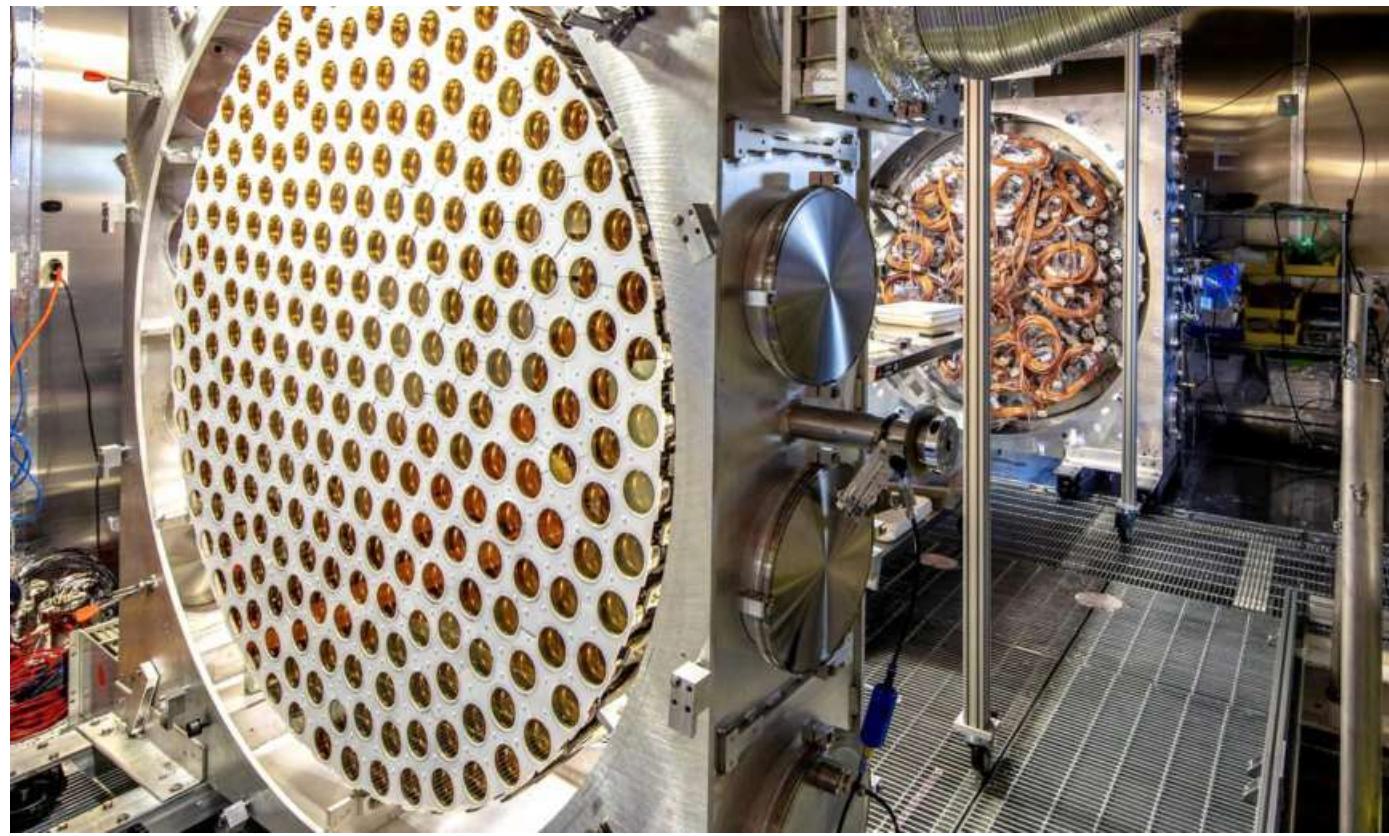
This raises a question: does dark matter ever touch us? More precisely, can atomic nuclei and electrons scatter dark matter particles when they come close?

Several theories of dark matter indeed predict this handshake between the visible and invisible. The issue is how we can detect it.

**A sail to catch the wind**

In 1985, physicists Mark Goodman and Ed Witten proposed a new strategy that has since mushroomed into an entire sub-field of experimental physics. (This is the same Witten of string theory fame. Thus the most theoretical of physicists has spawned an industry of experiments, proving the artificiality of divisions within physics. It is ironic that if dark matter is discovered in an underground laboratory, Witten will be awarded the Nobel Prize for something he has spent the least time on.)

We are all familiar with the pancake shape of the Milky Way galaxy. This disk



An array of photomultiplier tubes assembled for the LUX-ZEPLIN experiment. LZ DARK MATTER EXPERIMENT, LZ.LBL.GOV

of stars is embedded in a ball of dark matter about 100,000 lightyears across. In the Solar System, every teaspoon of space contains about two protons' weight of dark particles. These particles blow as a wind into us from all directions at one-thousandth the speed of light.

Goodman's and Witten's (GW) idea was to catch this wind in a “sail” – a chunk of metal placed deep underground to shield against other radiation from space. If a nucleus in the metal were seen to recoil spontaneously, it must be the invisible bump of dark matter.

In Ernest Rutherford's gold foil experiment, his team shone a well-understood beam at a mysterious target. GW's idea was the reverse: an enigmatic beam on a familiar target. The goal of the experiment is to measure two quantities: the unknown mass of the dark particle and the unknown rate at which atomic nuclei scatter dark matter particles. Physicists track this rate using a variable called the cross-section.

Consider the passage of light in a vacuum, in glass, and in a piece of rock. In the first case, a photon travels unimpeded; in the second, it travels a good distance before being scattered by an atom; and in the third, it is immediately stopped. We then say, for these three cases respectively, that the scattering cross-section is zero, small, and enormous.

Transparency needn't apply to light alone: any medium can be quantifiably

**Scientists are actively pursuing other avenues of research, too. One is to detect dark particles that are lighter than atomic nuclei, for these would scatter feebly off the target nucleus**

transparent or opaque to any particle type. GW's proposal would have measured the cross section for dark matter to scatter on nuclei down to  $10^{-38}$  cm<sup>2</sup>, already a staggeringly tiny quantity. It would imply that dark matter would have to traverse 10 billion km of rock before being stopped.

**The neutrino fog**

These mousetraps for dark matter have since come a long way. Where GW proposed the use of a kilogramme of metal for a day, today scientists expose tonnes of liquid xenon and argon to the dark-matter wind for years. The advantage of going bigger and running longer is that one can catch dark matter that is ghostlier, i.e., with a smaller cross section. As a result, we can now say with a straight face that we have ruled out dark matter-nucleus cross sections of  $10^{-44}$  cm<sup>2</sup>, a million times smaller than the GW limit.

This is just the announcement LZ made in August.

Could we go on making our detectors bigger and probe arbitrarily smaller cross sections? Not quite. Future detectors that will weigh tens to hundreds of tonnes will

also register much more noise from the scatters of other ghostly particles, especially neutrinos forged in the Sun's interior and in the earth's atmosphere. In fact, PandaX-4T and XENONnT are already reporting this issue. The resignation following LZ's announcement is partly for this reason: scientists had hoped to reveal dark matter's identity before facing this “neutrino fog.” Telling dark matter and neutrino signals apart in future searches is a challenge that drives a great deal of research.

**Every last drop**

Scientists are actively pursuing other avenues of research, too. One is to detect dark particles that are lighter than atomic nuclei, for these would scatter feebly off the target nucleus.

Picture a bug hitting a truck, which would hardly move the vehicle. The goal is to develop technology to perceive the slightest of energy transfers, which involves building detectors using special materials that are currently restricted to the realm of condensed matter physics.

Thus the hunt for dark matter, like that of the Calydonian boar, unites many talents. That is not surprising: the effort to decipher the natural world has always drawn every last drop of human ingenuity.

(Nirmal Raj is an assistant professor of theoretical physics at the Centre for High Energy Physics in the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. nraj@iisc.ac.in)

**THE GIST**

Dark matter is the invisible stuff making up most of the mass in the universe, responsible for giving the cosmos its current looks. Stars, gas, and planets contribute only 15% to the universe's mass

The simplest contender for the make-up of dark matter is a previously unknown type of particle that doesn't interact with photons and lives for at least the age of the universe, about 14 billion years

The researchers' plan is to catch the dark matter in a ‘sail’ – a detector placed deep underground to shield against other radiation from space. If a nucleus in the detector were seen to recoil, it must be the invisible bump of dark matter

The goal is to measure the unknown mass of the dark particle and the unknown rate at which atomic nuclei scatter dark matter particles. Physicists track this rate using a variable called the cross-section

**BIG SHOT**

A river that overflowed its banks after the passage of Tropical Storm John in Chilpancingo, Mexico, on Friday. The head of Mexico's national meteorological service, Alejandra Mendez, said John had soaked Guerrero with more than 95 cm of rain since September 23, while Otis, a Category 5 hurricane, had brought 35 cm of rain. REUTERS

**WHAT IS IT?**

## Pollen: a mammoth killer?

Vasudevan Mukunth

Pollen is an important substance many plants use to reproduce. It is a gametophyte, a multicellular organism of sorts that delivers the male gamete of a seed-producing plant to the stigma of another such plant.

Each pollen particle consists of reproductive and non-reproductive cells. When the pollen lands on a compatible plant, the non-reproductive cells produce the pollen tube while the reproductive cells multiply to produce the nuclei of sperm cells. The sperm travels through the tube to the base of the pistil, starting the process that eventually produces fruits filled with seeds. When many pollen particles are collected together, they resemble a powder. A natural polymer called sporopollenin surrounds the pollen cells to protect them during their journey through the air and from inclement elements.

Many people are allergic to pollen – this pollen usually comes from anemophilous plants (including birch and hickory); an allergic reaction from grass pollen is called hay fever. The study of pollen is called palynology. A study published in the September 2024 issue of *Earth History and*



Pollen may have played a part in the extinction of mammoths. The emergence of plants towards the end of the last ice age could have disrupted their sense of smell. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

*Biodiversity* reported that pollen may have played a part in pushing the mammoths to extinction. Based on genetic analyses, they said the emergence of plants towards the end of the last ice age could have disrupted the megafauna's sense of smell and signalling pathways based on their olfactory system, including locating their group-mates and food sources. However, independent researchers have asked for more proof of the idea before they say it can be accepted.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



## Demand flux

Growth dynamics may falter with waning urban consumption

**I**ndia's resounding 8.2% GDP growth in 2023-24 came with two worrying portents. The farm sector lost momentum due to an unhelpful monsoon, and private consumption spends rose at less than half the economy's pace. In fact, the 4% growth in private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) was the weakest since 2002-03, if one excludes 2020-21, when COVID-19 first hit the world. Of course, some of this stemmed from the farm sector's rain woes that weighed down rural demand, while economists flagged a K-shaped consumption pattern of higher-end goods and services seeing greater uptake than the rest. A normal monsoon this year, it was hoped, would help the farm sector and rural demand rebound, and shore up overall consumption to levels that spur growth as well as hasten an uptick in industrial capacity utilisation rates to thresholds that compel private investors to ramp up. This much-awaited outcome is vital for the virtuous cycle of more investments leading to more jobs and higher consumption to kick in.

Growth numbers for the first quarter suggested this story was playing out, with the PFCE rising at a seven-quarter high of 7.4%, outpacing the 6.8% GDP upturn. Rural demand signals such as two-wheeler sales also perked up. India Ratings reckons that real rural wage growth turned positive in July and is expected to stay positive, aided by cooling inflation. This bodes well for consumption. However, a twist in this tale may be imminent, with urban demand beginning to show some fatigue. Last Tuesday, S&P Global Ratings, which expects India to grow 6.8% this year (lower than the 7.2% rise penned in by the Reserve Bank of India), said high interest rates are tempering urban demand. The RBI's consumer confidence survey for July shows a turn in the tide, with current and future confidence levels of urban buyers dropping. The Finance Ministry has taken note too, pointing to a dip in passenger vehicle sales through April to August as a barometer of stuttering urban demand. The trend warrants monitoring, it said, while expressing hope that festive fervour could trigger a course reversal. With wallets cramped by persistently high food inflation (that also clouds rate cut hopes), the ability of urban Indians to create room for discretionary spends through the festive season and beyond would be critical for growth as well as the virtuous private investment cycle. With global oil prices turning benign, the Centre must consider passing through the reduced costs to consumers, and cut levies embedded into retail fuel prices. A substantive fuel price cut, as opposed to the token two rupees of relief per litre unveiled this March, can support demand in the economy.

## Mad doctrine

Any threat of use of nuclear weapons must be viewed seriously

**R**ussian President Vladimir Putin's revision of Russia's nuclear doctrine announced last week is a worrying increase in the war rhetoric surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It would once have been considered unthinkable for permanent members of the UN Security Council to behave in this manner. His announcement was that in the event of a conventional attack on Russia by any country that is supported by a nuclear power, Russia would consider that a "joint attack" and presumably, deal with the threat accordingly. He added that Russia could use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack posing a "critical threat to [its] sovereignty", a threat that was repeated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the UN General Assembly meet over the weekend, when he said the idea of defeating Russia on the battlefield is "senseless" and a "suicidal escapade" given that Moscow has nuclear weapons. Clearly, the context of Mr. Putin's nuclear doctrine revision and the comments is Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the United States, where he attempted to present a new "victory plan" for Ukraine. Mr. Zelenskyy wants the permission of the U.S. and other western countries to use missiles and other heavy weaponry procured from them for attacks deep inside Russia. Thus far, the weaponry, including Storm Shadow and ATACMS missiles, can only be used for Ukraine's defence, although western capitals turned a blind eye when Ukrainian forces invaded the Russian Oblast of Kursk in August with tanks and weaponry, allowing Mr. Zelenskyy to rack up a symbolic win and possibly some leverage in future negotiations for peace. However, much of the euphoria in Kyiv has since dissipated with Russia hitting back anew, sending in troops to Kursk, and also opening a new front around Ukraine's Pokrovsk, and western countries remaining loathe to enter the theatre of war. To that end, U.S. President Joseph Biden has now announced nearly \$8 billion in additional military aid for Ukraine, but made no reference to the demand for its utilisation inside Russia.

It remains to be seen whether Mr. Putin will be assuaged, or if concerns about the war reaching a "nuclear threshold" will grow from this point on, and it is hoped countries, including India, that have committed to finding a path to dialogue and peace, redouble their efforts to prevent such a catastrophe. New Delhi has said that it "conveyed messages" to Moscow when safety concerns grew over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. Prime Minister Narendra Modi may be called on to do the same when he visits Russia in October for the BRICS summit. As the world grapples with the spectre of escalation in West Asia, the last thing it needs is a reversion to chilling cold war scenarios in Eurasia, of mutually assured destruction.



**S**etting all family-based traditions of political domination to a side, the election of the 'relatively unknown' 55-year-old Anura Kumar Dissanayake (AKD) of the JVP (People's Liberation Front)-led NPP (National People's Power), as Sri Lanka's President comes as a true serendipitous surprise. He is that – relatively unknown – in more senses than one. Though 'around' for decades in Sri Lanka politics as a Marxist politician schooled in the radical Janatha Vimukhti Peramuna (JVP), and a cabinet Minister (2004-05) in Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's coalition government, AKD has swum below the radars of most Lanka-watchers. But he is 'relatively unknown' also in the important sense (important all over South Asia but particularly so in Sri Lanka) of being 'unknown as a relative' or kin descended from a political family.

Of all early analyses that I have come across of AKD's dramatic victory, the most insightful is one from an acute observer of Lankan affairs from the perch of Tamil Lanka but not a 'standard political columnist', Sivanandini Duraiswamy. The Jaffna-based litterateur who is, whether or not so in a formal sense, a sociologist, sums up the scene in a note that is a nugget of fact and comment: "The mandate if any was against what Mao Ze Dong termed 'the decadence of the state, the sufferings of humanity and the darkness of society'. It was in reaction to International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity and the extravagant recklessness of the Colombo elite. It represented a paradigm shift where a monolingual outsider who belonged to a party that rose in revolt twice in 1971 and in 1987-89 [resulting in the deaths of 80,000 Sinhalese youth] is now at the helm. Further, AKD is not from the dominant Sinhalese Govigama caste from which all 15 Heads of Government, except one, belonged to in our 75-year post-independence history. That is itself a significant achievement. He is likeable, self-made and charismatic."

Having given AKD his rightful due, she goes on to explain some of the interstices of the AKD phenomenon. Chief among these, in my re-telling of those with my added observations, are the following:

### The vote and challenges

AKD's dramatic win must be seen with the hard realities he must face. Foremost of these is plainly political: If 42% of the electorate has voted for him, 58% voted for others in a scattered way but



**Gopalkrishna Gandhi**

a former High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka

decisively against him. This large non-AKD if not anti-AKD majority comprises the huge chunk of Sinhala majority voters who voted in 'old UNP' style for the two former 'UNP's the second-in-the-race, Sajith Premadasa, son of the late Prime Minister R. Premadasa and Ranil Wickremesinghe, taken together. This AKD-negative chunk includes also, almost the entirety of the Tamil electorate in the nation's 10 non-Sinhala majority districts in the north, east and the central highlands.

This means that AKD has to not just consolidate his own Left-inclined and Left-supporting Sinhala support base but seek support from non-Left Sinhala and Tamil Lanka as well. If AKD is to form a stable government he has to do so with his own JVP and NPP MPs and others. The most logical and, in Sri Lanka, the tried-and-tested way of doing this would be through the coalition path. Or through 'outside support' – ever tenuous.

The next biggest challenge is financial. AKD has to meld his tare of past ideological positions with the hard reality of Sri Lanka's dependence on IMF funding. How he will be able to convince his support base – his 'bread and butter' – about the inevitability of the self-denying austerity regimen that comes as the price for IMF funding, remains to be seen. If Ranil Wickremesinghe was judged and judged out in under two years, AKD will have a tighter calendar to work within. If Sri Lanka's polity is a minefield, its political economy is an all-but dry lake. Early reports suggest that AKD will negotiate, not scrap, the Ranil government's convergences with the IMF. If AKD holds deliberations with the outgoing President's economic team, that could lead to calibrated increments in decision making. Ranil Wickremesinghe may have made political misjudgements, especially in his more-than-generous handling of the Rajapaksa order. But his grasp of economic affairs is not a resource to be lightly disregarded.

The third and from India's point of view, a very serious challenge to AKD's Leftward landscape is the ideological voltage which will be directed to it from China. Even if one were to disregard the speculation about China having played a financial role in AKD's election campaign, one cannot be over-cautious about Beijing's reflexive leverage over any government in Colombo. Within touching adjacency to India, the emerald isle shares with its immediate neighbour all the frictions proximity brings. Sri Lanka's distant but deep oceanic heave with China is without the

frictions that proximity brings. If IMF funding spells uneasy austerities in the short term, Chinese support cannot but script risky promissory notes in the long term.

### Renewal of the democratic voice

AKD cannot do better than remember a defining question that the great Lankan Marxist asked of those pressing for 'Sinhala only' politics in Parliament in 1956. "Do you want two languages and one nation, or one language and two nations?" On how AKD navigates the language and religious fissures of his country depends on the veracity and validity of his leadership. In this the experience of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge in proposing federal and devolution principles to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other Tamil political formations can be instructive for him. Let me say, with welcome admiration, that I found this statement of AKD's at his inauguration nothing less than redemptive: "Democracy helped me win. Some voted for me, and others didn't. But my pledge is to work hard to win the trust of those who didn't vote for me as well."

In her note dated September 24, 2024, Sivanandini Duraiswamy gives the optimistically gratifying and synoptically telling news that "(AKD) took a needed first step. He visited a Hindu Temple in Kandy today to receive a rapturous welcome." Bravo, is what I would say to that, bravo AKD.

An outstanding former Indian diplomat, Ramu Damodaran, recently drew my attention to a new play, 'Counting and Cracking' by Lankan playwright S. Shakthidharan which is said to be currently 'dazzling' New York audiences. Anand Giridharadas, founder editor of The.Ink online journal, has interviewed Shakthidharan, where he says: "I think the best way to strengthen democracy after realizing how fragile it is – rather than being terrified by that – is to listen deeply to the truths of people who are different to us and to find ways to agree to disagree."

Scepticism in the shape of hard-knocked realism marks India's general attitude to its neighbours. But at this point of time, India needs to view the AKD phenomenon with faith in the self-renewing power of the democratic voice. The internal gravitas of the AKD-led government will necessarily have to be ideological, its external outreach will need to be empirical. But its link with India, which has internal and external dimensions will have to be what they have always been and will always be: umbilical.

## Common Practice Standards must have India outlook

**I**ndia's vast potential in the agroforestry sector is a unique opportunity to integrate with carbon finance projects through Afforestation, Reforestation, and Revegetation (ARR) initiatives. There is a possibility to expand the area under agroforestry from the current 28.4 million hectares to 53 million hectares by 2050. Agroforestry accounts for 8.65% of India's total land area and contributes 19.3% of the country's carbon stocks. Thus, agroforestry plays a significant role in environmental sustainability and economic development.

Recent research suggests that if adequate policies, financial support, and incentives are implemented, the sector could contribute an additional carbon sink of over 2.5 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent by 2030.

### 'Common Practice' in Carbon Standards

In the realm of carbon finance, "common practice" is a key criterion used to assess whether a project is additional – meaning, it goes beyond what is typically done in a given region. For ARR projects, this involves determining whether similar activities are commonly practised without the financial incentives provided by carbon credits. According to carbon standards such as Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) or the Gold Standard, if an activity is deemed "common practice", it may not qualify for carbon credits, as it is not seen as contributing additional environmental benefits beyond the norm.

However, the current definition of common practice in global carbon standards often reflects the realities of large-scale agricultural practices found in regions such as Latin America, Africa, or the United States, where landholdings are extensive and contiguous. In contrast, India is characterised by small and fragmented landholdings. Recent data indicate that 86.1% of Indian farmers are small and marginal, with landholdings of less than two hectares. These farmers often engage in agroforestry in a non-systematic, scattered manner, planting trees alongside crops or on small patches of fallow land.

While beneficial, these practices may not meet



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International carbon finance platforms must revise their standards to better align with the realities of Indian agriculture

the additionality criteria set by current carbon standards because they are perceived as "common" within the Indian context. This presents a significant challenge, as it effectively excludes a large number of Indian farmers from participating in ARR carbon finance projects, thereby denying them the opportunity to earn additional income from carbon credits.

### Need for India-centric approaches

Given India's unique agricultural landscape, there is an urgent need to redefine and consider the common practice criterion to better reflect the specific challenges and opportunities within the Indian agroforestry sector. An India-centric approach would recognise that even small, incremental changes in land management practices such as adopting more systematic agroforestry techniques or utilising carbon finance to maintain tree cover can be transformative.

Revising and consideration of the common practice standards to accommodate the fragmented, small-holder model prevalent in India would unlock the vast potential for carbon sequestration. This would enable a greater number of farmers to participate in carbon finance projects, providing them with additional income streams while contributing to India's climate goals. Further, by acknowledging the fragmented nature of Indian agriculture, carbon credit platforms could design incentives that encourage systematic agroforestry, thereby enhancing both environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods.

Agroforestry, when integrated with ARR initiatives, offers a viable solution to the various challenges faced by India's agricultural sector. By promoting alternative livelihoods and providing additional income streams for farmers, these projects can help address issues such as low productivity, dependence on monsoons, and environmental degradation. The carbon finance provided by ARR projects enables a more systematic and sustained approach to agroforestry, which would otherwise be difficult to achieve given the financial pressures and

market constraints faced by many Indian farmers. For farmers grappling with unpredictable weather patterns and fluctuating crop yields, participating in ARR projects presents a pathway to income diversification. By integrating trees into their agricultural landscapes or restoring degraded forest areas on their land, farmers can tap into additional revenue streams through carbon sequestration. Beyond economic gains, ARR projects deliver crucial environmental benefits, such as enhancing soil fertility, improving water retention, and mitigating erosion, thereby bolstering agricultural productivity and ensuring long-term sustainability.

### Help small and marginal farmers

Research institutes such as The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) have already demonstrated the potential of ARR projects in India, spearheading 19 projects across seven States, benefiting over 56,600 farmers. However, for such initiatives to scale up, it is imperative that international carbon finance platforms revise their standards to better align with the realities of Indian agriculture.

As India looks to expand its agroforestry sector and leverage the benefits of carbon finance, it is crucial that international standards evolve to reflect the specific conditions of the Indian subcontinent. Revising the "Common Practice" guidelines to be more inclusive of Indian agroforestry practices will enable millions of small and marginal farmers to participate in ARR projects. This would not only drive sustainable development but also provide a much-needed boost to the incomes of millions of rural households, ultimately contributing to the overall economic and environmental resilience of the country.

It is imperative that carbon credit platforms such as Verra and Gold Standard recognise the need for India-centric standards. Only then can the full potential of agroforestry and ARR initiatives be realised, paving the way for a greener, more sustainable, and economically prosperous future for India's farmers.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A word of advice

Pakistan has made its speeches in the United Nations take the form of a ritualistic spewing of venom against India, even as it continues to practise its undeclared state policy of abetting cross-border terrorism to create disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir and across the rest of India (Page 1, September 29). Instead of spending its energies on nurturing terrorism on its soil and

fulminating against India at international fora, it should concentrate its energies on setting right its economy, which is in a shambles. Pakistan must realise the futility of nurturing cross-border terrorism, so that a peaceful and conducive atmosphere prevails for the normalisation of ties with India. It will also usher peace in South Asia.

**Kosaraju Chandramouli,**  
Hyderabad

**Sonrise**  
It is amusing that many politicians who hail from political families in India swear by the Constitution and pose as the champions of democracy while unabashedly promoting dynastic politics. ("Udhayanidhi is Deputy CM; Senthilbalaji back in Cabinet", September 29). Strangely, the public takes such hypocrisy for granted. Is there an unconscious yearning for kings and

maharajas in the Indian psyche?  
**Manohar Alembath,**  
Kannur, Kerala  
**Antibiotics use**  
The inappropriate use of antibiotics and the unrestricted over-the-counter sale of antibiotics has led to increased antimicrobial resistance ("Science" page, "Can Kerala's policy to limit antibiotics misuse reduce AMR?", September 29).

Antimicrobial resistance is one of the top public health and global threats, putting many of the gains of modern medicine at risk. Kerala became the first State to ban over-the-counter sale of antibiotics without a prescription, but much needs to be done in terms of regulation and the antibiotic policy to prevent the deaths due to AMR.  
**Dr. Thomas Palocaren,**  
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

**Mark of an era**  
In the passing of 108-year-old Pappalam on September 27, India has lost a pioneer in the field of agriculture. The centenarian Tamil Nadu-based farmer's life was a testament to the power of passion in agriculture, and it is unimaginable that a woman could toil in this tough and unpredictable field every day even at that ripe age.  
**R. Sivakumar,**  
Chennai

# Bridging the chasm of global inequality

The Summit of the Future raises a set of fundamental questions on global governance: should the focus be on great power competition or continuing imbalance in the institutions, agenda setting, and global inequality? The former looks at the means and not the ends with a continuing debate on the meaning of justice.

Global goals do not resolve challenges; they support new forms of cooperation. The Summit resulted in a Global Digital Impact initiative and a Declaration on Future Generations, an inspirational call for national action. The concrete impact is an International Scientific Panel and a Global Dialogue on AI. An implementation map and intergovernmental consultations mirror how climate change came onto the global agenda 30 years ago. Climate change is now relegated to scaling up adaptation finance, and GDP will include sustainability. Developed countries continue to have the capacity to shape the global agenda.

The Summit did not agree to a clear pathway for Security Council reform and has called for categories of members. Reform of governance of global financial institutions is limited to a pledge to give developing countries a greater say in decision making and review of sovereign debt has been reiterated. Concerns of developing countries have got a short shift.

The problem here is one of definitions. Should the G-7, which continues to set the global agenda, be described as a club of victors of the Second World War or a group of former colonial powers? The U.S. established the G-7 in 1973 to set the global agenda in the United Nations (UN) as an anti-developing country body. The clash between Western capitalism and Soviet communism provided the former colonies who became the world's poor more space and voice. While the world's political geography was reshaped, the 'poor' remained trapped at the bottom of the

**Mukul Sanwal**

served as policy adviser to the Executive Director of UNEP and later to the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC and was closely associated with Inter-Agency Relations in the Chief Executives Board of the UN

economic and geopolitical hierarchy. The imbalance in the wider world is reflected in the UN.

For example, recent figures from the UN show that only 17% of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track. Developing countries hold \$29 trillion in public debt, with \$847 billion in net interest payments, and experienced a negative net resource transfer in 2022. In July, the first joint declaration by G-20 finance leaders on international tax cooperation ended with disagreement over whether the UN or the OECD is the right forum to advance the agenda.

Real change began with the re-emergence of China and India and their BRICS grouping, in 2009, but it still awaits the reversal of colonial imbalances in key areas. In 1950, the U.S. used 40% of the world's natural resources having hegemonic power to set up multilateralism in a unilateral manner. With the reconstruction of Europe by 1970, their share had come down to 26%. Multilateralism evolved into treaties, having the authority to impact national policies. The G-7 share decreased to one-fifth in 2010, when Asia used half of global resource use. In a more equal world, the interests of the Global South gained a voice but not the ability to set the agenda. South Africa in 2023 had to file a case to determine obligations under the climate regime and this is a severe indictment of conference diplomacy.

#### Foundations of power

The foundations of power will remain with the West for a few decades even as the global trend is in favour of the Global South. In 1800, Asia consumed more energy than the rest of the world. In 1850, it consumed as much energy as the West. In 1950, the West's consumption was three times the rest of the world. In 2000, the West consumed as much energy as the rest of the world. The imbalance in the sphere of technology and endogenous

capacity is even more severe with China and India as outliers becoming global leaders only in certain areas. The trend is towards a more equal world in all its dimensions. In 2000, 4.6 billion people lived in countries whose combined GDP was just 20% of the 755 million people who lived in the G-7. By 2016, the GDP share of 17 developing countries as a percentage of the G-7 countries tripled to 63%. The Summit accepts this imbalance but focuses on how progress is measured rather than on measures to bridge the gaps.

The Summit recognises that GDP focuses on the economic performance of societies but seeks to link it to sustainability. A broader understanding of prosperity considers non-monetary factors such as infrastructure, municipal services, affordable energy, educational opportunities, health care, and access to drinking water that better represent the urban living standards in a country. A focus on comparable levels of well-being is overdue.

The big lesson from the Summit is that developing countries have yet to exploit the opportunities presented by the UN system. While the international political process is open in procedural terms, it has been informed by consensual science developed by 'official experts', and this will be the case for global governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and modification of GDP. Experts frame issues in a manner that determines the "problem" and how it should be "resolved".

As global power shifts back to Asia, both giants are conscious that their ideas are different from the dominant view espoused by the West on how societies work, change, and can be influenced. In a nod to geopolitics, Asia needs to be involved more deeply from the very beginning in expert bodies on AI and GDP to shape global governance by defining global priorities, cooperation, and justice.

The big lesson from the Summit is that developing countries have yet to exploit the opportunities presented by the UN system

# What has Make in India achieved?

Ten years later, manufacturing growth has slowed to 5.5%, its GDP share remains stagnant at 15-17%, and employment in the sector has decreased

#### DATA POINT

##### R. Nagaraj

In September 25, 2014, the newly elected Union government initiated the Make in India (MI) policy with two objectives: (i) to raise the manufacturing sector's share in GDP to 25% (from 14%-15%), and (ii) to create 100 million additional industrial jobs (from about 60 million) by 2025. The policy was similar to the New Manufacturing Policy 2012, formulated but not implemented. The policy context: though India's annual real (net of inflation) GDP growth rate had accelerated to 7%-8% during the previous decade with rising export share, especially during 2003-08, manufacturing sector performance was modest, with increasing net imports and modest employment expansion.

Ten years on, what are the policy outcomes? According to the National Accounts Statistics (NAS), the manufacturing real gross value added (GVA) growth rate has slowed down from 8.1 during 2001-12 to 5.5% during 2012-23 (**Chart 1**). The sector's GDP share has stagnated at 15%-17% over the last three decades, though it is slightly higher in the latest GDP series due to methodological changes (**Chart 2**).

As per the NSSO sample surveys, manufacturing employment has declined from 12.6% in 2011-12 to 11.4% in 2022-23. Unorganised or informal sector manufacturing accounts for most employment, declining by 8.2 million, from 38.8 million in 2015-16 to 30.6 million by 2022-23, as per surveys of unincorporated sector enterprises. Agriculture's share in the workforce increased from 42.5% in 2018-19 to 45.8% in 2022-23 (**Chart 3**).

The preceding reversal of structural transformation from a higher to a lower productivity sector is unprecedented in post-independent India. It is the clearest sign yet of premature de-industrialisation, that is, before attaining industrial

maturity as in the advanced countries.

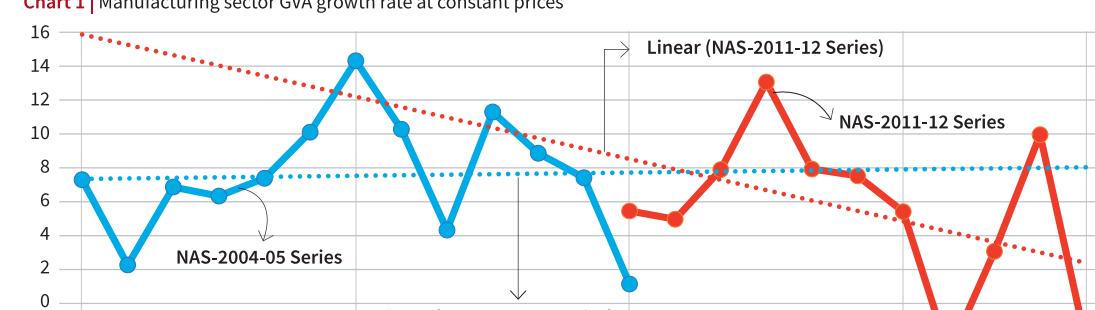
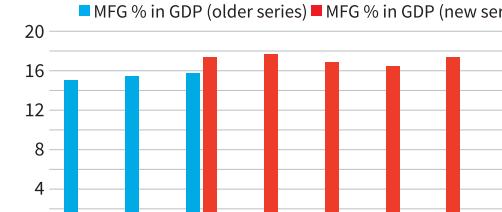
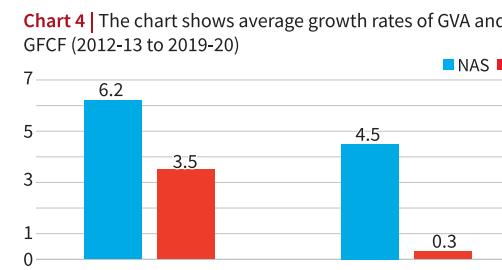
Why is India deindustrialising? Why did industrial production growth plummet despite the official real GDP growth rate of 6%-7% annually? Fixed investment growth practically collapsed. **Chart 4** shows the annual growth rate in GVA and gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) from 2012-13 to 2019-20 as per National Accounts Statistics (NAS) and Annual Survey of Industries (ASI). We focus on time-tested ASI figures as the NAS figures are overestimated due to methodological problems. The industrial output growth rate is much lower than the official NAS-based estimates. The GFCF growth rate during the period is practically zero. Unsurprisingly, booming imports, mainly from China, have met the demand (**Chart 5**).

Why did not domestic investments grow under MI, despite India's rank in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business (EDB) index, improving from 142 in 2014-15 to 63 in 2019-20? Because EDB is a bogus, politically motivated index with little analytical or empirical foundations. With hindsight, the government squandered away six precious years chasing a dubious index.

The key to reversing de-industrialisation is re-imagining industrial policy to align trade and industrial policies to promote domestic value addition and learning. Protection policies must promote securing a dynamic comparative advantage, not offer cash subsidies to gain a static comparative advantage. India must aim at investment-led growth and technological catching up. They must be supported by domestic R&D to promote adaptive research and the indigenisation of imported technology. Publicly funded development finance institutions or "policy banks" are needed to provide affordable long-term credit for socialising the risks of learning and catching up with the technological frontier.

## Make in India report card

The data for the charts were sourced from National Accounts Statistics, National Sample Survey Organisation, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Annual Survey of Industries, and Periodic Labour Force Surveys

**Chart 1** | Manufacturing sector GVA growth rate at constant prices**Chart 2** | The chart shows the manufacturing (MFG) sector's share in GDP at constant prices (1991-2023)**Chart 4** | The chart shows average growth rates of GVA and GFCF (2012-13 to 2019-20)

# Cash transfers in A.P.: lifeline with gaps

Government must ensure that cash transfers reach all marginalised populations

#### STATE OF PLAY

**Diego Maiorano**  
**Upasak Das**  
**Chakradhar Buddha**



particularly alarming as they highlight a failure to reach the most vulnerable.

Administrative and technical barriers largely account for these exclusions. Our research identified issues like unlinked Aadhaar numbers, errors in bank account mapping, and unresolved technical glitches. Discrepancies in land records, such as swapped village names, led to payment denials for eligible farmers. The bureaucratic challenges in resolving these issues are often overwhelming, especially for those with limited literacy and access to support.

The lessons are clear, technology can make welfare delivery easier for the administration, but it cannot substitute the need for transparent, human-centred support systems. Many beneficiaries remain unaware of their exclusion, and grievance redress mechanisms are often ineffective. The design flaws block access to subsidies. Informational barriers occur when beneficiaries are not informed about benefit denials or solutions. Structural challenges, including difficulties in updating incorrect records, exacerbate exclusions. These issues underscore the need for more inclusive welfare systems.

The poorest are often excluded due to glitches and complex error-resolution processes. For tribal communities, especially women, accessing help is even harder due to long travel times and cultural biases in public services.

These challenges raise fundamental questions about the

effectiveness of digital infrastructure in delivering welfare. The technological shift has increased the burden on already strained administrative systems and the most vulnerable beneficiaries, for whom "a glitch" can mean missing vital financial help. Instead of simplifying, digital public infrastructure has, in some cases, added layers of complexity.

To address this, the government needs to go beyond the current digital-first approach.

Administrative and technical barriers largely account for these exclusions. Our research identified issues like unlinked Aadhaar numbers, errors in bank account mapping, and unresolved technical glitches. Discrepancies in land records, such as swapped village names, led to payment denials for eligible farmers. The bureaucratic challenges in resolving these issues are often overwhelming, especially for those with limited literacy and access to support.

Research by Silvia Masiero and Chakradhar Buddha on the RB scheme highlights three main issues. Many beneficiaries remain unaware of their exclusion, and grievance redress mechanisms are often ineffective. The design flaws block access to subsidies. Informational barriers occur when beneficiaries are not informed about benefit denials or solutions. Structural challenges, including difficulties in updating incorrect records, exacerbate exclusions. These issues underscore the need for more inclusive welfare systems.

The RB scheme, launched in 2019, provides annual financial assistance of ₹13,500 to farmer families. Meanwhile, the AMV programme offers ₹15,000 per year to mothers or guardians of school-going children.

However,

the December 2022 survey of over 1,100 households in the Integrated Tribal Development Agency regions of the State revealed that approximately 24% of eligible RB beneficiaries and 15% of AMV beneficiaries did not receive any benefits. These figures are

**Diego Maiorano** is Associate Professor at the University of Naples L'Orientale

**Upasak Das** is Senior Lecturer at the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester

**Chakradhar Buddha** is Senior Researcher affiliated with LibTech India

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Hindu.**

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 30, 1974

## HMT Sales to go up in three years

NEW DELHI, Sept. 29: The Hindustan Machine Tools Limited would increase its turnover from Rs. 43 crores to Rs. 100 crores in the next three years when it completes its expansion and diversification programme, Dr. S. M. Patil, Chairman of the Company, told a press conference here today.

Dr. Patil said this would however push up the capital outlay of the company to Rs. 100 crores from about Rs. 70 crores at present.

Dr. Patil said the recognition that HMT had won in the sophisticated international machine tool markets could be seen from the agreement it had signed last year with Kearney and Trecker Marvin of U.K. under which it would supply the basic machines for the numerical controls for sale abroad. HMT would gradually take on more and more of the numerical controls part of the work to make the entire product in India. HMT had already secured orders worth £1.5 millions (Rs. 2.8 crores) for the next three years.

HMT also signed another agreement with Machine Tool Works Buchrle and Co. Oerlikon, Switzerland, for the export of engineering documentation and equipment to the Swiss company and the contract was worth 4.5 million Swiss francs (Rs. 2.8 crores).

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 30, 1924

## Madras Scavengers' Union.

The Madras Corporation and City Scavengers' Union has represented, by the Corporation Health Officer, the grievances of the scavengers and the great hardships they are subject to for consideration and remedy. Some of the grievances are thus: (1) the scavengers are not given 15 days' leave on full pay as they are entitled to; (2) that they are overworked as Night Soil Depot coolies in digging grounds; (3) the night drivers who work hard the whole night are required to present themselves at 8:30 a.m. to answer the Muster Roll call, to work till 12 noon and again turn up at 4 p.m. and work till 6 p.m. and run up again for night duty, wages being paid for work in the nights only; (4) that the men should be paid their monthly wages not later than the 5th of every month; and (5)

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Number of complaints to NRI cell regarding domestic violence**

**481** The government's NRI cell, which handles cases related to NRI marriages of women both in India and abroad, received 481 complaints from women in 2022, on issues ranging from domestic violence, confiscation of passports etc. PTI

**The death toll from the Nepal floods and landslides**

**148** Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said 148 people had been killed across the country with another 59 still missing. At least 36 of those killed were aboard three vehicles and were buried alive. AFP

**Amount earmarked for infra upgrades for Kumbh Mela**

**993** in ₹ crore. The Railway Ministry has been working on making elaborate arrangements for the Kumbh Mela and has plans to run 992 special trains for the mega religious congregation to be held in Prayagraj in January. PTI

**The number of Ukrainian drones shot down by Russia**

**125** The shooting down of drones sparked a wildfire and set an apartment block alight in one of the largest barrages seen over Russian skies since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Sixteen civilians were injured. PTI

**The death toll in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023**

**41,595** The toll includes nine deaths in the last 24 hours, as per the ministry, which said that 96,251 people have been wounded in Gaza since the war began. AFP  
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## Why are law students at RGNUL protesting?

Is this the first such students' protest at the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law? What are the various allegations against the Vice-Chancellor Professor Jai Shankar Singh? Where do talks between the administration and students stand?

### EXPLAINER

#### Aaratrika Bhaumik

##### The story so far:

**S**tudent-led protests have marred activity at the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL) after Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Jai Shankar Singh allegedly entered the girls' hostel without prior notice, violating their privacy. Students regard this incident as the last straw in a series of grievances that, in their view, have caused the VC to lose "their mandate" – leading to an indefinite sit-in protest that began on September 22, 2024. Their demands include strengthened campus security, the establishment of a students' association for improved representation, and the implementation of comprehensive academic reforms.

##### What happened?

Denying the allegations, Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* that his visit to the first-year female students' rooms was "at their invitation." He claimed that an influx of female students this academic year had led to overcrowding in the girls' hostel, with first-year students being placed in double-occupancy rooms. "These are baseless accusations. I visited the first-year students' rooms only after they repeatedly complained about the shortage of space. I was accompanied by the chief warden and a female security guard," he said.

Refuting Mr. Singh's claim, a fourth-year female student told *The Hindu* that Mr. Singh failed to give either the students or the hostel warden any prior notice of his visit. "According to hostel regulations, access to the girls' hostel is restricted for male members of the university, and even parents are denied entry unless explicitly authorised. This unannounced visit constitutes a grave breach of our privacy, especially since this is our personal space," she said.

Students further claimed that the chief warden and female security guard only arrived to accompany Mr. Singh only after being summoned by the students. "The VC didn't just visit the first-year students; he also entered the rooms of third-year students. If his intention was solely to address the space issues affecting first-year students, why did he feel the need to enter the rooms of third-year students, who reside in an entirely separate block?" a third-year female student questioned.

However, this is purportedly not the first instance of inappropriate behaviour exhibited by Mr. Singh.

Several students, speaking on the condition of anonymity, alleged that since his appointment in March, he has made sexist and insensitive remarks on multiple occasions. A written representation submitted by the students to the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court – who also serves as the ex-officio Chancellor of the University – attributes numerous instances of moral policing to the VC.

"*Ladki ho, domestic violence ya marriage jaisa Act uthao aur aaram se ghar par course karo. Kyu itna complicated aur naya topic leti ho* (You are a girl, pick a law like domestic violence or marriage and stay back at home and pursue the course. Why do you opt for new and complicated topics)," Mr. Singh allegedly told some female students, as per the representation accessed by *The Hindu*. Additionally, he reportedly questioned the attire of some female students on one occasion.



**In rage:** A group of students protesting at the Rajiv Gandhi National University in Patiala, Punjab on September 29. SUNDAR SHARMA

##### Are dialogues underway?

Negotiations between the protesting students and the University administration have repeatedly failed to reach a consensus. Moreover, three faculty members of the nine-member committee constituted to facilitate discussions with the students have resigned without explanation.

Several students reported to *The Hindu* that they have been protesting in sweltering heat and adverse weather conditions, with some even losing consciousness and requiring medical attention. "We tried to arrange for tents, but the university administration intervened and directed suppliers not to honour our requests," claimed a third-year student.

Students also claimed that the administration contacted their parents to stifle the protests, warning them that their children could face expulsion if they continued to agitate. Mr. Singh, however, denied the allegations and told *The Hindu*, "No calls were made. These are just lies and false accusations."

##### Are there other grievances?

This is not the first student-led protest that RGNUL has witnessed. In 2019, approximately 400 students agreed to end a five-day indefinite sit-in only after the administration committed to revoking the suspension of six students who had advocated for improved hostel food, enhanced library access for women, and the removal of discriminatory curfew restrictions in the girls' hostel. "Our

seniors had protested for the establishment of an official students' association nearly four years ago, yet no progress has been made on that front. It is incredibly difficult to voice our grievances without an official representative body," a fourth-year student said.

Female students have also voiced concerns regarding inadequate security measures. "Since the university is located on the outskirts of Patiala, the road in front of the campus remains deserted. We have repeatedly urged the administration to install street lights, CCTV cameras, and set up a police outpost near the main gate. But our grievances have been dismissed citing a lack of requisite funds," a student told *The Hindu*.

In recent times, NLUs – once hailed as "islands of excellence" by former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh – have witnessed a wave of student protests fuelled by a range of factors such as exorbitant fees, inadequate infrastructure, and administrative apathy. According to Prof. (Dr.) Faizan Mustafa, noted academic and VC of Chanakya National Law University (CNU), Patna, NLUs witness significantly fewer student protests compared to other universities. "Students in NLUs generally exhibit far greater restraint and refrain from engaging in any form of violence. They exercise their right to protest peacefully without arms. I do not see any problem with it," he told *The Hindu*.

Dr. Mustafa further opined that students, as primary stakeholders, should play an active role in administrative

decision-making. "When it comes to conflict resolution, I believe the responsibility lies with the head of the institution to take the initiative."

Throughout my 15-year tenure as the VC of various NLUs, I have never subscribed to the 'control model' of university administration. Involving students meaningfully in administrative decisions fosters trust between them and the administration. Ultimately, universities are better run from classrooms than from the VC's office," he added.

##### What happens next?

Raj Lali Gill, the Chairperson of the Punjab State Women Commission, has written to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommending the "immediate removal" of Mr. Singh "to restore a safe and respectful environment on the university campus." The recommendation follows her visit to the university, where she met with protesting students and instructed the administration to form a "neutral committee" with student representatives to engage in dialogue.

Additionally, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has reportedly taken cognisance of the students' grievances and assured them of prompt action. Despite Dr. Naresh Vats, the Officiating Registrar of the varsity, announcing that classes would resume on September 27, 2024, students have so far unanimously boycotted them. The University was earlier shut down on account of the ongoing protests.

### THE GIST

▼ Student-led protests have marred activity at the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL) after Vice-Chancellor (VC) Professor Jai Shankar Singh allegedly entered the girls' hostel without prior notice, violating their privacy.

▼ Denying the allegations, Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* that his visit to the first-year female students' rooms was "at their invitation."

▼ Raj Lali Gill, the Chairperson of the Punjab State Women Commission, has written to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommending the "immediate removal" of Mr. Singh "to restore a safe and respectful environment on the university campus."

## CACHE



GETTY IMAGES

## The Mullenweg-WP Engine dispute and how WordPress users are affected

WordPress is software that people can use to build a website, blog or e-commerce portal on the internet. While WP Engine is a company that offers managed hosting services for WordPress websites, Matt Mullenweg is the founder and CEO of Automattic, the company that owns WordPress.com

**Vasudevan Mukunth**

**S**ince September 21, a dispute between Matt Mullenweg, the technologist at the centre of the WordPress community, and a company called WP Engine has snowballed rapidly into a crisis for lakhs of WordPress users around the world. WordPress reputedly powers more than 40% of all websites on the internet, so policies that affect users' ability to access the software's features could have a wide-ranging impact.

**WordPress and Mullenweg**

WordPress is a piece of software people can use to build a website, blog or e-commerce portal on the internet. As open-source software, it's built, tested, deployed, and popularised by a community of thousands of volunteer developers located around the world. It is available under a GPL licence, which allows others to modify the software while obligating them to distribute the new version under the same licence.

A WordPress website can be self-hosted: you can download a copy of WordPress for free from WordPress.org or use for websites hosted on your own server. In the hosted version, you pay a fee to a third party to manage your website's WordPress setup and infrastructure. WP Engine is one such third party.

Matt Mullenweg is the founder and CEO of Automattic, a for-profit company that owns many digital products. One of them is WordPress.com, a hosted WordPress offering. Mullenweg also personally owns WordPress.org, which dispenses the open-source WordPress for

download. This said, Automattic isn't directly affiliated with WordPress.org or the WordPress Foundation. It contributes nearly 3,988 hours per week towards WordPress development, however.

**The trademark dispute**

On September 21, Mullenweg accused WP Engine of being a "cancer" to the WordPress community. His ire was directed at WP Engine's decision to disable the ability of WordPress installed on sites it hosts to record changes made to content composed using the system. WP Engine's stated reason was that this feature led to bloated databases that eventually slowed websites. Mullenweg also alleged WP Engine was profiting from free access to WordPress without itself contributing to WordPress's development.

After the post appeared, WP Engine shot off a cease-and-desist (C&D) letter to Automattic on September 23 asking Mullenweg to stop disparaging WP Engine. Automattic's lawyers responded with a C&D letter to WP Engine alleging the latter had violated a trademark.

According to Automattic's letter, WP Engine's use of the label "WP" in its name has confused consumers into equating WP Engine with WordPress itself. WP Engine rebutted by quoting a line from the WordPress Foundation website's page on "Trademark Policy": "The abbreviation 'WP' is not covered by the WordPress trademarks and you are free to use it in any way you see fit." But at some point after September 21 the line was edited to: "The abbreviation 'WP' is not covered by the WordPress trademarks, but please don't use it in a way that confuses people."

WP Engine also said it had been using

the label "WP" for "more than a decade". Trademark law in the U.S. expects trademark owners to act to sanction potentially infringing uses. If they don't, they are liable to lose the trademark. WP Engine's argument is thus that it has been able to use the "WP" label for many years without inviting punitive action.

**An unprecedented ban**

On September 24, Mullenweg wrote in a Reddit post that WP Engine "had the option to license the WordPress trademark for 8% of their revenue, which could be delivered either as payments, people ... or any combination of the above." The 8% figure, which would have amounted to \$40 million a year from WP Engine, has not been specified anywhere else. The next day, Mullenweg banned WP Engine from directly accessing updates and plug-ins hosted on WordPress.org, abruptly breaking the normal function of several lakh WordPress websites (the updates are essential for WordPress websites to remain secure). This action greatly exacerbated negative sentiments towards Mullenweg in the WordPress community that had erupted after his "cancer" comment.

One point of contention among community members centred on WP Engine's decision to disable revision control, which Mullenweg had translated to WP Engine's private equity ownership "butchering" WordPress in order to cut costs. Members also highlighted the confusion surrounding Mullenweg's role vis-à-vis WordPress. According to the WordPress Foundation, Automattic has a licence to use the "WP" for commercial activities.

Should WP Engine be liable to pay a

trademark licence fee, it will be to the Foundation – yet the C&D letter alleging trademark misuse came from Automattic, not the Foundation.

Many developers have also construed Mullenweg's decision to ban WP Engine's access to WordPress.org to be a subversion of the WordPress open-source community's equal-opportunity structure in favour of an Automattic CEO's bid to resolve a dispute driven by himself. They have also alleged Mullenweg has a conflict of interest since WP Engine competes directly with Automattic's WordPress.com.

**An uncertain future**

Despite WP Engine not being obligated to contribute to WordPress development, Mullenweg has maintained it isn't entitled to access WordPress.org because such access is vouchsafed for services that benefit the WordPress community. He told *The Verge* his actions erect "an expectation that any business making hundreds of millions of dollars off of an open source project ought to give back".

On September 27, Mullenweg temporarily restored WP Engine's access to resources on WordPress.org until October 1 while asking stakeholders to blame WP Engine's leaders, not him, for the disruption.

The WordPress Foundation filed an application in July with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to trademark the terms "Managed WordPress" and "Hosted WordPress".

In the present context, this has sowed more uncertainty amid independent hosting providers, who are seeking clarity from Automattic and keep legal action against their businesses at bay.

**KNOW YOUR ENGLISH**

*I got the entire six-course meal for free!*

You should store the money you saved on the meal in your piggy bank for a rainy day

**S. Upendran****What is the meaning of 'The opposition skunked our team'?**

When used as a noun, the word 'skunk' is mostly used to refer to the animal which squirts or sprays a foul-smelling liquid on its attacker. The smell is so bad that the attacker flees. The word is sometimes used with human beings as well. When you refer to an individual as a 'skunk', what you are suggesting is that he is rather unpleasant; he is disliked and not trusted by those around him.

*There's no way I'm inviting that skunk to the party.*

Unlike in British English, Americans frequently use the word 'skunk' as a verb as well. When you say that the rival team 'skunked' you, what you mean is that they defeated you quite badly; it was an easy victory for them. In a game like football, it also suggests that your team failed to score a single goal.

*Nobody expected Harish to skunk Sanjay in straight sets.*

The expression 'drunk as a skunk' is used informally to mean 'very drunk'.

**Which is correct? "I got it for free" or "I got it free"?**

(Amar, Bengaluru)  
If you love your grammar, and strongly believe that all rules should be followed blindly, then you would argue that 'for free' is grammatically incorrect. You would maintain that the word 'free' is an adjective and not a noun; therefore, a preposition like 'for' should not precede it. We cannot, therefore, say 'for free'. But as we know, rules are meant to be broken. It has become common nowadays, even among native speakers of English, to say 'for free'. In informal contexts, we hear sentences like 'I got it for free'.

**What is the origin of the term 'piggy bank'?**

(K. George, Cochin)  
Nowadays, when you hear the word 'piggy bank', you immediately think of an object shaped like a pig, which parents give their children in order to encourage them to save money. Whenever a child receives money from the parents or relatives, they are expected to put it in the little bank. The curious among you may wonder why this 'bank' is shaped like a 'pig' – after all, this animal, is not known for its ability to save – it never stores food for winter. The only thing it does is eat.

As you are probably aware, several centuries ago the dishes and utensils that we make use of today were made of clay, and not metal. In England, the clay that was used to make jugs, jars, plates, etc. was called 'pygg'. Whenever a housewife managed to save some money, she used to put it in a 'pygg jar' which she called 'pygg bank' – meaning 'clay bank'. Around the 18th century the spelling of the clay was changed to 'pig', and by the time the 19th century arrived, most people had forgotten that the word 'pig' in 'pig bank' referred to a type of clay and not the animal.

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**THE DAILY QUIZ**

## A quiz on Dame Maggie Smith, one of the most acclaimed and loved actors of our time, who passed away recently

**V.V. Ramanan**

**QUESTION 1**  
Maggie Smith was one of the few actresses to earn the 'Triple Crown of Acting'. Name the series for which she got the Emmy that helped her complete the honour.

**QUESTION 2**  
Maggie Smith won her first Oscar for playing the titular character in which 1969 flick?

**QUESTION 3**  
Which character did she play in Steven Spielberg's *Hook*, a take on Peter Pan?

**QUESTION 4**  
Harry Potter fans know Ms.

Smith as the one playing the legendary Prof. McGonagall. Her face-off with another popular character nearly did not make it to film but for author J.K. Rowling insisting it should be included. Which scene?

**QUESTION 5**  
Name her co-star in her first Oscar-winning film, *Travels With My Aunt*, whom she married and had two sons with.

**QUESTION 6**  
Maggie Smith starred alongside this thespian's daughter Finty Williams in *Gosford Park*, while the other thespian shared the screen with Smith's son in *Die Another Day*. Name the fellow thespian.



**Visual question:**  
Name the character played by Maggie Smith in *Downton Abbey*.

**Questions and Answers to the September 27 edition of the daily quiz:**

1. The school Bhagat Singh attended in his boyhood. **Ans: Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School in Lahore**
  2. The word Singh and his comrades added to HRA thus changing it to HSRA. **Ans: Socialist**
  3. The name of the British officer assassinated by Bhagat Singh and Rajguru. **Ans: John P. Saunders**
  4. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly in opposition to the introduction of these sets of laws. **Ans: Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill**
  5. The number of days of hunger strike Bhagat Singh underwent in protest of the treatment of political prisoners. **Ans: 116 days**
- Visual: The period for which Bhagat Singh was detained in connection with the Lahore Dussehra bomb case of 1926. **Ans: May 29 to July 4, 1927**
- Early Birds:** Anwesha Mandal | C. Saravanan | Arvind Tillway | Piyali Tuli | Vivek Raj

**Word of the day****Illusory:**

based on or having the nature of an illusion.

**Usage:** His hopes would soon prove to be illusory.

**Pronunciation:** newsth.live/illusorypro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ɪ'lʊ:s(ə).i/, /ɪ'lʊ:z(ə).ju/

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

# MONEYWISE

## A 'standard' parameter that helps decide the right cover

### COVERNOTE

**K. Nitya Kalyani**

The Arogya Sanjeevani policy serves as a reference point for hospitalisation policies. The only effort you have to make is to decide which company you want to buy the policy from.

The standardised policy mandated by the insurance regulator can serve as a sample, or reference point, using which you can make sense of other policies that are available on the market.

As we saw in the previous instalment of CoverNote, the Arogya Sanjeevani policy serves as that reference point for hospitalisation policies. Each company has to offer this policy mandatorily.

If you had made the effort to look through the policy and what it covers/excludes, you may well be tempted to opt for this policy as it has a standard set of terms and conditions and is a kind of an off-the-shelf product.

The only further effort you have to make is to decide which company you want to buy the policy from. The premium rate can be a deciding factor, but my advice would be that you should also take into account any existing relationship with an insurance company.

For example, you may already have a policy from X insurance company. For hospitalisation policies, it can only be a general insurance company or a standalone health insurance company, and you may have your home or vehicle insurance with them or another health-related policy.

In this case, even if you have found that the premium rate is not the best on comparison, you may do well to opt to go with them because this relationship strengthens your position with the company and also with your agent or other intermediary through whom you bought the policy.

#### Check points

On the other hand, if you have had negative experiences with them, you may want to opt for a different company. How do you do that? Ask your friends and family for their insurance company and/or agent and how their experience has shaped up. Check company websites for their claims settling ratios - specifically in the category of policy you are shopping for, namely hospitalisation policies - and zero in on the right target. There is one more situation when you should simply opt for the Arogya Sanjeevani policy. That is, when you need to buy a policy urgently. The reason could simply be a long-postponed decision and the tax season drawing near, an improvement in your affordability or triggered by somebody else's sudden hospitalisation and the attendant expenses.

Whatever that may be, buy the policy and keep it active by making timely premium payments (these days you can even pay premiums monthly). If this was a stopgap purchase you can shift to a different, better suited policy with more of the options that you need.

However, get into the act well before your annual renewal date to study and decide which policy you want to shift to because that will be the time when you can do so.

Yes, you can do make the switch and preserve the various waiting periods that you have already gone through.

How to choose the new policy? We will get to that in the upcoming instalment of CoverNote.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in). Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



ILLUSTRATION: SOUMYADIP SINHA

## Setting up commitment savings

### THINKINVESTOR

Your investment process must systematically save from your post-tax monthly income and must not let you spend the accumulated wealth before the end of the time horizon for a life goal

**Venkatesh Bangarupuswamy**

Spending often is an automatic response. Savings is an acquired discipline. It is, therefore, important that you adopt a process that facilitates your savings habit. In this article, we discuss an investment process, a form of commitment savings, that you can adopt to accumulate wealth.

Your investment process must have two elements. One, the process must systematically save from your post-tax monthly income. And two, it must not be easy for you to withdraw money and spend the accumulated wealth before the end of the time horizon for a life goal. To address the first element of the process, you can adopt a systematic investment plan (SIP) for your equity and bond investments. You can set up an SIP on an equity ETF or an equity index fund or an active fund. You can do the same for your bond investments – set up a recurring deposit with your preferred bank.

What about the second element? Banks typically charge a penalty for premature withdrawal of recurring deposits. This ought to discourage you from withdrawing the money before the end of the time horizon for a life goal. Typically, the maturity of your deposit will match with the time horizon for a life goal. But this argument cannot work for equity investments.

Your equity investments can be withdrawn easily; you can typically redeem your fund units without any exit load after one year from the date of investment.

You must, therefore, set up a process to avoid selling the investments and spending it before the end of the time horizon for a life goal.

At the same time, you must have the flexibility to take out the gains and re-invest the proceeds in bonds to reduce the risk of losing your unrealised gains should the market decline.

To balance these two requirements, you must adopt a rule to take out gains. Next, you must allow your spouse, partner, sibling, or parents to operate your equity investments. That is, you set up the SIP, and they control the redemption decision; you must convince them why you want to sell your equity investments before the end of the time horizon for a life goal.

#### Conclusion

Setting up an investment process is important to accumulate wealth through your investing life.

Spending today brings us more happiness than saving today to spend more in the future.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

## Should you bin your unused credit cards?

When you close one of your credit cards, your total credit limit decreases, potentially raising your credit utilisation ratio; unused cards can also contribute to your overall available credit

### PROS & CONS

#### Rohit Chhibbar

If you have multiple credit cards, you might be wondering whether it would be wise to close one of your existing credit card accounts. While closing a credit card is easy, you should carefully weigh the pros and cons before taking a decision.

Here are a few things you must consider before closing a credit card.

#### Increase in CUR

The credit utilisation ratio (CUR) shows the amount of credit that you have used compared with your total credit limit. Credit bureaus give a significant weightage to CUR when calculating your credit score.

Hence, maintaining a moderate CUR is beneficial, as it shows that you are not overly dependent on credit. Even unused credit cards contribute to keeping your ratio in check by adding to your overall available credit.

When you close one of your credit cards, your total credit limit decreases, potentially raising your CUR, if your total spending remains unchanged.

An extremely high CUR, especially if continued for several months, can negatively affect your credit



Every credit card comes with a unique set of benefits, such as complimentary lounge access, co-branded offers, movie discounts



If you have a credit card that you rarely use, offers minimal benefits, has low credit limit and carries a high annual fee, it is wise to cancel it



ger course of time.

This is viewed positively by the lenders as well. Closing your first credit card, even if it is unused, can lead to a significant decrease in your credit age and, consequently, may lead to a drop in your credit score.

Now that you have all your credit accounts active, your total credit limit is ₹4,30,000. Based on the used credit amount of ₹1,50,000, your credit utilization will be 30.23%.

Now if you decide to close your credit card 2. The total credit limit will be ₹1,80,000.

Considering your expenses remain the same at ₹1,50,000, your credit utilization ratio will rise to 72.22%.

#### Decrease in credit age

The length of your credit history also plays a crucial role in your credit score.

Your oldest active credit card contributes to a longer credit history as it reflects that you are experienced with credit and skilled at managing your credit accounts over a long period of time.

When does it make sense to close a credit card account?

If you have a credit card that you rarely use, offers minimal benefits, has low credit limit and carries a high annual fee, it might be

wise to cancel it.

Additionally, if you have multiple credit cards and find it challenging to manage each card responsibly, it could be better to close some of the accounts instead of falling into debt.

Struggling to keep up with payments can also harm your credit score.

In such situations, you can consider cancelling a card, preferably the one offering the least benefits. But, do consider it should not have any impact on the age of your credit history.

#### Cost-benefit analysis

Before making a decision on closing your card account, conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis.

Identify if you are paying a hefty amount for insignificant benefits or if you can utilise the card's rewards or cashback structure for savings.

If you do think closing your cards would be helpful, try to minimise the impact. Avoid closing too many accounts at once.

If you have multiple unused cards, proceed gradually and consider the age of each account.

Instead of discontinuing a card entirely, you can focus on maximising its benefits and keeping it active, as this can be more advantageous in the long run.

(The writer is Head of Credit Cards Business, Paisabazaar)

### Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
HDFC Bank	10.75 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to Rs 4,999
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Rs 101
State Bank of India	11.45-14.85	10,984-11,856	2,197-2,371	NIL
ICICI Bank	10.85 onwards	10,834 onwards	2,167 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda	11.15-18.75	10,909-12,902	2,182-2,580	Up to 2% (Min Rs 1,000 and Max Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	11.25 onwards	10,934 onwards	2,187 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
Bank of India	10.85-16.10	10,834-12,186	2,167-2,437	0.50%-1% (Min Rs 250, Max Rs 10,000)
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453	0.50% (Maximum Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.40-17.95	10,772-12,683	2,144-2,537	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.99-16.00	10,621-12,159	2,124-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49 onwards	10,994 onwards	2,199 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	10.75-13.50	10,809-11,505	2,162-2,301	0.50%-1%
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268	Up to 1% (Minimum Rs 750)
IDFC First Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 2%
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265	1% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Karnataka Bank	13.43	11,487	2,297	Up to 2% of loan (Min. Rs 2,500 Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	1.5%-3.5%

### Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	Interest Rate (%)	EMI (Rs)	Processing fee
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.45	10,307 - 10,735	Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	8.75 - 10.60	10,319 - 10,772	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	8.95 - 12.70	10,367 - 11,300	Up to Rs 2,000
Canara Bank	8.70 - 12.70	10,307 - 11,300	0.25% (Maximum Rs 2,500)
Bank of India	8.85 - 12.10	10,343 - 11,148	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 5,000)
UCO Bank	8.45 - 10.55	10,246 - 10,759	Nil
State Bank of India	9.05-10.10	10,391-10,648	Nil
IDBI Bank	8.80 - 9.65	10,331 - 10,294	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.70 - 13.00	10,307 - 11,377	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.85 - 12.00	10,343 - 11,122	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	9.10 onwards	10,403 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	9.20 onwards	10,428 onwards	Up to 0.50% (Rs 3,500 - Rs 8,000)
K			

# In the EYe of a storm: vital questions about culture

**Shiv Shivakumar**

The soul-searching prompted by an MNC employee's untimely death throws up vital questions on organisational culture.

EY is in the middle of a storm, created by its own insensitivity. The facts as we understand them today – a junior employee dies on the job; no one from the company attends her funeral; the leader says she was allotted the same work as everyone else, so overwork is not the reason for her death; the firm issues a gag order on employees with warnings of severe action; an Opposition leader meets the parents, the State government begins probing the matter.

This is an issue of culture. A recent *HBR* meta-analysis of 220 studies found that what leaders say or do when employees are upset or frustrated, will have enormous consequences. This is true for EY, and they should be careful.

The EY team needs a crash course in public relations management. Almost everything they have done so far is below par. I feel a lot of the words are dictated by lawyers who worry about litigation, as is true of all MNCs, but in this situation, EY needs to show heart, not legalise.

Every organisation touts its culture, but most often miss two key dimensions – it must work for the last person in the chain and resolve real-life dilemmas. Culture depends on many things – the company, the industry, and society.

It is true that managers feel overwhelmed and overworked today. They have little emotional surplus left to invest in subordinates or peers. Corporate life has become more transactional, less engaged. The idea of colleagues as best friends is dead. Insecurity is high at every level and the happiness index of the best sector does not cross 45%. So, all firms have a toxic problem.

Industry culture depends on the markers of individual industries.

The food delivery business is all about speed and there is high penalty without that, which shapes workforce behaviour of its workforce. The aviation sector thrives on safety leading to trust, so it typically frowns upon short cuts. Socially, our leaders and influencers also fail us on culture. We hear on stump mic the India cricket captains calling teammates names and using foul language to egg them on.

This is seen as cool by many. A young manager may be led to believe it is okay to swear similarly at his work colleagues. Socially, our media focuses on who is earning how much, not who is doing good in society or whether the high earner is accountable. Our culture seems to favour getting rich at any cost.

How can CEOs set the right tone for corporate culture? I have four simple suggestions from my own experience.

Any organisation's culture depends on the behaviours of the top 10% managers. The CEO must influence their behaviour and hold them accountable for lapses.

Put mechanisms in place for employees to voice concerns. In the firms I ran, we had an anonymous survey to rank teams every two months on how responsive they were internally. Use the feedback to course-correct behaviour, not as an input into incentive planning.

Avoid hero culture, which builds up a few people and everyone apes them blindly. This leads to a breakdown of rules. Reward teams, not individuals.

If something matters, it must have consequences. In the early 2000s, Hindustan Lever saw a few deaths in factories. Niall Fitzgerald, Unilever's global CEO then, gave the 300-odd senior Indian managers a dressing down, roughly saying: "The value of a life seems to be different in India. If there is one more death in any factory here, I will get rid of the factory manager." The deaths stopped.

(*Shiv Shivakumar was former chairman, PepsiCo India, and former MD, Nokia India*)

# A sporty knock from India Inc

Gone are the days when corporates supported sports as a form of patronage, now many companies have sporting verticals with a CEO leading the unit and a chief commercial officer looking at the P&L; this growing crop is making serious investments in sports and are beginning to reap rewards

## NEWS ANALYSIS

**Chitra Narayanan**

**D**usty Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh is known as the city of *tala* and *talm* (locks and education). Soon, it might be known as the handball capital of India. It is from here that automotive parts solutions company Pavna Industries is spearheading the Premier Handball League (PHL), pumping serious money into the sport.

A keen sports enthusiast, Swapnil Jain, MD of Pavna Industries, and his wife Preeti Jain, personally lead the sporting knocks of the company that has invested not just in handball but also cricket. Pavna Sports Ventures, a separate business unit the company has created, has a team, California Golden Eagles, in the U.S. Premier league. "We have set aside ₹75 crore-₹100 crore as working capital for the sports unit," says Mr. Jain.

Cut to Kolkata. Shrachi Group MD Rahul Todi, who also leads its sporting arm Shrachi Sports, has had a really busy September. He was in Chennai cheering his motorsports team Bengal Rahr Tigers at the Indian Racing League's night race. From there he flew to Paris for the Paralympics Olympics where the group was supporting athletes. And then back to Kolkata for some football action – Shrachi has a three-year strategic alliance with the Indian Football Association.

Gone are the days when corporates supported sports as a form of patronage. It is fast becoming a serious business. Many companies have sporting verticals or SBUs with a CEO leading the unit and a chief commercial officer looking at the P&L. Of course, the big daddies are Reliance Sports and JSW Sports. The latter, according to its web site, delivered revenues of ₹23 mil-



**Tough call:** Many of the corporates entering the sporting arena are taking bets on non-cricket games, which is riskier considering their long gestation periods. REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO

tion and interests in the Kolkata Football League.

The Todi-family owned group, which is into real estate, agro and engineering, is pretty serious about its sporting venture. "We are looking at an investment of ₹200-250 crore in sports. It is a pure business venture for us," an expansive Rahul Todi says, outlining some ambitious plans to create sports infrastructure and academies.

Gone are the days when corporates supported sports as a form of patronage. It is fast becoming a serious business. Many companies have sporting verticals or SBUs with a CEO leading the unit and a chief commercial officer looking at the P&L. Of course, the big daddies are Reliance Sports and JSW Sports. The latter, according to its web site, delivered revenues of ₹23 mil-



We are looking at an investment of ₹200-250 crore in sports. It is a pure business venture for us

**RAHUL TODI**  
MD, Shrachi Group

lion from its various sporting assets. These are considerable. Set up in 2012, JSW Sports today is associated with teams such as Bengaluru FC, Delhi Capitals, Haryana Steelers, Pretoria Capitals and Delhi Capitals women's squad and athletes like Neeraj Chopra, cricketers Axar Patel, Dhruv Jurel, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, wrestler Sakshi Malik and many more.

Suhail Chandhok, who heads the sporting vertical of Ronnie Screwvala's Unilazer Ventures, says:

"Sports is today seen as a profitable venture, whether it's in year one or two, or whether it's in year five, six or seven. I think there is a real bullishness and optimism about why corporates are investing in sport."

Unilazer took a punt on kabaddi in 2014, and today, Mr. Chandhok says the Pro Kabaddi League is, after cricket, the most lucrative sporting league in the country. "When you look at the economics of it, teams were bought at under ₹2 crore when the league was first launched. Since then, the only team that was sold has been Bengal Warriors, and that went at a price upwards of ₹100 crore. We ourselves have received offers for ₹200 crore," he says.

"With 300 million viewers per season, we've seen

Cricket is where the rich pickings are - look at Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd.'s (CSKCL) impressive balance sheet in FY24, which showed a four-fold increase in profits. CSKCL's profit after tax for FY24 was ₹229 crore compared with the ₹52 crore it earned in FY23.

But what is interesting is that many of the corporates entering the sporting arena are taking bets on non-cricket games, which is riskier considering their long gestation periods, and fewer revenue options. On the other hand, the invest-

ments needed are less, so they can spread themselves out more.

Take the way the Punit Balan group has invested in teams in several leagues including Ultimate Table Tennis, Global Chess League and Pro Panja.

As Pavna's Jain says, in the handball league which commenced in 2023, currently there are just three revenue avenues – one is the franchise fee, the second is sponsorship, the third is ticketing, which is not much currently. Media rights, which give cricket and kabaddi franchise investors a bulk of their revenue,

Similarly, Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd.'s Akhilesh Reddy, who has invested upwards of ₹250 crore in setting up a motor racing league in India through Racing Promotions Pvt. Ltd. (RPL), does not foresee quick returns. It's a costly sport with huge investments. But passion drives him and the fact that there are now six franchises with many more showing interest is a cause for optimism. For those betting on emerging sports, the big challenge is developing an ecosystem.

Today, kabaddi is able to command media rights, but the others need to build not only viewership but also get enough international standard players, develop infrastructure, and spread the sport. India Inc. is certainly speeding on the sporting lane.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

# NPS, a 'rising star' in retirement planning

**Srivats K.R.**

The National Pension System (NPS) has emerged as a transformative force in India's retirement planning.

What started in 2004 as pension reform for government employees has evolved into a comprehensive, voluntary savings vehicle, attracting participants from both government and private sectors.

While the progress has been significant, more needs to be done to build awareness and drive wider adoption.

With 7.77 crore subscribers, as of September 2024, the combined assets of NPS and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) – the government-backed pension scheme for the unorganised sector – have reached ₹13.31 lakh crore. Over the past de-

cade, NPS assets have registered a remarkable 37% compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) to reach ₹2.76 lakh crore, driven largely by the 58 lakh non-government subscribers. Their number is expected to cross 66 lakh by March 2025, according to the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently highlighted the growing interest from the private sector – as against the 8% growth in NPS investment from the government sector between March 2020 and March 2024, the private sector raced ahead with 25% growth. Currently, private sector assets in NPS are growing at 43% annually, signalling a significant shift in retirement plan-

**With the right policy initiatives, National Pension System is poised to lead India's pension revolution**

ning. Yet, this growth still falls far short of the latent potential and can be re-doubled through broader reforms and incentives to spur more investment from the private sector.

### Opening doors wider

NPS was initially targeted at new government recruits under a defined contribution (DC) model, replacing the older defined benefit (DB) pension system. In 2009, it was opened to all citizens for voluntary participation. The PFRDA ensures transparency and enables par-

icipants to choose from a range of pension fund managers and asset classes. As of September 2024, NPS's government sector assets reached ₹10.1 lakh crore, with state government employees holding ₹6.53 lakh crore and Central government employees ₹3.57 lakh crore.

The non-government assets grew to ₹1 lakh crore by October 2015, ₹5 lakh crore by October 2020, and ₹10 lakh crore by August 2023.

As of September 2024, only 17,633 companies were registered under NPS, pooling 21.07 lakh subscribers. This includes 8.4 lakh subscribers cumulatively from public sector banks, regional rural banks, and central public sector enterprises (CPSEs). Rishi Agrawal, CEO of

TeamLease RegTech, a company that develops compliance management software, believes that additional tax incentives can spur more corporate participation in NPS.

This includes raising the personal tax deduction limit and added corporate tax benefits, he adds.

Pointing out that NPS offers flexibility, a range of investment options, tax advantages, and cost efficiency in the retirement space, Rahul Bhagat, CEO of DSP Pensions, advocates making NPS adoption mandatory for corporates, similar to the 401(k) system in the U.S., to drive significant growth. This, in turn, can enhance retirement savings of private-sector employees, he says.

NPS tier-2 accounts, which are currently fully

taxable, must be taxed more lightly like mutual funds to attract more investors, he says.

Furthermore, expanding the investment options beyond the BSE-200 companies will give pension fund managers more flexibility in delivering higher returns, he adds.

With the right policy initiatives, NPS is poised to lead India's pension revolution, offering millions of citizens a secure financial future post-retirement.

India's aspiration to become a pensioned society is gradually taking shape. However, the growth trajectory of NPS in the private sector, though promising, still requires greater institutional support to reach its full potential.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

# Balrampur Chini hopes success of polylactic acid plant will be sweet

To stimulate the Indian bioplastics market, support from the government in terms of providing subsidies and imposing import curbs are necessary, says Avantika Saraogi, executive director of Balrampur Chini Mills, which is foraying into manufacturing of polylactic acid. Ms. Saraogi calls for strictly imposing the ban on single-use plastic in terms of setting up of a regulatory framework

## INTERVIEW

**Avantika Saraogi,  
Stefan Barot**

**Mithun Dasgupta**

**I**n an interview with *businessline*, Avantika Saraogi, executive director, Balrampur Chini Mills, says there is huge headroom for growth for the domestic bioplastics market as well as for the company. Stefan Barot, president-chemical division, says the over ₹2,000-crore polylactic acid (PLA) venture is a risk diversification measure for the company so it can maximise the value stream. Excerpts:

**India currently represents a very minute fraction of the global bioplastics market. Why is the market size of PLA, which is bio-based, in the country so small? What would be the growth drivers?**

**Barot:** The market is small in India, and it is difficult to understand. Because the imports are not truly reflecting the reality. You only measure what comes as a neat product and even that

sometimes is misclassified. Besides that a lot of it is coming in as compound or a finished product which is not properly reported. We assume that the market for PLA right now is roughly 20,000 tonnes.

The market's full potential remains unrealised, caught between the need for local production and effective legislative support. When we look at where PLA can be used or will be used, then the market is very big. India banned 19 categories of single-use plastics. PLA and its compounds can replace most of these items. So, for us the market will be growing very fast in the future.

**How do you see the prospects of Balrampur Chini Mills' PLA project going forward?**

**Saraogi:** We intend to establish a greenfield PLA plant in Uttar Pradesh with a production capacity of 75,000 tonnes per annum as a for-

ward integration measure. I would say that the headroom for the single-use plastic (SUP) market is basically 5 to 5.5 million tonnes, even if we say that the PLA obviously cannot be the solution for every single usage. PLA can easily be used for all the rigid application and some percent-

age of the flexible application. So, in a very conservative scenario, PLA could actually replace anywhere between 25-35% of single-use plastics, performing much better than their existing non-plastic solutions like paper, wood, glass, cloth. If the demand stimulation can come from either legislation or consciousness of the consumers and brands, then one can scale up the operation.

Then PLA would be a better performing material at the same cost and may be even lower in the future. We need some support from the government to create the demand and also some support to hope-

fully make expansions to harness economies of scale. If these things happen, then the sky is the limit. It is an infinitely stretchable market for us. We are only going to be using less than 10 per cent of BCML's sugar production for making PLA.

### What kind of support from the government are you talking about?

**Saraogi:** We are looking at fiscal support in terms of incentives and subsidies. China's aggressive PLA production capacity building has led to an abundance of supply, making it a dominant player in the global

market. So, we are looking for some import barrier to create a level playing field. Things like this stimulate the Indian bioplastics market. And also support from the government is required to strictly impose the single-use plastics ban, in terms of setting up of a regulatory framework and monitoring.

### When is the plant expected to be commissioned?

**Barot:** We announced in February that the plant will be up and running within a period of 30 months. So, roughly two years from now, in the middle of 2026.



**HODEIDA**

Four killed, 30 injured as Israel conducts air strikes on Yemen



Israeli air strikes on Yemen killed four people on Sunday and wounded more than 30, Houthi media reported, after the Israeli military said it struck targets in the Iran-backed rebels' territory including Hodeida. It added that ambulance and rescue teams were still searching for missing people. AFP

**KYIV**

At least 13 wounded in southern Ukraine in Russian air strikes



At least 13 people were wounded on Sunday in a series of Russian strikes on Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine, emergency services announced. The regional capital was hit by several "massive aerial strikes" at dawn, they said. Meanwhile, Russia's Defence Ministry claimed that it took the village of Makivka in Luhansk region. AFP

**ISLAMABAD**

Separatists kill seven labourers in Pakistan's restive Balochistan



At least seven labourers from Punjab province were killed by separatists in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, police said on Sunday. The labourers from Multan were shot dead late on Saturday night when they were asleep in an under-construction house in the Khuda-e-Abadan area of Panjgur town. PTI

**PUERTO DE LA ESTACA**

Search resumes for 48 missing migrants off Spanish Canaries



Rescue teams on Sunday resumed searching for at least 48 migrants who went missing the day before when their boat overturned just as it was being rescued off Spain's Canary Islands, killing at least nine people. Twenty-seven migrants were rescued after the boat, which had set out from Mauritania, overturned off El Hierro. AFP

China says it stands for Lebanon's sovereignty

**Reuters**  
SHANGHAI

China opposes any violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and "condemns all action that harms innocent civilians", China's Foreign Ministry said on its website on Sunday after an Israeli air strike on Beirut killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

Nasrallah's death is widely considered a significant blow to the Iran-aligned group as it reels from an escalating campaign of Israeli attacks.

China urges all parties and especially Israel to immediately cool the situation and prevent the conflict from "getting out of control", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Separately, China also issued an advisory asking its citizens not to travel to Lebanon due to the intensification of the conflict. "Those currently in the country are urged to evacuate or move to safer areas as soon as possible," the Chinese embassy said.

## Air strikes by Israel kill 11 Palestinians in Gaza Strip

The Israeli military said it struck Hamas militants operating from a command centre embedded in a compound that previously served as Um Al-Fahm School; Hamas denies using civilians as cover

**Reuters**  
CAIRO

Israeli military strikes across the Gaza Strip have killed at least 11 Palestinians, health officials in the enclave said on Sunday, as Israeli planes bombarded several northern, central and southern areas.

A school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip was among buildings hit, killing four people and wounded several others, Gaza medics said.

The Israeli military said it struck Hamas militants operating from a command centre embedded in a compound that had previously served as Um Al-Fahm School.

It accused Hamas of exploiting civilian facilities and its population for military purposes, which Hamas denies.

In another strike, three people were killed in a



**War's toll:** A school partially destroyed by Israeli strikes in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, amid the Israel-Hamas war. AFP

house in Gaza City, medics said.

Four others were killed in three separate air strikes in Nuseirat and Khan Younis in central and southern parts of the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces pursued their operations in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, and in Gaza City's suburb of Zeitoun, where forces blew up several houses, according to residents and Hamas media.

On Sunday, the Israeli military said forces continue the fight in a "multi-front war" and are operating in Gaza to bring Israeli and foreign hostages home and to "dismantle" Hamas.

**Tunnels discovered**

It said troops discovered and dismantled an underground tunnel route that is approximately one km long near residential buildings and civilian spaces in

central Gaza, adding that they found several rooms and equipment used by Hamas for prolonged periods.

Fighting and Israeli military activities in Gaza have declined in the past week as Israel escalated its military offensive against Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon, killing its leader Hassan Nasrallah in an air strike on Friday. The group announced Nasrallah's death on Saturday.

Most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have been displaced by the war, in which 41,500 Palestinians have been killed, according to Gaza health authorities.

Israel and Hamas have been fighting since gunmen from the Palestinian militant group stormed into southern Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and capturing about 250 hostages, going by Israeli tallies.

## 170 killed as floods and landslides batter Nepal

**Agence France-Presse**  
KATHMANDU

Residents of Nepal's flood-hit capital returned to their mud-caked homes on Sunday to survey the wreckage of devastating floods that have killed at least 170 people across the Himalayan republic.

Deadly rain-related floods and landslides are common across South Asia during the monsoon season from June to September, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

Entire neighbourhoods in Kathmandu were inundated over the weekend with flash floods reported in rivers coursing through the capital and extensive damage to highways connecting the city with the rest of Nepal.

Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said 170 people had been killed across the country with another 42 still missing.

Home Ministry spokesperson Rishi Ram Tiwari said that bulldozers were being used to clear several highways that had been blocked by debris, cutting Kathmandu off from the rest of the country.



**Desperate search:** Rescue personnel work to retrieve the bodies of victims from a landslide in Dhading, Nepal, on Sunday. REUTERS

bureau told the *Kathmandu Post* newspaper.

It was the highest rainfall recorded in Kathmandu since at least 1970, the report said.

Domestic flights resumed in and out of Kathmandu by Sunday morning after weather forced a complete stoppage from Friday evening, with more than 150 departures cancelled.

Monsoon rains from June to September bring widespread death and destruction every year across South Asia, but the number of fatal floods and landslides has increased in recent years.

## U.S. strikes on Syria kill 37 'affiliated with extremist groups'

**Associated Press**  
BEIRUT

In Syria, 37 militants affiliated with the extremist Islamic State group and an al-Qaeda-linked group were killed in two strikes, the United States military said on Sunday. Two of the dead were senior militants, it said.

"The air strike will disrupt ISIS' capability to conduct operations against U.S. interests, as well as our allies and partners," the statement read.

There are some 900 U.S. forces in Syria, along with an undisclosed number of contractors, mostly trying to prevent any comeback by the extremist Islamic State group.

They also announced a

**Divided opinion**

**Rising nationalism:** Demonstrators gather near a banner depicting Portuguese far-right party Chega's leader Andrea Ventura during a demonstration against "uncontrolled immigration" called by Chega in Lisbon on Sunday. AFP

## Austria holds election with far-right bidding for a historic victory

**Reuters**  
VIENNA

Austrians elect a new Parliament on Sunday with the far-right Freedom Party (FPO) aiming to secure its first general election win in a neck-and-neck race with the ruling conservatives that has been dominated by economic worries and immigration.

Having led opinion polls for months, the FPO's edge over the Austrian People's Party (OVP) has shrunk to almost nothing as Chancellor Karl Nehammer casts himself as a statesman and depicts his rival, far-right FPO leader Herbert Kickl,



Karl Nehammer

as a toxic menace.

An FPO victory would make Austria the latest European Union country to register surging far-right support after gains in countries including the Netherlands, France and Germany.

## Bangladesh interim govt. should make way for a more efficient set-up: former BNP MP

**Kalol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

With nationwide incidents of lynching of political activists from the deposed Awami League and growing violence in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the condition of Bangladesh under Prof. Muhammad Yunus-led interim government has turned 'clumsy', said a leading member of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Former BNP member of Parliament, Ru-

men Farhana, said the law and order machinery in Bangladesh was not functioning and called upon the Yunus administration to make way for a "more efficient" set-up.

"The interim government is not elected by the people and it is only an elected government that can be held accountable for its acts of omission and commission. The interim government should hand over power to a more efficient government if they are unable to deal with the present challenges," said

Ms. Farhana. Ms. Farhana had been a member of Parliament during the Sheikh Hasina years and was noted for her fiery criticism of the Awami League government.

"If this government is still not able to control law and order strictly, they should give the reins to those who are more capable," Ms. Farhana had declared in a TV interview.

The interim administration has launched six committees that are expected to come out with reports

suggesting reforms in various sectors. But the reform agenda of the government has been overshadowed by frequent reports of 'mob justice' or lynching of activists of Awami League's student wing, looting and extortion of private entrepreneurs.

Ms. Farhana said that the lack of strict policing against the perpetrators of such crimes had generated an impression that the police forces of Bangladesh were disinclined to act against them.

## Hurricane Helene leaves at least 69 dead as losses of a lifetime devastate residents

**Reuters**  
NORTH CAROLINA

States across the Southeastern U.S. started a massive cleanup and recovery effort on Sunday after winds, rain and storm surges from Hurricane Helene snuffed out power for millions, destroyed roads and bridges, and caused catastrophic flooding from Florida to Virginia.

The storm killed at least 69 people, according to state and local officials in South Carolina, Florida,



A resident inspects damages of his house after Hurricane Helene made landfall in Horseshoe Beach, Florida, on Saturday. AFP

ranged from \$15 billion to more than \$100 billion, insurers and forecasters said over the weekend. Property damage and lost eco-

nomic output will become clearer as officials assess the destruction.

The storm has damaged water systems, communications and critical transportation routes across the region, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Army Corps of Engineers will start assessing damage to water systems on Sunday, FEMA said. Roughly 2.7 million customers remained without power on Sunday, a U.S. Energy Department official said.



Qualified paddle sport instructor Atiya Zaman on a kayak during an instructing session at Limehouse Cut canal. AFP

## Muslim women row against taboos in London's waterways

Agence France-Presse

LONDON

Paddle dipped gently below mossy water, Dilruba Begum guided the kayak and a trainee sat in front of her down a canal in east London.

"Out here, you can be anyone," she whispered as she lifted the paddle up to allow the kayak to drift with the current.

Two years ago, when Ms. Dilruba, 43, was swamped with mothering duties, a friend told her about a free, women-only programme to learn paddle sports near her home. Now she is a qualified paddle sport instructor, after taking part in the programme run by Poplar HARCA, a local housing and community regeneration body.

Ms. Dilruba and her fellow paddlers are breaking new ground, encouraging women from London's less advantaged eastern neighbourhoods to embrace water sports that many felt were inaccessible to ethnic minorities like them with stretched resources and limited leisure time.

Jeneha Hamid, from Poplar HARCA, said many people from minority ethnic backgrounds that make up most of the local community "thought water sport was not something that is typically for them". This could be due to a fear of drowning, as well as cultural and religious reasons. "I think it is just feeling socially excluded," she added.

Naseema Begum, 47, who was part of the initial cohort and is now an instructor, said there was a "taboo" preventing Asian women and those wearing headscarves from taking part in water sports.

Wearing a *niqab*, Ms. Naseema wanted to show that "you can wear anything and go in the water. As long as you've got the right equipment... anyone can take part".

## Nepal's dam-building spree lends power to electric vehicle boom

Agence France-Presse

KATHMANDU

Taxi driver Surendra Parajuli's decision to buy an electric cab would have been unthinkable a decade ago, when chronic power cuts left Nepalis unable to light their homes at night.

But a dam-building spree has led to dirt-cheap energy prices in the landlocked Himalayan republic otherwise entirely dependent on fossil fuel imports, meaning the switch has put more money in his pocket.

"It has meant huge savings for me," Mr. Parajuli, the proud new owner of a battery-powered and Chinese-made BYD Atto 3, said.

"It gives 300 kilometres in a single charge and costs me a tenth of what petrol does. And it is environmentally friendly."

Kathmandu is ground zero of an incipient transport revolution set to see the clapped out cars that clog its traffic-snarled streets make way for emissions-free alternatives.

More than 40,000 electric vehicles are on the roads around the mountainous country, according to official estimates.

But demand is insatiable: more than a quarter of those vehicles were imported in the 12 months to July, a near-threefold increase from the previous year.

Neighbouring China, now the dominant player in electric vehicles globally, is supplying nearly 70% of the market.

"EVs are genuinely suitable for Nepalis," Yajya Raj Bhatt, a prospective buyer at an electric vehicle motor show, said.

"Before, we had to rely on petrol cars, but now we can drive independently."

### Great potential'

More than four in five Nepalis did not have access to electricity at the turn of the century, according to the International Energy Agency. But rapid investment in dams, which generate 99% of Nepal's baseload power, has transformed the energy grid since. Hydropower output has increased four-fold in the past eight years, according to government figures, while 95% of the population now has access to electricity.

The country has already signed deals to export surplus power to coal-dependent India and has its sights set on future revenues by raising its current 3,200 megawatts of installed power generation capacity to 30,000 megawatts over the next decade.

Making electricity universal, and universally cheap, has the potential to jumpstart an economy that has historically depended on remittances from Nepalis working abroad.

Kulman Ghising of the Nepal Electricity Authority said that the benefits have already been felt by setting the favourable conditions for widespread electric vehicle adoption.

Nepal is entirely dependent on imports from India to meet its fossil fuel needs, imposing additional costs on motorists, but Mr. Ghising said curbs on demand had saved the country around \$224 million.

"The EVs have great potential for us," he added. "EVs in India and Bangladesh need to depend on coal, but in Nepal, it is fully green energy," he said.

CMYK

AINX

# Nasrallah's killing reveals the depth of Israel's 'penetration' into Hezbollah

Killing of the armed groups' leader on Friday came barely a week after deadly detonation of pagers and radios for which the Lebanon-based group blames Israel; assassination of Nasrallah, who had long been vigilant and restricted his movements, suggests that the group had been 'infiltrated'

Reuters

In the wake of its leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's killing, Hezbollah faces the enormous challenge of plugging the infiltration in its ranks that allowed its arch enemy Israel to destroy weapons sites, booby-trap its communications and assassinate the veteran leader, whose whereabouts had been a closely guarded secret for years.

Nasrallah's killing on Friday came barely a week after deadly detonation of hundreds of pagers and radios for which the Lebanon-based group blames Israel.

It was the culmination of a rapid succession of strikes that have eliminated half of Hezbollah's leadership council and decimated its top military command.

One source familiar with Israeli thinking said, less than 24 hours before the strike, that Israel has spent 20 years focusing intelligence efforts on Hezbollah and could hit Nasrallah when it wanted, including in the headquarters.

The person called the intelligence "brilliant," without providing details.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his close circle of Ministers authorised the attack on Wednesday, two Israeli officials said.

Nasrallah had avoided public appearances since



Mourning crowd: Iranians participate in a rally in Tehran on Saturday to condemn the Israeli air strike in Lebanon that killed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Iran-backed Hezbollah group. GETTY IMAGES

the 2006 war. He had long been vigilant, his movements were restricted and the circle of people he saw was very small, according to a source familiar with Nasrallah's security arrangements.

The assassination suggested his group had been infiltrated by informants for Israel, the source said.

The Hezbollah leader had been even more cautious than usual since the September 17 pager blasts, out of concern that Israel would try to kill him, a security source familiar with the group's thinking said a week ago, citing his absence from a commanders' funeral and his pre-recording of a speech broadcast a few days before.

Hezbollah's media office did not respond to a request for comment.

quest for comment.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Saturday called Nasrallah's killing "a measure of justice" for his many victims, and said the United States fully supported Israel's right to defend itself against Iranian-backed groups.

### Intelligence failure'

Israel said it carried out the hit on Nasrallah by dropping bombs on the underground headquarters below a residential building in southern Beirut.

"This is a massive blow

and intelligence failure for Hezbollah," Magnus Ranstorp, a veteran Hezbollah expert at the Swedish Defence University, said.

"They knew that he was meeting. He was meeting with other commanders.

But it has been materially and psychologically

weakened over the past 10 days.

In recent days, Israel has struck more than 1,000 Hezbollah targets.

Israeli officials said the fact that Hezbollah has only been able to launch a couple of hundred missiles a day in the past week was evidence its capabilities had been diminished.

Before the strike on Nasrallah, three Iranian sources said Iran was planning to send additional missiles to Hezbollah to prepare for a prolonged war. The weapons that were to be provided included short-to-medium-range ballistic missiles including Iranian Zezals and an upgraded precision version known as the Fateh 110, the first Iranian source said.

Reuters was unable to reach the sources after the Nasrallah assassination.

While Iran is willing to provide military support, the two Iranian sources said that it does not want to be directly involved in a confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel.

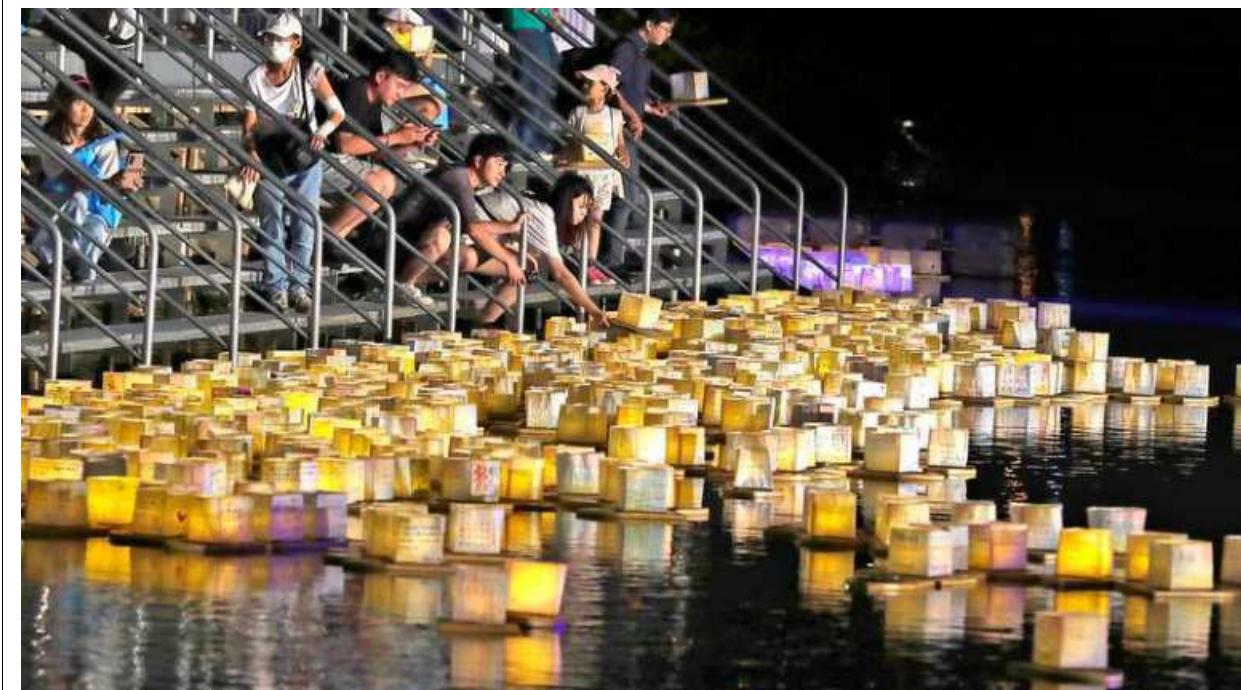
Hezbollah may need certain warheads and missiles along with drones and missile parts to replenish those destroyed by Israeli strikes across Lebanon last week, a senior Syrian military intelligence source added.

Founded in Tehran in 1982, the Shia paramilitary outfit is the most formidable member of Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance of anti-Israel allied irregular forces, and a significant regional player in its own right.

Joseph Votel, a former army general who led U.S. forces in West Asia, said Israel and its allies could well intercept any missiles Iran sent by land to Hezbollah now.

"That might be a risk they are willing to take, frankly," he said.

## Light for blessings



With the flow: People release floating lanterns during a blessing ceremony by the Keelung River in Taipei, Taiwan on Saturday. AP

## Rivals in U.K. Conservative leadership contest set their focus on immigration

Reuters

LONDON

The four candidates vying to be the next leader of Britain's Conservatives began to outline their vision for the nation on Sunday, with immigration due to dominate the debate over the future of the party after a crushing election defeat.

At the beginning of the Conservatives' annual conference in the city of Birmingham, the four candidates, including frontrunners, former Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick and former Trade Minister Kemi Badenoch, took to the airwaves to present their bids to become the party's new leader.

National dependence on imports from India to meet its fossil fuel needs, imposing additional costs on motorists, but Mr. Ghising said curbs on demand had saved the country around \$224 million.

"The EVs have great potential for us," he added.

"EVs in India and Bangladesh need to depend on coal, but in Nepal, it is fully green energy," he said.



Race begins: Leadership candidate Robert Jenrick at the annual Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham on Sunday. AFP

most saying a new leader must end the infighting and lack of delivery they believe led the party to its worst election performance in its long history.

Mr. Jenrick and Ms. Badenoch put the focus firmly on immigration, with both saying former Conservative governments had badly failed to tackle an issue voters say is further

stretching already struggling public services, such as health. Mr. Jenrick told Sky News that he would set "a legally binding cap cast in iron" on numbers allowed to enter Britain and the nation should leave the European Convention on Human Rights, which some Conservatives blame for stopping deportation flights for asylum seekers.

Ms. Badenoch responded by saying that while numbers did matter, it was more about integration and culture. "Culture matters even more. Who comes into the country is absolutely critical," she told the BBC.

All four candidates, including former Foreign Minister James Cleverly and former Security Minister Tom Tugendhat, said the Conservatives needed to win back the trust of voters after squandering it during years of infighting and scandal.

The Conservatives' annual conference will be dominated by the leadership contest, with all four due to address delegates on Wednesday before being whittled down to two in October. Members will then cast their votes and the new leader will be announced on November 2.

## Abusive clergy must be judged, says Pope ending Belgium visit

Associated Press

BRUSSELS

Pope Francis demanded on Sunday that sexually abusive clergy be judged and their bishops stop covering up their crimes as he ended a troubled visit to Belgium by responding to the outrage over the scandal here that has devastated the church's credibility.

"Evil must not be hidden. Evil must be brought out into the open," the Pope told some 30,000 people at Belgium's sports stadium.

Pope Francis deviated from his prepared homily to respond to the meeting he held with 17 abuse survivors on Friday night, where he heard first-hand of the trauma and suffering they endured and the tone-deaf response of the church when they reported the crimes.

Belgium has had a wretched legacy of abuse and cover-up, none more symbolic of the church's hypocrisy than the case of Bruges Bishop Roger Vangheluwe. He was allowed to quietly retire in 2010 after he admitted that he had sexually abused his nephew for 13 years.

Pope Francis only defrocked him this year in a move clearly seen as finally dealing with a problem before his arrival in Belgium.

The main reason for the trip was to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the Louvain Catholic University, the oldest Catholic university in the world.

But the rector of the Dutch campus told the Pope that the abuse scandal had so harmed the church's moral authority that it would do best to reform if it wants to regain



Pope Francis

credibility and relevance. Rector Luc Sels suggested that opening up greater roles for women – including the priesthood – and being more welcoming to LGBTQ+ Catholics would be a good place to start.

**No place for abuse'** Once here, he could not escape the criticism. Belgium's king demanded the church work "incessantly" to clean up the scandal, and the Prime Minister insisted that victims' needs be placed first, in a remarkable dressing-down from the leadership of the once-staunchly Catholic country. "In the church there is room for everyone, everyone, but everyone will be judged and there is no place for abuse. There is no place for the covering up of abuse," the Pope said in his homily.

Pope Francis's visit to Belgium was always going to be difficult, given the country's history of clerical sexual abuse and overall secularising trends which have emptied its majestic cathedrals and churches. But it was unclear if he or his entourage expected such sharp public expressions of outrage or the pointed calls for reform from Belgium's intellectual elite.

AINX

**NOT AMUSED**

Kanpur fans peeved at groundstaff's lack of effort



Fans in Kanpur were peeved at the groundstaff's lack of effort to get the ground ready for play on day three. "There was no rain, yet they couldn't start. If there was a wet patch on the ground, why was nothing done to fix it? We spent ₹500 for our tickets and sat through for six hours in this humidity," said one spectator.

**BIG UPSET**

Osasuna dismantles Barcelona's perfect LaLiga start



Osasuna shattered LaLiga leader Barcelona's perfect start to the season with an emphatic 4-2 victory on Saturday. The Catalans had won all seven of their opening fixtures.

**The result:** LaLiga: Osasuna 4 (Budimir 18, 72-pen, Zaragoza 28, Bretones 85) bt Barcelona 2 (Victor 53, Yamal 89).

**SPECIAL**

Debutant Peiris spins Sri Lanka to an innings victory



Debutant off-spinner Nishan Peiris took six wickets on Sunday to seal Sri Lanka's first series win against New Zealand in 15 years with a victory by an innings and 154 runs in the second Test at Galle.

**The scores:** Sri Lanka 602/5 dec. vs New Zealand 88 & 360 in 81.4 overs (Peiris 6/170). PoM: Kamindu Mendis. PoS: Jayasuriya.

**ALL-ROUND SHOW**

Head stars as Australia seals ODI series 3-2 against England



Travis Head (4/28 and 31) helped Australia beat England by 49 runs in the final ODI at Bristol on Sunday to complete a 3-2 series win.

**The scores:** England 309 in 49.2 overs (Duckett 107, Brook 72, Head 4/28) lost to Australia 165/2 in 20.4 overs (Short 58). Australia wins five-match series 3-2. PoM & PoS: Head

# Green Park drops the ball, leaves fans high and dry

Though there was no rain, poor drainage facilities meant there were areas on the outfield that remained damp; a draw could have an impact on India's chances of a WTC final spot

**BANGLADESH IN INDIA**

**S. Dipak Ragav**  
KANPUR

**P**lay was abandoned for a second day in succession owing to a wet outfield on day three of the second Test between India and Bangladesh at the Green Park Stadium here on Sunday.

**Inexcusable**

Unlike day two, where it rained until about 10 a.m. and was overcast later, skies cleared by 7.30 a.m. on Sunday and remained dry throughout. That there was no action was inexcusable.

Thus far, only the opening day has seen some cricket, with Bangladesh, who was asked to bat first, reaching 107 for three from



**Damp squib:** Super soppers could not get the ground ready for action despite the rain relenting. SANDEEP SAXENA

35 overs. In the morning, there was some hope when the markers removed the covers from the pitch and got the stumps in place by 9.30 a.m. The first inspection was at 10 a.m. when on-field umpires Richard Kettleborough and Chris Brown, alongside fourth

umpire Virender Sharma, were seen stomping their shoes and inspecting the outfield.

Unsatisfied, they came

out again at noon, and then again at 2 p.m. It was bright and sunny, but the umpires were forced to call off play. The uncertainty

also meant players from both teams seemingly made a wise decision to stay back in their hotels.

*The Hindu* understands that the fine-leg boundary region near the pavilion side for a right-hander, and the mid-wicket and extra-cover regions just beyond the square area weren't fully dry.

The bowler's run-up to was a potential source of concern. The officials had to be mindful of the risk of injuries on a soggy outfield.

The groundstaff used sand and sawdust over the wet patches, hoping that those areas would dry soon, but their efforts proved futile.

The issue was that the venue doesn't have a sand-based outfield like some of the other centres in the country, which allows for

more efficient and quick drainage. Green Park has a soil-based outfield that takes time to dry.

The failure to get the ground ready, despite nature relenting, cast a poor light on the historic venue's ability to host international fixtures.

The stadium had already been under scrutiny

when a section of the 'C' stand had to be closed because of structural integrity concerns.

**On the backfoot**

More importantly, it brings into focus BCCI's decision to allot Tests to venues where drainage facilities are far from ideal. Not only has this episode put the UPCA and the apex body on the backfoot, the outcome of this game could also cost India dearly.

Having comprehensive-

ly beaten Bangladesh in the opening fixture in Chennai by 280 runs, the hosts would have fancied another win here.

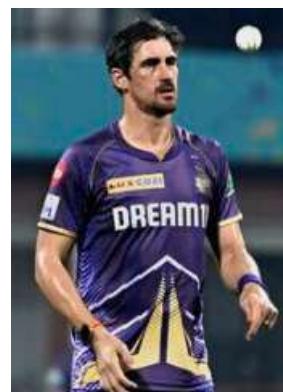
Rohit Sharma's men need four more wins from the remaining nine fixtures, including this, to seal their place in next summer's World Test Championship final.

However, India now stares at the possibility of not being able to maximise its home advantage. With three matches in its backyard against New Zealand, India had the chance to get the five wins before flying to Australia. A draw here could complicate this.

Fortunately, the forecast for the final two days of this encounter looks good.

The million-dollar question will be whether the authorities can get the ground ready.

## Overseas players' earnings capped at ₹18 crore

**IPL AUCTION**

Starc at ₹24.75 cr was the biggest beneficiary at the last mini-auction in December 2023. R. RAGU

In a bid to ensure that Indian cricketers end up ranking in the most money in the Indian Premier League (IPL) player auction, the IPL governing council has capped an overseas player's earning at the mini-auction at ₹18 crore, the highest permissible retention fees.

The decision was made while finalising the IPL player auction rules here on Saturday night. Later, a document with salient features about player regulations for the IPL 2025 player auction was shared with the franchises and BCCI affiliates.

"Any overseas player's auction fee at the small auction will be lower than the highest retention price of ₹18 crore or the highest auction price at the big auction," states the document, accessed by *The Hindu*.

"In case the highest auction price at a big auction is ₹20 cr, then ₹18 cr. will be the cap. If the highest auction price at a big auction is ₹16 cr. then the cap will be ₹16 cr."

It effectively means that no overseas player can be sold for a fee larger than some retained superstars of Indian cricket. A trend of smaller auctions witnessing skyrocketing fees has emerged over the last few years.

The discussion took a serious turn when two Australian cricketers – Mitchell Starc (₹24.75 cr) and Pat Cummins (₹20.50

## Centre of Excellence set to scale up BCCI's training system

**Amol Karhadkar**  
BENGALURU

For long, the Indian cricket fraternity has been longing for its own Centre of Excellence.

On Saturday, the rechristening and relocating of the National Cricket Academy, resulted in a huge step in the direction.

A sprawling 40-acre plot that was allotted in 2008, but stuck in disputes and litigations for well over a decade since then, has been converted into the Board of Control for Cricket in India's Centre of Excellence and was formally inaugurated on Saturday by its president Roger Binny and secretary Jay Shah.

The facility has three huge grounds. The main ground has 13 red-soil pitches, floodlights, an 85-yard boundary and broadcasting facilities.

The other two have 11 mixed soil and black soil



**Giant step:** The NCA, rechristened CoE, is spread over 16,000sq.ft. and will take care of most of BCCI's training needs. K. MURALI KUMAR

pitches, respectively.

There is also a 45-pitch outdoor training facility and eight strips in the climate controlled indoor nets facility that will take care of most of the BCCI's training needs for the boys and girls, junior and senior alike, all through the year.

While the CoE is expected to be fully operational by early 2025, including an

neficiaries will be not only the future generation of cricketers, but also the current generation of cricketers," Laxman said on Sunday.

"Since the time I joined the NCA in December 2021, all the cricketers, they come here, not only for rehab. Obviously, there is a misconception that the cricketers come only for rehab.

"But they come to the NCA to improve their skills, get ready for the challenges during the various series they are going to participate in."

"I am sure that all the players who come to this facility and all those who will be part of this programme will strive to achieve excellence, will strive to become the best they can."

"And in the process, the Indian cricket team will be probably the best in the world in all the formats."

**Amol Karhadkar**  
BENGALURU

The Duleep Trophy is set to revert to its zonal format starting next year. The BCCI, at the 93rd Annual General Meeting, is understood to have held a prolonged discussion over the issue before deciding to move away from this year's experiment.

"Various members addressed the need to maintain the competitive nature than virtually converting Duleep Trophy into exhibition games with mix-and-match teams," a member who attended the AGM on Sunday, told *The Hindu*. "After hearing the house patiently, the secretary (Jay Shah) promised that the conventional zonal format will be reverted to starting next season."

Based on the recommendations of a working group consisting then head coach Rahul Dravid, chief selector Ajit Agarkar, NCA head V.V.S. Laxman and GM, operations Abey Kuruvilla, the BCCI hosted the Duleep Trophy with four teams selected by four teams. The experiment is set to be done away with starting next season.

The AGM, meanwhile, authorised office-bearers to finalise BCCI's representative for ICC's meetings as an ICC Director. With Shah set to take over as the ICC chair on December 1, a new ICC representative will have to be selected.

While the BCCI media statement did not lament these two aspects, the statement, signed by Shah, confirmed that a resolution was passed "to maintain BCCI's legal status as a society. The members further resolved that the tournaments of the BCCI, including IPL, shall not be converted to a company."

## Jemimah and bowlers set up India's victory

**WT20 WC WARM-UP**

**Press Trust of India**

DUBAI

Jemimah Rodrigues struck a crucial 52 (40b, 5x4) as India posted a 20-run victory over West Indies in a warm-up game ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

Jemimah anchored the innings as India made 141 for eight (Jemimah 52, Matthews 4/17) bt West Indies 121/8 in 20 overs (Henry 59 n.o., Pooja 3/20).

24, with a four and a six.

In reply, West Indies managed 121 for eight with Chinelle Henry top-scoring with an unbeaten 59 off 48 balls. Pooja Vastrakar took three wickets while Deepa Sharma claimed two.

The T20 World Cup is set to begin on October 3 with India taking on New Zealand in its opening match on October 4.

**The scores:** India 141/8 in 20 overs (Jemimah 52, Matthews 4/17) bt West Indies 121/8 in 20 overs (Henry 59 n.o., Pooja 3/20).

## Railways retains the title after win over IOC

**HOCKEY**

**K. Keerthivasan**  
CHENNAI

The spectators gave a big round of applause to the Indian Railways team when it did a lap of honour after a fighting 5-3 victory over Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) in the final of the 95th MCC-Murugappa Gold Cup all-India hockey tournament on Sunday.

Railways, the defending champion, had been dominant throughout and in the summit clash, it was more



**Another one:** The triumphant Railways team. M. VEDHAN

so, as it didn't allow IOC comprising quite a few Olympians and Internationals – to settle down.

The team got nine penalty corners, including eight in the first quarter, but converted only one.

The moment Railways went 4-2 ahead in the third quarter, IOC was left with a mountain to climb. It attacked well on occasions but failed miserably in the

final third. The former champion, too, had eight penalty corners, and converted just one.

"Though IOC had many stars, our players were fitter and better. I would also like to pick youngster Simranjot Singh not just for his ability to score but also for his receiving skills. Of course, it has been a team effort," said Railways head coach Sunil Kumar Singh.

**The result (final):** Indian Railways 5 (Gursahibjit Singh 7, Simranjot Singh 9, Yuvraaj Singh 18 & 58, Mukul Sharma 35) bt IOC 3 (Talwinder Singh 23, Gujinder Singh 29, Rajbir Singh 58).

A INX

**IN BRIEF****Tottenham beats 10-man Utd to up pressure on Ten Hag**

Tottenham piled more pressure on Erik ten Hag's position as Manchester United manager with a dominant 3-0 win at Old Trafford on Sunday. United captain Bruno Fernandes was sent off before half-time as Brennan Johnson, Dejan Kulusevski and Dominic Solanke struck for Spurs.

**The results:** Ipswich 2 (Delap 8, 72) lost to Aston Villa 2 (Rogers 15, Watkins 32); Manchester United 1 lost to Tottenham 3 (Johnson 3, Kulusevski 47, Solanke 77).

**Arjun Maini finishes third in DTM race from maiden pole**

Arjun Maini finished third in race one of DTM at the Red Bull Ring at Spielberg (Austria) after becoming the first Indian to secure pole position in the sports car series. After many changes at the top of the timings sheet, the Mercedes-AMG driver held his nerve in Saturday's morning session and clocked the fastest time of 1:30.128 minutes on his final lap. In race one, Maini came third behind winner Mirko Bortolotti and Maro Engel. The DTM grid has 20 drivers representing Mercedes AMG, BMW, Audi, McLaren, Ferrari, Porshe and Lamborghini.

**Rutuja and Burgic make doubles final in Berkeley**

Rutuja Bhosale and Ema Burgic of USA beat Ayana Akli & Erynn Cayetano 7-5, 6-4 in the doubles semifinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Berkeley, USA. In the final, Rutuja and Burgic will play Elyssia Bolton and Maegan Manasse, who beat Alicia Linana and Sahaja Yamalapalli 10-4 in the super tie-break.

**The results:** \$25,000 ITF women, Berkeley, USA: **Semifinals:** Elyssia Bolton (Aus) & Maegan Manasse (USA) bt Alicia Linana (Esp) & Sahaja Yamalapalli 6-0, 4-6, [10-4]; Rutuja Bhosale & Ema Burgic (USA) bt Ayana Akli & Erynn Cayetano (USA) 7-5, 6-4.

**Indian air pistol teams shoot gold in World Junior meet**

Individual medals were elusive except for the women's air pistol bronze for Kanak, but India was on top of the medals table with two gold in team events on the opening day of the World junior shooting championship in Lima, Peru. The junior men's air pistol team of Umesh houdhary, Mukesh Nelavalli and Parmod won the gold with 1726 points, beating Romania by 10 points. The women's team of Kanishka Dagar, Lakshita and Anjali Chaudhary scored 1708 points and edged out Azerbaijan by one point for the gold. Though not nominated as part of the team, Kanak did well to shoot 573 in qualification and missed a better medal by 0.9 point, as she wound up with a perfect 10.9 last shot.

**Blasters and NEU FC share spoils****Sports Bureau**

Kerala Blasters shared points with NorthEast United following a gripping 1-1 draw in the Indian Super League football at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium in Guwahati on Sunday night.

Alaeddine Ajarai's 58th minute goal from a free-kick was equalised by Noah Sadaoui's stunning strike in the 67th as the Kerala Blasters FC salvaged a crucial point on the road.

It was a very high-intensity match with end-to-end football from both sides. However, the visitors made the more impressive moves with the likes of Noah, Jesus Jimenez and Danish Farooq combining in attack.

**Vishnu and Vaidehi get top billing****TENNIS****Kamesh Srinivasan**  
NEW DELHI

Former champions Vishnu Vardhan and Vaidehi Chaudhari have been seeded No.1 in the men's and women's events in the Festa National tennis championship, to be played at the DLTA Complex from Monday.

Manish Sureshkumar and V.M. Ranjeet are the other former champions in the men's draw. Another former champ, Dalwinder Singh, was trying to make it through the qualifying draw.

In the women's section, Riya Bhatia has been seeded second and will try to assert her strong game, which had seen her win

# From TV presenter to Olympiad gold winner

Tania glad to contribute to team's victory in Budapest; hopes chess will receive the attention it receives in Delhi as in Tamil Nadu and Telangana; says loves doing commentary

**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

From talking about the world's elite athletes winning gold medals at the Paris Olympics as a television presenter to winning a gold herself at the Chess Olympiad within a space of a fortnight, Tania Sachdev went through the kind of experience not many could have.

"It was indeed incredible that I could be part of two Olympics in such different ways," Tania told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

"The Indian team for the Chess Olympiad was selected just two days before I left for Mumbai to do that gig for the Olympics. I have not been playing a lot of tournaments for the last couple of years."

"So I was thinking at that moment, 'how am I going to pull this off?'"

She pulled it off, alright. She played on the reserve board for India. She played five games, won two and drew three.

Tania is glad that she could contribute to India's gold. "India may win Olympiad gold again, but it is a



**Double joy:** Tania Sachdev at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest. FIDE

great feeling to know that I was part of the team that won for the first time," she says. "I can't explain the emotions I went through, standing on the podium and receiving the gold medals - that along with our gold-winning medals team."

Would she be tempted to play more after winning the Olympiad gold?

"I wish I knew the definite answer," she says. "I love doing commentary, it

is not a job for me; it is something I enjoy."

"But playing is still something I am involved with."

"I don't know what the future holds for me in terms of the balance between playing and commenting, but I am so glad that I have won this gold before I have retired from competitive sport."

Tania is a bit disappointed though that chess, or even the Olympiad gold, is

not getting the attention it deserves in States like Delhi, where she lives. "It is really sad," she says.

"Look at a state like Tamil Nadu, which always honours its chess players and the way it conducted the last Olympiad two years ago."

"Some other States like Andhra and Telangana are also doing well. I hope that should be the case all over the country, so that more kids are inspired."

# Rivaan, Ruhaan are National champions

**MOTORSPORTS****Sports Bureau**

CHENNAI

Local lad, 11-year-old Rivaan Dev Preetham (MSPORT) on Sunday retained his title in the Micro Max category in the fifth and final round of the MECO-FMSCI National Karting Championship Rotax Max Classes 2024.

In the Senior Max class, Ruhaan Alva (MSPORT) emerged National champion.

**The results (provisional):**  
**Senior Max (Finals, 15 laps):** 1. Rehan Khan (MSPORT)



**On top:** Ruhaan (Senior Max), Rivaan (Micro Max) and Arafath (Junior Max). SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# Coach Kanitkar oozes confidence

**Tarun Shastry**

CHENNAI

India U-19 coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar said his team is confident ahead of the first Test in the Youth Test series against Australia U-19, which will begin at the M.A. Chidambaram stadium on Monday.

"We are confident because we've had a good one-day series. Having said that, this is a different format altogether. Everything changes, the place is different, so it's better to take the good things from the one-day series and prepare well again, but we are confident."

Speaking about the hot and humid conditions and also the pitch, Kanitkar said: "Puducherry was hot as well, so we are fine with the weather, but the pitch is different. We'll have a look at the pitch again tomorrow morning, let's see, probably it might rain because it's hot and humid, so we'll have a look and then decide."

With India possessing talented youngsters, the coach felt positive about his team's ability. "There a lot of good players, I would not like to single out one person, you'll see, there is a lot of talent and ability. Anyone of them could do well and it's a very good side in terms of batters, bowlers, and their abilities, when you watch them you'll realise."



India U-19 coach Kanitkar

When asked if there was an opportunity for Samit Dravid, son of T20 World Cup winning coach Rahul Dravid, to play in the Tests he said, "As of now he is at the NCA, he is recovering from his knee injury. So, I don't know yet, but it looks unlikely."

The coach also felt playing the red-ball format will be a fantastic opportunity for the youngsters to know where they stand "I think this is a great initiative to play the Test matches."

"The red-ball format tests you. It's about planning and strategy, so for the batters, bowlers, and also the fielders this is the ideal challenge to see where you stand. To be able to play against a foreign side is a great thing, I know a lot of people including myself have played at the u-19 level against foreign teams and it really helped us a lot."

"I think this is going to be magnificent for the players."

# Team bonding, one of main reasons for Olympiad triumph, says Vaishali

**K. Keerthivasan**

CHENNAI

The last few days, for Grandmaster R.Vaishali, after a historic gold by the Indian (open & women) teams at the Budapest Chess Olympiad, have been quite hectic, but enjoyable. She hasn't seen a chess board for a change, busy attending felicitation functions, giving interviews to the media and meeting important people.

"It was a happy feeling to be part of the team's historic gold medal-winning team, certainly memorable. It's been quite hectic ever since we returned. We met the Prime Minister in New Delhi recently. I will go to London to play in the Global Chess League (GCL) that begins on October 3 and then there is the European Club Cup. I will be taking part in the Tata Steel tournament in November," Vaishali told *The Hindu* in a virtual interview.

According to Vaishali's coach R. B. Ramesh, her performance at Budapest



has been 'decent.' And the 23-year-old agreed with the assessment and explained that in detail.

"Of the 10 games I played, I had four wins and four draws. A couple of games didn't go well. I won a crucial game against Georgia in the seventh round. And the fifth-round win over Kazakhstan was crucial, too. Against Poland in the eighth round, I played in better positions but couldn't convert. It was very painful. A few things here and there could have gone well. It was a learning experience."

Bonding with teammates, according to Vaishali,

was one of the main reasons for the team's victory. "We had an amazing time together. D. Harika, a very experienced player who has played in many Olympiads (10). It was a dream come true moment for her. For me, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal, it was our second over the board Olympiad. Harika shared her experiences with us," she said.

When things were not looking good for the Indian team after the loss to Poland and the draw with USA in the eighth and ninth rounds respectively, it was captain Abhijit Kunte's idea to pull the players from their rooms for a walk that changed the outlook of the team.

"We had this huge setback after seven good rounds. We lost to Poland and drew with the USA to concede the lead. The night was not looking great. We had a team meeting. Our captain Abhijit sir said, 'we have to change something'. So, we went for a

walk. We had a good time discussing things, chess and non-chess. That really helped.

"We had to win the last two matches (vs. China & vs. Azerbaijan) to secure gold. We were motivated. In the previous Olympiad, we came close to winning the gold and let it slip. We didn't handle the pressure situations well then. We were determined to win gold this time," said Vaishali.

Her goal is to get back to the world's top 10 in women's FIDE ratings and cross the 2500 Elo mark. "But more than that", she added, "I want to improve my game."

Vaishali is excited to compete in GCL, where she will play for Ganges Grandmasters. "I will be playing with Viswanathan Anand and Arjun Erigaisi for the Ganges team. I was following my brother Praggnanandhaa's games in the previous edition. It was so much fun. And am looking forward to it," she said.



**On a roll:** Jyoti comfortably threw farther than her previous mark of 52.77m in all her six attempts. R.V. MOORTHY

# Jyoti, Manna and Nayak set new meet records

**ATHLETICS****Y.B. Sarangi**

PATNA

Jyoti (javelin), Tushar Kantti Manna (400m) and Jashbir Nayak (decathlon) set new meet records in the Indian Open under-23 athletics meet on Sunday.

For players who are used to competing for very little prize money in the domestic circuit, it will be interesting to fight for the equal winner's purse of ₹3,00,000 for the men's and women's champions.

Both the hard court and grass court national titles in the past.

It is for the aspiring players to capitalise on the opportunity and use the championship to launch their career in the international arena.

For players who are used to competing for very little prize money in the domestic circuit, it will be interesting to fight for the equal winner's purse of ₹3,00,000 for the men's and women's champions.

Jyoti, competing in the 400m since January, recorded a convincing win with an impressive personal best of 45.92s while Nayak amassed 7065 points to smash the previous record.

Manna, competing in the 400m since January, recorded a convincing win with an impressive personal best of 45.92s while Nayak amassed 7065 points to smash the previous record.

the 100m crown with 10.40 even as National record holder Manikanta Hoblighar finished fourth with 10.68.

**The results (finals): Men****100m:** 1. Animesh Kujur (Odi)

10.40, 2. Govind Kumar (Chd)

10.61, 3. Tamil Arasu (TN) 10.66;

**400m:** 1. Tushar Kantti Manna

(Del) 45.92 (NMR, Old, Ayush Dabas, 46.58, 2021), 2. Rince Joseph (Ker) 46.71, 3. Sakir (Har)

3:48.21, 2. Gaurav Panchal (Har)

3:49.10, 3. Arjun Waskale (MP)

3:50.36; **110m hurdles:** 1. A.

Gracenos Jeeva (Odi) 14.49, 2.

Rathish (TN) 14.56, 3. Subham Singh Rawat (Del) 14.58, **3000m steeplechase:** 1. Suraj Pal (UP)

9:00.52, 2. Parveen Kumar (Har)

9:11.11, 3. Vishnu Kumar (Raj)

9:13.97; **20km race walk:** 1. Sachin Bohra (Utk) 1:28:51.58, 2.

Khangambadi Pilot (Man)

1:28:51.94, 3. Gaurav Kumar (UP)

1:32:48.34; **Discus:** 1. Abhimanyu (Har)

# Jadeja – a stellar performer who is happy to fly under the radar

He is at his most comfortable either facing up to the best of attacks with the team having its back to the wall, sending down over after probing over of relentless left-arm spin, or gliding across the turf with the grace of a ballerina and the pace of a cheetah, lifting fielding to a fine art



R. RAGU

**R. Kaushik**

**K**amindu Mendis is currently flavour of the season, and rightly so, after drawing abreast of the great Sir Don Bradman in becoming the second-fastest to 1,000 Test runs in terms of innings played (13).

Last week, R. Ashwin walked away with all the plaudits after his stirring all-round display in potentially his final Test at his home ground, the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, scoring a hundred and taking five wickets in an innings in the same game for the fourth time.

While Mendis and Ashwin have hogged the limelight, another stellar performer has flown under the radar, as he invariably does despite his wonderfully consistent exploits with bat and ball across formats for a long time now.

Ravindra Jadeja won't mind it one bit, you suspect. He isn't a great one for outlandish shows of emotion or for espousing his views freely and without inhibition. He is at his most comfortable either facing up to the best of attacks with the team having its back to the wall, sending down over after probing over of relentless left-arm spin, or gliding across the turf with the grace of a ballerina and the pace of a cheetah, lifting fielding to a fine art.

In the same Chennai Test where Ashwin was named the Player of the Match for the 10th time – among Indians, only Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid have won more such awards – Jadeja was typically efficient, striding inconspicuously in Ashwin's outsized shadow during India's first-innings batting stint, and playing second fiddle to Jasprit Bumrah and Ashwin respectively in India's two bowling innings.

He finished the game with 86 runs, helping Ashwin rally India from 144 for six on day one to a match-deciding 376 all out, and with five wickets across two innings. Yet, apart from the smiles he elicited for his inner Rajput-fuelled signature celebration upon reaching his half-century, he was hardly in the forefront, content to walk at his own pace and happy in his own skin.

**Extraordinary accomplishment**  
It almost went unnoticed that Jadeja became the first cricketer in Test history to score more than 2,000 runs and take 200 wickets in winning causes, an extraordinary accomplishment that alone underpins his value as an all-round asset. At a time when India is bemoaning the lack of a quality seam-bowling all-rounder in the longest format, Jadeja forms arguably the more potent half of a spinning all-rounder combine alongside Ashwin, whose wicket-taking skills remain undiminished and whose batting now seems to have found a second wind.



K.R. DEEPAK

Sometimes, it's hard to believe that Jadeja is just nine weeks short of his 36th birthday, or that he has completed 15 years in international cricket. Time seems to have stood still for the left-handed handyman born in Navagam-Khed in Saurashtra, who has been stumped neither by advancing years nor the ravages of injury that has reared its ugly head now and again.

Jadeja is as full of energy as he was when he debuted for the country in February 2009 as a 20-year-old, as electric on the park, as feared for his ability to turn the course of a match with a slice of brilliance in the field, and a far improved version of the man who once didn't believe in himself as a batter in international cricket, but has been a splendid performer all over the world once he started viewing himself in a different light.

If Jadeja's value has been less eulogised, we can put it down to his disarming lack of self-aggrandisement. There is a simplicity to his bowling that makes the craft appear remarkably easy. Just as there is an effectiveness to his batting that can hardly be mistaken for graceful elegance.

Jadeja might not elicit the oohs and the aahs that the more stylish batters or the more vicious turners of the ball do, but it's in his understanding and maximising of his strengths and his acute awareness of his very few weaknesses that he stands head and shoulders above everyone else.

There might appear nothing fancy about Jadeja's extremely incisive left-arm spin. But one can't average 24 with the ball while picking up 13 five-wickets hauls in Test cricket by being commonplace; Jadeja is anything but, as his numerous victims will affirm. An easy, uncomplicated, repeatable action is complemented by subtle changes in angle and pace; he may not possess, or talk about, the dip and loop and drift and revs like the more eloquent Ashwin does, but Jadeja's command over his bowling speaks for itself.

On good tracks of the variety that abound outside the sub-continent – good for the faster bowlers, or good for the batters, that is – Jadeja is an exceptional defensive bowler who keeps pegging away, giving away little in terms of width or errors in length.

Blessed with the ability to bowl long spells with enviable consistency, he gives the batters little breathing room; that he can get through his overs quickly might not always thrill his pace-bowling partner at the other end, but he is a captain's delight because he offers greater leeway when it comes to meeting over-rate requirements.

Give him a surface with a hint of encouragement, and Jadeja becomes a totally different beast. He brings all his variations into play, and they are many even if they may not appear visibly so, and uses his innate smarts and awareness to spin a wicked web of deceit that's often overlooked by the presence at the other end of Ashwin.

#### Mind-boggling

To bowl alongside Ashwin and still pick up 299 Test wickets (and counting) at more than four wickets per game is mind-boggling. That he has stolen a march over Ashwin in the last half-decade when India has played overseas with just one specialist spinner speaks to how highly successive leadership groups rate him, and exactly what he brings to the table as he backs up Jasprit Bumrah and Co. and ensures that the pressure built by the quicker bowlers isn't released by a loose spell or by overreach.

So much has Jadeja's batting come on since the beginning of 2018 that first Virat Kohli and now Rohit Sharma have been emboldened to use him in the top half of the batting order.

Since January 2018, Jadeja has made close to 2,000 Test runs in 39 games at an

average of 43.24, which has propelled his overall average to 36.72 from a modest 29.40 in his first 35 Tests. All four of his centuries, including a massive unbeaten 175 against Sri Lanka in Mohali while batting at No. 7, and 13 of his 21 fifties have come in the last seven years, reiterating that once he started – belatedly, many will attest – believing that he belonged as a batter in Test cricket, he was a completely transformed willow-wielder.

Like Rohit and Kohli, Jadeja too bid adieu to international T20 cricket after India's World Cup triumph in Bridgetown in June. For all his versatility, he didn't exactly crack the T20I code; his numbers from 74 games for the nation in that format are middling to par, just about, but he was still seen as adding tremendous value mainly because his fielding alone was worth taking a punt on.

#### Outstanding

In the other two formats, he has been outstanding; in the 50-over game, for instance, he averages 32.42 with the bat and 36.07 with the ball, the seemingly high latter number more than made up for by an economy of 4.88 and a strike rate of a wicket every 44.3 deliveries, which has helped him snare 220 victims in 197 games. In all formats combined, he has more than 570 wickets and upwards of 6,300 runs. Ravindra Jadeja is a star, all right, never mind if he doesn't tom-tom it.

India must count itself very fortunate that in the last quarter of a century or so, it has twice had two astonishingly skilled spinners operating in tandem but seldom competing with each other. Even though he himself finished with more than 400 Test wickets, Harbhajan Singh was often Anil Kumble's understudy when they played together, though it's another matter that for a while in the early 2000s, Harbhajan supplanted Kumble as India's lead tweaker overseas.

Ashwin clearly has the more jaw-dropping numbers compared to Jadeja, but the latter is anything but an also-ran. Several of Ashwin's wickets have stemmed from the unyielding and sustained pressure imposed by Jadeja at the other end, and the off-spinner from Chennai will be the first to acknowledge.

Over the next three months, Jadeja will continue to be a pivotal figure in India's bid to make it to the final of the World Test Championship for the third time in a row. It's unlikely that in Australia later in the year, India will play both Ashwin and Jadeja in all five Tests; it's also more than likely that if they go in with just one of them, the scales will be tilted in Jadeja's favour, as they have been for a while now.

As a primarily restrictive bowler and as an attritional, obdurate left-handed batter, Jadeja will be expected to sail in the wake of the glory boys. For some reason, that prospect seems to appeal to the Jammagar gazelle. Indian cricket is richer for that.

## THE GIST

Jadeja isn't a great one for outlandish shows of emotion or for espousing his views freely and without inhibition

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# MAHARASHTRA



A relative of protester Vijay Tamnar gets emotional as six members of the Dhangar community sit on an indefinite strike in Pandharpur, Maharashtra. EMMANUEL YOGINI

## Striking for identity and inclusion

It has been over three weeks since the Dhangar community in Maharashtra started a fast-unto-death agitation in Pandharpur for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes list, claiming they are the Dhagad community, already listed in the Constitution. **Vinaya Deshpande Pandit** visits Solapur district to understand the political ramifications of the demand of the State's second-largest community ahead of the upcoming Assembly election

Ganesh Keskar is miffed after reading the headline, 'Dhangar agitation in Maharashtra to seek reservation as STs.' 'Please don't spread rumours about our agitation. We are not agitating to be included in the ST (Scheduled Tribes) list (of the Indian Constitution). Why is the government, the media saying this about our agitation?' says Ganesh, an architect by profession, and the first of his nomadic family to settle down and start a business. He says the community, that he claims has at least 2 crore members, is seeking a recognition that the Dhangars are actually Dhagads, already classified as a Scheduled Tribe. Government sources claim there are no more than 1 crore Dhangars in Maharashtra.

Ganesh is at the Tilak Smarak Maidan, in the middle of the old city of Pandharpur, Solapur district, Maharashtra. Here, 350 km away from Mumbai, India's financial capital, six men are in the third week of their hunger strike demanding reservation under the ST category. Ganesh from Satara, Vijay Tamnar from Rahuri, Mauli Halanvar from Pandharpur, Deepak Borade from Jalna, Yashwant Gayke from Beed, and Yogesh Dharam from Ambegaon.

Claiming to be Maharashtra's second largest community after the Marathas, the Dhangars are spread across Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, Goa, and Karnataka. In the context of Maharashtra's Assembly election to be held this year, the community claims to hold sway in 92 of the 288 constituencies.

### Setting the stage

The stage is replete with Dhangar iconography, yellow being prominent. It denotes the colour of the clan's deity Khandoba. Fans whir on the stage; plastic bottles of water lie carelessly around. There is always some action to keep up the momentum. If nothing else, the young community members make reels of the agitators, weak from not eating or drinking anything. They add sad or compassionate songs to the videos before they put them out.

The striking men meet and greet community visitors and the rare VIP who walks in to support them. Shahajibapu Patil, ruling Sena MLA and Dr. Vikas Mahatme, president of AIIMS, Nagpur, have paid visits. Sometimes, community members are overwhelmed and break down when family members visit from different parts of Maharashtra. Some bring along their cattle, some their instruments. Some play for them; some cheer for them. Someone's mother holds their faces and cries for the cause.

On a humid day when the rains have made the ground muddy, speeches continue on the public announcement system. Some sit quietly on the

The government has been positive. We expect that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will issue the Government Resolution (that declares that Dhangads should be read as Dhangars).

**MAULI HALANVAR**  
BJP member from Pandharpur, who is on a fast

red chairs placed in front of the stage. They clap dutifully after the speeches. "On a daily basis, there is a walk-in crowd of 4,000 to 4,500 people," says Amol Karande, the district coordinator and State reservation committee member for Dhangar reservation.

The photographs of community icons hang behind the protesters: the founder of the Holkar dynasty in the 18th century, Malharrao Holkar; Yashwantrao Holkar from the 19th century. On the banner of agitation are photographs of social reformer Shahaji Maharaj, Dalit hero Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, social reformer Mahatma Phule, community leaders B.K. Kokre and Shivajibapu Shendge. A bust of the Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar, the builder of temples, is placed prominently on stage.

A few hundred metres away, on the banks of the Chandrabhaga river, is the temple of Lord Vitthal, believed to be a reincarnation of Krishna; and Rakhumai, his consort. For over 800 years, devotees have been walking for several kilometres every year during the Hindu month of Ashadh, in the monsoon, to meet their beloved 'Vithu mauli (mother)'. People come from across the world to the spot the god they believe becomes a doting, forgiving mother at this time. The crowds see the spectacle of the protest.

### Old idea, new bottle

The demand for Dhangar reservation is not new in Maharashtra. It has been made several times since independence, and it has been struck down by the courts of law, by study committees, and by governments. What is new is the claim of being already included, because of a twist in the name.

In 2013, Maharashtra saw one of the biggest Dhangar agitations. Then, Leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis and Shiv Sena leader

Subhash Desai had gone to the agitation location in Baramati to promise the protesters in writing that they would clear Dhangar reservation in the first cabinet meeting if they were voted to power. The BJP-Sena government was voted in that year, but the parties forgot the community which put them on the 'throne', says the community.

In parts of Maharashtra, politicians admit that Dhangars cannot be ignored, but the community itself has not united. "The government has been positive. We expect that Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will issue the Government Resolution (that declares that Dhangads should be read as Dhangars)," says Mauli, a BJP leader himself.

However, previous study reports had concluded that Oraon Dhangads (tribespeople listed in the Constitution as a Scheduled Tribe) and Dhangars are different communities. Some records from the pre-independence period also call Dhangars a part of Maratha or Kunbi community.

The Constitution already has a list of 45 tribes. Oraon Dhangad is number 36 on this. According to anthropological information, the Dhagads are a sub-tribe of Oraon tribe, says expert Sanjay Dabhade. They were added to Maharashtra's list after the reconstitution of State in 1966, when parts of Central Province and Berar were added to the then Bombay province. As per the 1971 census data, there was only one Oraon Dhangad in Chandrapur-Gadchiroli.

In 1965, the B.N. Lokur committee had set out well-defined criteria for assigning Scheduled Tribe status. Five criteria were given: ancient lifestyle, geographical isolation, distinct culture, shyness in behaviour, backwardness, particularly economical. Several committees formed thereafter have concluded that the Dhangars don't fit into these criteria.

The customs, traditions, and deities of Oraon Dhangads and Dhangars differ. The Dhangars are not isolated from the rest of the society; neither are they shy. Hence, they did not fulfil the conditions of belonging to the Scheduled Tribe community.

When asked about this, the agitators get up from their beds. "Where are these Dhagads then? The community has been mentioned in the list for Maharashtra, which means they should have been here to claim the benefit. When Marathas started agitating for reservation under OBC quota, the OBCs of the State stood up against them. Why aren't the Dhagads standing against us?" asks Deepak, who hails from Jalna. He resigned as an assistant police inspector to be a part of the Dhangar reservation protest, say members of the coordination committee.

Meanwhile, the Dhangars have reservations under the OBC category. They get 3.5% reservation as nomadic tribes. The community feels threatened after the Maratha agitation for reser-

vation. They feel if Marathas are given Kunbi certificates under the OBC category, they will likely end up with a larger share in the OBC seats in government education institutions and jobs. The OBCs enjoy reservation in local self-government, but not at the State and Central elections, unlike the SCs and STs.

The Maharashtra government has now formed a nine-member committee under Indian Revenue Service officer Sudhakar Shinde to look into the matter of the Dhangar reservation. It will travel to the other States where Dhangars are, before submitting its report. Government sources indicate that the issue is complex, and that Dhangar reservation issue is being seen 'sensitively'.

On September 14, a man attempted to take his life in support of the cause. The protesters rushed him to the hospital and he was saved. That was the sixth day of the indefinite hunger strike. After this incident, the six protesters kept appealing to all the visitors not to take any extreme step. "We all stand for the same cause, but your life is precious. Don't do this," is an announcement made daily.

Those with him say the community needs protection under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. "We get beaten up often; the village ruffians steal our sheep. We have no protection, nobody we can seek help from," says a supporter who has walked in a while ago.

### 'Preposterous,' say STs

Through recorded history, Dhangars have not been considered tribals. In the 19th century, social reformer Mahatma Phule had said in the book *Shetkaryacha Asud* that Dhangars were a part of Kunbis. The Tribes and Castes of Bombay published by the British in 1922 did not list the community. In 1945 Babasaheb Ambedkar had said in *Bahishkrut Bharat* that Dhangars are a caste of Kshatriyas.

Madhav Sarkunde, who describes himself as a "tribal writer poet and social activist", says, "Article 366(25) of the Constitution has clearly stated who should be called a tribal. After the 2017 Supreme Court judgment which goes against the Dhangar demand, a contempt of court can be filed against any government which issues a GR for giving ST reservation," says.

He explains that in 1979, the Government of Maharashtra had made the same demand to the Centre. The Centre had sent back the proposal saying this demand cannot be fulfilled. "In 2002, when the matter came up in Parliament, it was concluded that there was no similarity between Dhangad and Dhangar, and that there was no printing error," says Madhav.

Thereafter, the Sudhir Joshi Committee of 1995 too had concluded that Dhangars are not tribals. Shripad Dange, who played a leading role in the Indian Communist movement, was part of that committee.

Sanjay Dabhade, State committee member of National Forum for Tribal Rights, says this is nothing but a political ploy. "The OBC castes feel that they should get reservation under SC-ST categories as there are bigger constitutional benefits. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had himself started these politics in 2014. STs claim that the PM had said in his poll speeches in Maharashtra in 2014 that Dhangars be given reservation. Then Fadnavis promised them reservation, thereby increasing their aspirations," he says.

Tribal MLAs have also come together under the leadership of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly's Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal to oppose the Dhangar agitation. "Let them prove legally how they are one of us," Zirwal said recently.



The men leading the protest: (from left) Ganesh Keskar, Vijay Tamnar, Mauli Halanvar, Deepak Borade, Yashwant Gayke, Yogesh Dharam; (right) people from the Dhangar community arrive at the protest site across Maharashtra. EMMANUEL YOGINI

# KERALA



**Tough task:** A view of the outpatient area of the Government Medical College Hospital, Manjeri, the top referral hospital in Malappuram district in the government sector. Such teeming crowds in hospitals render it difficult for authorities to trace contacts and contain contagious infections such as Nipah, once it is confirmed in a patient who happens to be on the hospital premises. SAKEER HUSSAIN

# Living in the shadow of Nipah

With two back-to-back Nipah deaths in less than two months at just 10 km apart, Malappuram district of Kerala is in the throes of a social-health crisis. There's no guarantee that the virus will not return anytime soon, point out health officials. It's double jeopardy with a virulent form of Mpox infection reported from the district, reports **Abdul Latheef Naha**

**G**rief and anger resonate in Rahana's voice as she speaks through an N-95 respirator mask about the death of her youngest brother, Farhan\*. He would have been celebrating his 24th birthday on Friday, September 27, along with his four siblings, if the deadly Nipah virus had not claimed his life on September 9.

Now, his siblings are distraught. They are struggling to cope with their loss while grieving in isolation, yet periodic visits by health workers bring them back to the harsh reality. "Won't you even let us overcome this pain?" asks Rahana, her voice filled with frustration and anger.

"We have lost faith in our doctors. None of them could diagnose the disease, though he had all the symptoms," she says, holding back tears. "If the doctors had acted more perceptively and responsibly, my brother could have been saved."

Farhan developed high fever, headache, and altered sensorium on September 5. He consulted three doctors, both traditional and modern, on September 6. As his condition worsened, he was admitted to NIMS Hospital, Wandoor, in his native Malappuram district on September 7. The next day, he was shifted to MES Medical College Hospital, Perinthalmanna, 35 km from Wandoor, where he died around 8.30 a.m. on September 9. However, it was only nearly a week after his death that Nipah was confirmed as the cause.

#### Symptoms go unrecognised

No doctor who examined him linked his condition to the deadly Nipah virus, despite his symptoms of high fever, myoclonic jerks, and altered sensorium – typical signs of Nipah. His last recorded temperature was 108 degrees Fahrenheit. One doctor even asked the family if Farhan was a drug addict, which his sister describes as "adding insult to injury." She is outraged at the failure of the medical professionals to recognise a viral disease that had recently resurfaced in Kerala, particularly in Malappuram and its neighbouring Kozhikode districts.

Nipah has dealt a devastating blow to Farhan's family in Naduvath, Tiruvali panchayat. The siblings had already lost their mother to colon cancer just two months ago. Now, the death of Farhan, who was pursuing an MSc in Psychology at Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies, Bengaluru, has plunged them into even deeper sorrow. His death has also rattled the neighbourhood and the State's health apparatus.

Malappuram district has become a focal point on India's health map due to two back-to-back Nipah cases this year. The deadly zoonotic virus, largely carried by fruit-eating bats, looms over the region. Farhan's death was the second Nipah incident in less than two months. The first was a 14-year-old boy from Chembrasseri, near Pandik-

kad, who died on July 21. The aerial distance between the two cases is less than 10 kilometres.

#### Another threat looms

Adding to the health concerns in Malappuram is the most virulent form of Mpox (monkeypox), clade Ib. A 38-year-old man who recently arrived from Dubai is undergoing treatment in an isolation ward at Government Medical College Hospital, Manjeri. Though not as deadly or alarming as Nipah, the State Health department is preparing to manage its spread. Health Minister Veena George has urged those travelling from abroad to report any symptoms such as fever, swollen lymph nodes, or skin lesions.

Malappuram is hosting the first case of Mpox clade Ib in India. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) experts, this strain is several times more virulent than others. On August 14, the WHO declared Mpox clade Ib a public health emergency after its spread to neighbouring countries from Congo in Africa.

Currently, 29 people who came into contact with the Mpox patient are under surveillance in Malappuram. Thirty-seven passengers who travelled with him on the flight have been advised to take precautions. Unlike COVID-19 or Nipah, quarantine is not required for Mpox.

"Mpox is manageable. We could detect this season's first case easily because we have experience handling six cases in recent years. The lesions are typical," says Malappuram District Surveillance Officer (DSO) C. Shubin. Although the Mpox clade Ib adult mortality rate has been 10%,

and the child mortality rate 5% in certain African countries, Dr. Shubin is optimistic that it will be much lower in a State like Kerala, where health surveillance is among the best in the country.

If not for the surveillance by Dr. Shubin and his team, the latest Nipah case in Wandoor might have gone unaccounted for. What raised his suspicion of Nipah was the rapid progression of the patient's condition from AES to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) while under treatment at MES Medical College Hospital.

Farhan, showing clear symptoms of AES, was brought to MES Hospital around 1.30 p.m. on September 8. He was admitted to the medical intensive care unit (MICU) by 6 p.m. However, the hospital staff could not collect cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) due to his convulsions. In the MICU, his condition worsened, and he developed ARDS, eventually succumbing to the illness by 8.30 a.m. on September 9. His body was taken home and buried on September 10. Many attended his funeral, unaware that he had died from Nipah and could transmit the deadly virus.

#### A 'precious' sample

Fortunately for Dr. Shubin and the Health department, an unused blood sample of Farhan was found in the MES Hospital lab. "It was very little, but so precious," the doctor said. The sample was sent to the virology lab in Kozhikode on September 13, and the Health Minister confirmed Nipah as the cause of death on September 15.

Even before the public announcement, the Health department had activated the Nipah protocol, placing the victim's family and friends under observation. "We swiftly implemented the protocol by tracing all his contacts, advising quarantine, and testing them while providing treatment for those showing symptoms," says District Medical Officer R. Renuka.

As head of the District Disaster Management Authority, District Collector V.R. Vinod imposed restrictions on public movement. Five civic wards around the victim's home were declared containment zones; schools, madrasas, anganwadis, and tuition centres in the area were closed; and wearing masks in public was made mandatory. "People were cautious, though enforcement was not as strict as it was during COVID-19," says P.P. Mohanan, councillor of Naduvath ward.

On Tuesday, Health Minister Veena George declared, "We have controlled the spread of the Nipah virus. All 104 people from the high-risk category have tested negative. A total of 32 people are under observation at Government Medical College Hospital, Manjeri, and MES Medical College

Hospital, Perinthalmanna." The district administration lifted the restrictions after ensuring that there was no virus spread.

#### How the spread got curbed

According to Dr. Renuka, the late onset of ARDS may have limited the spread of the Nipah virus in Farhan's case. In the July 21 Nipah case, the boy died of AES. "When the respiratory system is affected, the virus spreads more easily through droplets from coughing. In this case, when the patient developed cough through ARDS, his already weak central nervous system suppressed the cough and minimised the risk of airborne transmission," explains Dr. Renuka.

Supporting Dr. Renuka's view, Dr. Shubin adds that had the victim developed ARDS symptoms earlier, there might have been more Nipah cases. "We were lucky this time," he says.

Fruit-eating bats, also known as flying foxes, are the natural reservoir for the Nipah virus. The virus is mainly transmitted from bats to humans through contamination of fruits consumed by bats and people. It can also be transmitted through contaminated food or direct human-to-human contact with an infected person's secretions and excretions. Caregivers, friends, and family of an infected person are at a higher risk of contracting the virus.

It remains unclear how Farhan contracted the virus. "It's assumed he got it from a bilimbi fruit he ate while at home. In the Pandikkad case, it was believed he contracted it from a hog plum. These are only assumptions. We have not detected the virus in any fruit so far, but we know fruit bats can discharge the virus anytime and anywhere, especially when they eat or touch fruits on trees," says Dr. Renuka.

A survey by the Health department following the recent Nipah death identified dozens of bat colonies within a couple of kilometres of the victim's home. Expert opinion is divided on whether the virus can be attributed to bats. Since bats are an integral part of the local ecosystem, coexisting with them, as people have for generations, seems to be the most practical solution.

"A One Health approach is needed," suggests Dr. Renuka, advising people not to disturb bats or destroy their habitats. "Nipah is here to stay. We need to be aware and vigilant. That is the best way to survive," Dr. Renuka says.

#### Still in the dark

Preventing Nipah is not easy. Outbreaks occur when various factors converge. However, according to Dr. Shubin, strengthening the surveillance of AES cases can help detect infections early and stop transmission by isolating contacts.

Despite the increased AES surveillance, it is surprising that doctors missed the latest Nipah case, which presented with typical symptoms. The studies and surveys conducted by different agencies, including the Central teams, have so far linked the virus to the bats. But the mode of transmission of the virus from bats to humans still remains a riddle.

"We have identified the source. Bats are virus reservoirs. But we don't know when and how they will discharge the virus. We must live with this reality," says Dr. Shubin and Dr. Renuka.

Living in a verdant district with colonies of bats, the people of Malappuram have a new reason to be worried about. They will be living amidst the fear of Nipah. Those in the health sector, particularly doctors and nurses in the private sector, must wake up to the new reality. They cannot afford to misdiagnose a case just because they have not seen a Nipah case before. "They deal with our lives. They should keep updating. We cannot afford to lose human lives to the ignorance and carelessness of medical practitioners," says Rahana.

(\*Names changed to protect identities)



**Utmost caution:** Volunteers in protective gear bringing the body of a 14-year-old Nipah victim for burial in Malappuram in July. FILE PHOTO