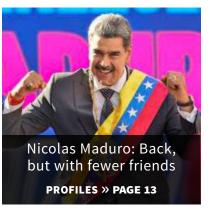
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over choice of CM candidate

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Delhi's three major political parties – Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), BJP, and Congress – on Saturday crossed swords over the choice of chief ministerial candidates for the Assembly election scheduled for February 5.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal fired the first volley by saying that "sources" have told him that the BJP has picked former South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri, who is contesting from Kalkaji against CM Atishi, as its chief ministerial face.

In response, senior BJP leader and Union Minister Amit Shah, addressing a rally in the national capital, said, "Who is Kejriwal to announce our CM face?"

The Congress also hit out at the AAP chief, wondering whether Mr. Kejriwal, whom the Supreme Court granted bail last year in the liquor policy case subject to certain condi-



BJP leader Amit Shah at an event in Delhi on Saturday. ANI

tions, could even qualify for the top post.

The ruling AAP has, in its poll campaign, repeatedly attacked Delhi's main Opposition party, the BIP, for not declaring a CM face. The BJP has responded by saying that the announcement will be made "in due course of time".

On Saturday, Mr. Kejriwal doubled down on his attack against the BJP, challenging it to send its chief ministerial candidate for a public debate on their vision for the national capital.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra



How can someone who was barred by the Supreme Court from signing files, who had to step down as the CM, be projected as a chief ministerial candidate?

Sachdeva termed the former CM's claim about Mr.

Former Delhi MP and Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit, who is up against Mr. Kejriwal from New Delhi seat, said, "How can someone who has been barred by the apex court from signing files, who had to step down as the CM, be projected as a chief minis-

BJP FIELDS KAPIL MISHRA » PAGE 2

SANDEEP DIKSHIT

Bidhuri "an absolute lie" and said that "all the BJP candidates are our chief ministerial candidates".

terial candidate?"

Parties in Capital trade barbs 3 more bodies retrieved from flooded Assam mine

Multiple agencies keep up work to locate five other trapped miners; authorities continue to pump out water from nearby mines; the body of a worker from Nepal was recovered on Wednesday

Rahul Karmakar

escue workers retrieved the bodies **▲**of three workers from a flooded rat-hole coal mine in Dima Hasao district of Assam on Saturday afternoon, taking the death toll to four in the accident that took place on January 6. Five workers are still missing.

Officials at the site in Kalamati area, about 28 km from the industrial town of Umrangso, said an Army and National Disaster Response Force team recovered the bodies between 7.28 a.m. and 12.40 p.m.

The deceased have been identified as Lijen Magar (27) of Kalamati village Wednesday. close to the mine; Khushi Mohan Rai (57) from Fakiragarm in Kokrajhar district of western Assam; and



Long operation: A rescue team carries the body of a worker recovered from a mine in Dima Hasao, Assam on Saturday. PTI

Sarat Goyari (37) of Thailapara in Sonitpur district of north-central Assam. The body of Ganga Bahadur Shreshta (38), a resident of Udayapur district in Nepal, was recovered on

Efforts by multiple agencies, including the Navy, to rescue the five miners still trapped in the 90-metre pit continued for the fifth day, Dima Hasao's District Commissioner Simanta Kumar Das said.

"Efforts to find the other miners will resume tomorrow [Sunday] morning but dewatering will continue throughout the night. The water level is down to about 15 metres with six pumps draining out 2.43 lakh litres per hour from the affected mine," Mr. Das told The Hindu.

Six more pumps are simultaneously draining out water from three abandoned mines nearby, all at a lower elevation than the ill-fated mine, while the heavy-duty pump brought by Coal India Ltd. (CIL) from Nagpur will need some more time to be set up. "Once the CIL pump goes into the mine, the six small pumps will have to be taken out. Our priority is on mobilisation to wrap up the operation as soon as possible," Mr. Das said.

Water level in the mine was almost constant at 30 metres for the first three days, but the technicians managed to bring it down by 7 metres on Friday.

CONTINUED ON



Shiv Sena (UBT) to go solo in civic polls: Sanjay Raut

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Saturday announced that the party intends to go solo in the upcoming municipal corporation elections in Mumbai and Nagpur. » Page 4

Centre backs probe against firm owned by Kerala CM's kin

NEW DELHI

The Centre has defended before the Delhi High Court its decision to probe the affairs of **Exalogic Solutions Private** Limited, owned by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's daughter T. Veena, and some other entities. » Page 6

MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES **CLASSIFIEDS** » PAGE 5

BJP attempting to enrol fake voters on a 'large scale' in New Delhi: AAP

The Hindu Bureau

The Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday accused the BJP of submitting fake voter registration applications on a "large scale" in a "deliberate" attempt to manipulate the Delhi Assembly election process. It said such practices raise doubts on the conduct of free and fair elections in the national capital.

The party said it had brought these fake applications to the notice of the Election Commission (EC).

At a press conference on Saturday, AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh alleged that several voter registration applications usthe residential



Kejriwal addressing a press conference on Saturday. R.V. MOORTHY

addresses of BJP leaders and addresses of small shops and basements across the New Delhi constituency were sent to the

"An application has been filed to register 33 vo-

ters from the MP's official residence occupied by BJP candidate [New Delhi seat] Parvesh Verma, who was supposed to vacate his home after his term ended. From a two-bedroom flat tions have been made for absurd and reeks of deliberate manipulation," Mr. Singh said.

The AAP leader said filing fake applications amounted to tampering with the electoral rolls. "This calculated assault on democratic integrity shows the BJP's desperation to rig elections," he said.

He alleged that over 20 names have been sent from the address of a three-bedroom flat, 20 from a basement in Jor Bagh and 21 from a small shop in the Sangli Mess area, apart from official residences of BJP MPs.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7

Twin peaks



Under fog: The Naini bridge over the Yamuna in Pragyaraj, Uttar Pradesh, shrouded in a blanket of dense fog on Saturday as severe cold weather continues in northern States. PTI

HAL asks civil operators to ground Dhruv helicopters

<u>Jagriti Chandra</u> NEW DELHI

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. has advised civilian operators to ground the indigenous Dhruv advanced light helicopter Mark-III until the cause of a crash in Porbandar last week is identified.

The armed forces have already temporarily grounded all their 330 Dhruvs following the January 5 crash of an Indian Coast Guard helicopter during a training sortie that killed all three crew members onboard.

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 9

Many trapped as waiting hall | Seven special courts will be set up to collapses at Kannauj station

at 212 VP House, applica-

The Hindu Bureau LUCKNOW

A partially built waiting hall collapsed at the Kannauj railway station in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, trapping several construction workers and railway staff under the debris. At least seven people suffered serious injuries and have been taken to the local government hospital.

The two-storey building was under construction at the station, which is being renovated under the Amrit Bharat scheme.

A ceiling slab of the waiting hall suddenly collapsed. It is believed that nearly 40 people were present on the site at the time, of which at least 25 have



Saturday. Seven persons suffer serious injuries. PTI

been rescued so far.

A rescue operation has been launched by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the Government Railway Police (GRP), the Railway Protection Force

(PRF), and the district administration. "Our focus is to rescue

trapped. We are using all resources at our disposal for the rescue efforts." Kannauj District Magistrate Shubhrant Kumar Shukl **CONTINUED ON**

the workers who are

» PAGE 7

<u>The Hindu Bureau</u> CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday announced that seven special courts would hear cases pertaining to sexual assault on women.

The courts would be set up in places including Madurai, Tirunelveli, Coimbatore, Salem, Tiruchi, and Chennai.

In his reply to the address by the Governor, R.N. Ravi, in the Assembly, Mr. Stalin said that a special committee headed by the Additional Superintendent of Police would be set up to expedite trials in sexual assault cases in all the districts.

The Tamil Nadu Prison



hear sexual assault cases, says T.N. CM

Additional Superintendent of Police will be formed to expedite trials in sexual assault cases in all the districts.

Rules, 1983, would be amended to ensure that persons accused in such cases were not granted bail, the Chief Minister added.

Earlier in the day, the Assembly passed the Cri-

minal Laws (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

The Bills, moved by the Chief Minister in the House

on Friday, are aimed at enhancing the punishment for sexual offences against women and children, as well as prosecuting those harassing them on digital and electronic platforms. The Criminal Laws Bill

proposes a minimum of 14 years of rigorous imprisonment for a rape convict, up from the present 10 years.

If the rapist is a member of the police force, it seeks to double the minimum rigorous imprisonment to 20 years. If the rape victim is a girl aged below 12, the Bill calls for life term and death penalty as the minimum and maximum punishment respectively.

SEE ALSO » PAGE 4

A ND-NDE

THE HINDU



Light rain brings minimum down to 7.7 degrees Celsius

Light rain was witnessed in parts of Delhi on Saturday evening as the city recorded a low of 7.7 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department. Forty-five trains were delayed as a thick fog engulfed the city in the morning, reducing the visibility, officials said. The IMD said the maximum temperature settled at 17 degrees Celsius, three notches below the season's average. According to data shared by the met office, the Sadarjung weather station recorded 1.6 mm of rainfall, Palam 2.4 mm, Delhi University 2 mm, Pusa 1.5 mm, and Najafgarh 4 mm. The weather department has predicted a generally cloudy sky with light rain on Sunday, with maximum and minimum likely to settle around 17 and 11 degrees Celsius. PTI

Pink toilets will be built in prominent markets: Mayor

Delhi Mayor Mahesh Kumar Khichi said on Saturday that pink toilets would be constructed for women in prominent markets across the city. The announcement followed a meeting at the Civic Centre with 100 women entrepreneurs from Delhi, led by Priyanka Saxena, General Secretary of the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) Women's Council. During the meeting, the women raised several concerns, including the lack of adequate parking in markets like Lajpat Nagar and Karol Bagh, which make it difficult for customers to access these areas. He also announced plans to develop selfie points in key historical markets, such as Chandni Chowk, Karol Bagh, Lajpat Nagar, Khari Baoli, and Kashmiri Gate, to celebrate the city's heritage. PTI

Kapil Mishra, ex-CM's son feature in second BJP list of 29 names

Candidates fielded for the February 5 election include four Purvanchali faces, five women, and several former legislators and serving councillors

Satvika Mahajan NEW DELHI

he BJP on Saturday released its second list of 29 candidates for the Delhi Assembly election a week after issuing its first list with as many names.

Kapil Mishra, who was accused of making hate speeches in the run-up to the north-east Delhi riots in February 2020, which left 53 people dead and over 700 injured, has been fielded from Karawal Nagar, where he replaces BJP MLA Mohan Singh Bisht.

Harish Khurana, the son of a former Delhi Chief Minister, Madan Lal Khurana, has been named for Moti Nagar constituency. The State unit's temple cell chief, Karnail Singh, will be up against senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former Health Minister Satyendar Jain from Shakur Basti.

Former Kasturba Nagar MLA Neeraj Basoya, who recently switched over from the Congress, has been retained for the seat.

BJP MLA from Laxmi Nagar Abhay Verma, who won the 2020 poll with a slender margin of 800 votes, will seek re-election from the East Delhi seat.

Five women, including Deepti Indora from Matia



Kapil Mishra, who has been accused of making hate speeches in the run-up to the February 2020 riots, joined the BJP in 2019. FILE PHOTO

Mahal and Neelam Pahalwan from Najafgarh, and several former legislators and sitting councillors have also made the cut.

The BJP has announced a total of 58 candidates so far for the 70-member Delhi Assembly, the election for which is scheduled on February 5. The

ruling AAP has announced candidates on all seats and the Congress on 48. BJP's The

candidate from Karawal Nagar served as a legislator from the seat when AAP came to power in 2015. Mr. Mishra was inducted into the Cabinet as the Water Resources Minister. However, he was sacked for "anti-party activities" in 2017. After being disqualified as an MLA under the anti-defection law, he joined the BJP in 2019. In August 2023, he was named as the Delhi BJP vice-president.

Mr. Mishra, the Laxmi Nagar MLA and two other candidates named in the second list belong to the Purvanchali

> community. Purvanchali is a term used for residents of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bi-

har and those hailing from there in the national capital. The community has been at the centre of a political tussle between AAP and BJP.

The BJP won three and eight seats in the Delhi Assembly elections of 2015

Delhi Police's annual data show fall in crime rate; AAP questions authenticity

Samridhi Tewari NEW DELHI

A slight decline in crimes such as murder, robbery, rape, and molestation were recorded in 2024 as compared to the previous year, according to the annual data released by the Delhi Police.

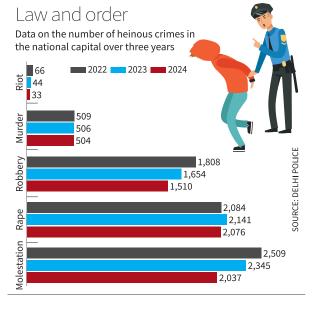
Crime in the national capital has become a contentious issue in the run-up to the Assembly election with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) targeting the BIP over law and order. which falls under the aegis of the Central government.

Reacting to the Delhi police data, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said the people of Delhi should be asked whether crime has "actually reduced".

"Gunshots are fired on the streets. The people will tell you how safe they feel in Delhi," he said at a press conference.

AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh said, "It is shameful that despite gang wars taking place in the city, they [police] are claiming the numbers have still gone down."

According to police data, cases of sexual harassment decreased to 362 from 381 the previous year. Street crime, including snatching cases, reduced in 2024 with 6,493 cases reported as compared to 7,886 in 2023. Motor vehicle theft cases declined to 39,976 from 40,045.



One of the most reported crimes – theft – saw a sharp decline in 2024, with 1,17,563 incidents recorded, a drop from 1,58,965 in

The data, however, show fatal accidents rose to 1,504 in 2024 from 1,432 in 2023 and burglaries too witnessed a surge of 29,000, marking an increase of over 400 cases from the previous year.

A sharp rise was recorded in cases under the Excise Act, which increased to 6,445 from 5,951 in the previous year. Similarly, cases registered under the Gambling Act saw a marginal uptick, rising to 3,556 in 2024 from 3,534 in 2023.

Moreover, a significant increase was observed in cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act to 1,789 in 2024 from 1,325 the previous year.

New strategies

A senior Delhi Police officer said the several improved law enforcement strategies including targeted operations, enhanced patrolling and technology driven surveillance led to the decrease in crime rate.

Police used AI-powered surveillance cameras that worked on analysing crowd behaviour to detect untoward incidents. awareness, and a victimcentric support system like women help desks to create a safer environment for women, the officer said. Police also collaborated with municipal authorities to have well-lit roads

and streets.

Man dies after being hit by a luxury car in south Delhi

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI

when his car was hit by a speeding luxury car coming from the opposite direction near Safdarjng Enclave on Saturday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Sukhiit, a resident of Hisar, Haryana. According to police, at around 6.30 a.m., the car moving to South Extension was hit by the luxury car that jumped the road divider and collided head-on. The driver of the vehicle fled, said a senior police officer.

"A case has been filed, and the driver will be held soon, the officer added.

Four arrested with pair of white rhino horns

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Four persons in illegal possession of a pair of horns of were arrested from Lajpat Nagar, police said on Saturday.

The accused, identified as Deepak Sharma, 57, Suresh Kumar, 57, Sant Ram, 57, Anil Kumar Sethi, 60, have been booked under various sections of the BNS and Wild Life (Protection)

Following a tip-off, police officers acted as decoy and apcustomers proached the accused to buy the horns. The deal was finalised for ₹1 crore, the officer said. As the police learnt about the accused's location, they raided Horns were of an African rhino and had been in one of the accused's house for over 90 years

a flat in Lajpat Nagar and recovered the two horns.

Accused Deepak disclosed that his family had the horns since his grandfather's time. The horns were of an African rhinoceros and had been in his house for over 90 years, the police officer said.

Hit by COVID-19, Deepak said his business was at risk with ₹35 lakh debt. Knowing the horns were rare and could fetch over ₹3 crore, he lured another accused, Suresh, with a commission to help him sell them.

Rahul Gandhi to address his first Delhi election rally tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will address a rally for the uncoming Assemb ly election in Delhi on Monday. Mr. Gandhi's 'Iai Bheem-Jai Samvidhan' rally in north-east Delhi's Seelampur will be his first in the national capital since the 2024 Lok Sabha poll.

Making the announcement on Saturday, the party's Delhi in-charge, Qazi Nizamuddin, said Mr. Gandhi's rally will see huge participation by dwellers.

He added, "We will fight to throw out corrupt and the incompetent AAP, save the city from devastation, and put the Capital back on the path of develop-



Congress has been attacking AAP over 'lack of development' in the city. FILE PHOTO

ment." Mr. Gandhi was touted to participate in 'Delhi Nyay Yatra', the party's month-long foot march held last year across the 70 Assembly seats of the city, but did not attend it.

Sheila Dikshit's tenure The party's State unit has led a campaign by contrasting the ruling Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) "unfulfilled promises" and "lack" of development works in the Capital over the past decade with the "infrastructure boom" during Sheila Dikshit's 15year tenure as the Chief Minister.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal has, in his speeches, attacked the grand old party saying it "has no role to play" in Delhi's political landscape and terming it an "alliance partner of the BIP".

The Congress and AAP are members of the Opposition INDIA bloc and contested last year's general election in the national capital together in a 4-3 seat-sharing arrangement against the BJP.

BJP attacks AAP on 'corruption' in poll song

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Targeting the ruling Aam Aadmi Party on alleged corruption the Delhi unit of the BJP on Saturday released the party's campaign song for Delhi Assembly poll.

"For the past 10 years, Delhi people have suffered under the 'AAP-da' (disaster) government, which has misused public funds for personal luxury. The time has come for Delhiites to seek accountability and usher in change," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said. The song "Bahane Nahi, Badlav Chahiye; Delhi Mein BJP Sarkar Chahiye" (We don't need excuses, but change; a BJP government is needed in



North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari has written the song. ANI

Delhi) has been written and composed by BIP Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari.

Reacting to the song, AAP said Delhi demands law and order. "As Union Home Minister, Amit Shah must answer how many police personnel have been recruited, how many PCR vans added," a party spokesperson said.

🔞 WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE Sr. Divisional Electric Engineer/ TRS/ Electric Loco Shed, Tughlakabad, New Delhi-44, acting for and on behalf

of the President of India, invites E

enders against the following Tenders

lenders against the following lenders, with the closing date 03.02.2025. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. (1) Tender/Bid No.: TKD-24-2024, Date: 09.01.2025 Name of Work and Station: Maintenance of Three Phase Locomotives batteries in Major and Minor Schedule at ELS/TKD for a period of 02 Years. QTY: Minor inspection=3000. Loco Major.

inspection=3000 Loco, Major inspection=300 Loco Estimated Cost: ₹ 12,90,060/- Cost of Tender

Form: Nil Earnest Money: ₹ 25,800/-Completion Period: 24 Months Last

Date & Time of Submission of Tender: 03.02.2025 at 15.30 Hrs Note: (1) E-Tender document and

details of E-tender will be available or www.ireps.gov.in Portal. (2) Manua

ffer will not be acceptable for this E Tender; in case manual offer received then offer will not be considered. (3)

For any correction in this tender corrigendum will be uploaded or website, which may be seen up-to the

date of tender opening. (4) Tenderer must have class-III, digital signature certificate and will have to register on

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRS)

Electric Loco Shed, WCR

Tughlakabad, New Delhi-110044

REPS Portal.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

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

No. 525638/32

PRESS NOTICE (RE-TENDER 3)

The Chief Engineer, P.W.D. Building (Health & Education), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati- 3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam invites bids in electronic tendering system (e-tenders) through Engineering, Procurement and Construction, (EPC-I) mode of contract (Single stage two-part bidding system) from eligible contractors registered with Assam Public Works Department (Building & NH) or Contractors registered with other State/ Central Government Departments, Institutions, Undertaking and Authorities having experience in similar nature of work, for the following works (including Routine Maintenance for four years from the completion of defect liability period):

	Group No.	Name of work		Estimated value		Total Bid			
SI. No			District	Construction (Rs. in Lakhs)	Maintenance (Rs. in Lakhs)	Value (including GST@18%) (Rs.in Lakhs)	Completion Period (Months)	Bid Security	Cost of Bid (In Rs.)
ı	Gr-22	Infrastructure Development of 65 Secondary Schools for construction of new school Buildings under NESID-OTRI Scheme in Kamrup District i) Nagarbera H.S. School (ii) Majortop H.S. School siii) Palashbari Boys High	Kamrup	1973.85202	39.38404	2013.23606	15	2%of Bid value for General category and 1 % of Bid Value for reserved Category	20,000

The Bid price may vary at the time of detail tendering for which no claim will be admissible

All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents. The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

The Work will be allotted only after receiving Government approval.

Details of the bid may be seen at website i.e. https://www.assamtenders.gov.in from 13-01-2025, 10:00 am onwards.

Chief Engineer, P.W.D. (Building), Assam, **Health & Education** Chandmari, Guwahati-3

WESTERN RAILWAY

MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT CORRIGENDUM TO E-AUCTION SALE PROGRAMME RESCHEDULE AND ADDITIONAL SALE PROGRAM DURING JAN 2025 FOR P.WAY AND OTHER VARIOUS SCRAP

E-Auction Sale Notification No. S III / Auction Programme-1 / JAN-2025 Dated-09/12/2024 owing Reschedule of auction date and Additional E-auction program for disposal of P. Way Scrap Material to be

eld in JAN 2025 for following depots is as given below:										
Depot	Resch	program Of Jan Officer		Divisional	Contact No.					
	From	То	program Of Jan 2025	Officer in charge						
MAHALAXMI	27.01.2025	31.01.2025	20.01.2025	Deputy Chief Materials Manager-	022- 24929571					
PARDI	27.01.2025	31.01.2025	20.01.2025	Mahalaxmi	09004495750					

All other terms and conditions will remain unchanged. Please visit Western Railway Website of material Managemen Department i.e. www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in as well as on www.ireps.gov.in e-auction portal for further information.

(No. SIII/Auction Programme-2/JAN 2025 /Dt. 09.01.2025)

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X.com/WesternRly | Follow u **TO ADVERTISE**

BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI-221004 Bid No.: E/1179/W-1173R1

E-TENDER NOTICE

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Maintenance, BLW, Varanasi acting or and on behalf of President of India invites open E-Tenders for the following work. Tender No.: EL/1179/W-1173R1, Name of work: "Replacement of Centralized Air Conditioning Plant, AHU & Cooling Tower of Computer Building & D&D building" Approximate cost Rs.: ₹ 66,66,914.46, Completion period: 06 Months, Earnest money: ₹ 1,33,300/-, Tender opening date and time: 31.01.2025 at 15.00 hrs. For details and to participate e-tender please visit Indian railways website www.ireps.gov.in.

Assistant Electrical Engineer वेबसाईट:-blw.indianrailways.gov.in"

PLEASE CONTACT

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selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

THEMOHINDU

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Janasanyog /C/6533/ 24/11-Jan-25

Uttarakhand BJP expels six rebel leaders

Press Trust of India DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand BJP on Saturday said it has expelled six rebel leaders who entered the fray for the upcoming urban local body (ULB) polls in the State as Independents against the party's official nominees.

The six rebel leaders, four in Uttarkashi and two in Rudraprayag, have been expelled for six years for anti-party activities on the recommendation of the State party president Mahendra Bhatt, said State party media in-charge Manveer Chauhan.

The orders, issued by party presidents of the two districts, were issued on Fridav.

Those expelled are former municipal chairman Bhupendra Singh Chauhan in Barahat, former district president Ummeedchand Shah in Purola, former block president Yashwant Kumar in Naugaon and Shakti Kendra convener Ajay Singh Rawat in Barkot. All had filed their nominations as Independents against the BJP's official nominees in these places in Uttarkashi district, Mr. Chauhan said.

In Rudraprayag, outgoing Ukhimath Nagar Panchayat president Vijay Rana and former mandal mantri of Agastyamuni Sushil Goswami have also been expelled, he said.

ULB polls are scheduled to be held on January 23.

CM urges Naga leaders to play bigger role in resolving Manipur's ethnic conflict

A third party is required to resolve the current issues and for restoration of peace, says Biren Singh; clashes between Kuki and Meitei communities have left 250 people dead since May 2023

Press Trust of India
IMPHAL

anipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Saturday requested the church and other leaders of the Naga community to play a greater role in resolving the ongoing ethnic conflict in the State.

Clashes between Kuki and Meitei communities have left over 250 people dead and thousands homeless since May 2023.

The Nagas were not involved in this conflict.

Addressing a programme at Maram in Naga majority Senapati district, Mr. Singh said, "I want to appeal to the Naga communities that a third party is required to resolve the current issues and for restoration of peace. For this, church and community leaders need to take responsibilities and initiatives."

'Path of peace'

All grievances and problems can be resolved under the Constitution and the laws of the Manipur government, he said.

"Whatever happened has happened... it's time to



Refugees in own home: Tribal children playing at a relief camp in Kangpokpi, Manipur. FILE PHOTO

forget and forgive. We need to jointly walk on the path of peace and bring back the former Manipur. We need to jointly work together to resolve this crisis. I seek the support of all those gathered today, including elected members, former elected members, and church leaders to overcome this crisis," Mr. Singh

The Chief Minister said he is available 24x7 and

will provide whatever help is needed from the government.

'Need help'

Mr. Singh said, "I need your help. Somebody has to come forward. During the Kuki and Naga clashes of the '90s, we tried hard to bring a solution. Similarly, I seek your support now. I have heard of such endeavours to bring peace being taken but I urge all of

you to take the initiative assertively."

The concern of the indigenous people should be addressed and all 34 recognised tribes of the State need to live together, he said.

He said his government has waged a war against drugs, and added that identifying illegal immigrants is required to protect the numerically less indigenous communities.

Woman dies in hospital after delivery; negligence, say Bengal Oppn. parties

Shiv Sahay Singh KOLKATA

The death of a woman at Midnapore Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) led to allegations of medical negligence and triggered protests by Left parties and the Congress outside the health facility on Saturday.

A 31-year-old woman, who had delivered a baby on Wednesday, died on Thursday at the State-run health facility.

Her family members have alleged that the death was due to using "expired" saline.

Three other women have also allegedly developed complications because of being administered the "expired" saline – Ringer's Lactated (RL).

A 13-member team of the State Health Department visited the hospital amid protests.

The family of the deceased woman, who lodged a complaint with the Kotwali police station,

Police personnel trying to ston a clash between supporters of the

Police personnel trying to stop a clash between supporters of the Left parties and youth organisations outside a hospital in Midnapore on Saturday. PTI

said the probe is futile.

'Expired saline'

Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari in a social media post said. "One lady died after childbirth and four other women are admitted in Critical Care Unit & Intensive Care Unit at the Medinipur Medical College after becoming "critically ill" when administered with "expired" saline." He alleged that even after the State Health Department banned the use of RL saline and 14 other medical items procured from Paschim Banga Pharmaceutical Ltd. following the directive of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), the information was either not updated or the authorities didn't act sincerely.

Meanwhile, the probe panel held meetings with the authorities concerned. The protesters tried to enter the hospital but were stopped by the police. The protesters held Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is in charge of the Health Department, responsible for the death.

'Renaming Kolkata's Star Theatre is historic, yet futile'



A view of the Binodini Theatre, formerly called Star Theatre. DEBASHISH BHADURI

Moyurie Som KOLKATA

The iconic century-old Star Theatre, at the crossing of Aurobindo Sarani and Bidhan Sarani in North Kolkata, now carries a different name plaque – Binodini Theatre.

A few days after CM Mamata Banerjee's renaming announcement in December, all banners and plaques at the auditorium were promptly replaced. While this change might seem innocuous to some, it is considered by many as historically significant — a long overdue reparation to the 19th century theatre performer Binodini Dasi.

According to author, theatre researcher and practitioner Suddhasatya Ghosh, the original Star Theatre, established in 1883 at 68, Beadon Street, and demolished and relocated by 1930, was supposed to be named after Binodini.

"Theatre veterans like Girish Ghosh, Amritalal Basu, Ardhendu Shekhar Mustafi approached Binodini to court Punjabi businessman Gurmukh Rai and help fund a commercial theatre space," he said.

Supported by patrons He added that fema

He added that female theatre practitioners at the time were primarily sex workers, and would be supported as thespians by their wealthy patrons. Between the 1870s and 1880s, Binodini became a celebrated and widely popular thespian. "Binodini had a paramour she wanted to

marry, but the likes of Girish Ghosh convinced her to court Rai instead, who they believed could help establish an autonomous theatre space," Mr. Ghosh said. "The promise made to Binodini was that the auditorium would be named after her – B Theatre or Binodini Theatre."

The same sentiment was echoed by Abanti Chakraborty, who co-wrote and directed the contemporary Bengali play *Binodini Opera*, a tribute and retelling of Binodini's life story.

'Felt betrayed'

When the auditorium was finally registered in March 1883, it was named Star Theatre. "She was told that the audience would not want to watch theatre at a space named after a sex worker. Binodini felt betrayed and humiliated," said Mr. Ghosh.

Star Theatre slowly declined in operations and was eventually sold off before 1888.

After that, Mr. Ghosh said, the auditorium was renamed and restarted multiple times, but was finally razed. Meanwhile, the brand 'Star Theatre' started afresh in 1888 as a new auditorium, where it now stands.

However, both agree that renaming the theatre after Binodini accomplishes little in paying tributes to her theatre legacy. "This was not the Star Theatre established by Binodini, and others. That no longer exists. Moreover, it is a movie hall, not a theatre space."

30 cyber 'fraudsters' held in Jaipur under 'Operation Cyber Shield'

The Hindu Bureau

In a major action taken under the ongoing 'Operation Cyber Shield', the police here on Saturday arrested 30 alleged cyber fraudsters after conducting raids at 40 places falling in five police station areas of the capital city. The accused had conducted transactions worth ₹30 crore to defraud the unsuspecting people.

Besides indulging in the nefarious activities, the accused were allegedly 'training' a new batch of 'fraudsters'. Along with the accused operating through eight gangs, two minors have also been detained.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Jaipur West) Amit Kumar told *The Hindu* that three of the accused, disguised as monks and astrologers, had allegedly cheated some people and offered to conduct rituals for them.

"One of the accused, a 25-year-old resident of

RISE 07:15 SET 17:44

RISE 16:01 SET 05:52

RISE 07:15 SET 17:45

RISE 17:05 SET 06:50

RISE 07:15 SET 17:46

max min

08

17 08

17 08

RISE 18:10 SET 07:41

Timings

SUNDAY, JAN. 12

MONDAY, JAN. 13

TUESDAY, JAN. 14

Delhi Weather

Delhi Palam Today

cold and uneasy

to prevail

16°C The weather will be

Delhi Palam Tomorrow

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mosty dry. Morning will be cold

and foggy. The day conditions

17°C Morning will be cold and

foggy. Day will be cool with

cold winds. Night will be cold

and uneasy. The dry weather

will be cool. Night also will be

Delhi City

Safdarjang

DELHI



Police officers seizing equipment used in cyber fraud from a building in Jaipur on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tonk district's Kheda Kumbholav village, received training in 'cyber frauds' in Sri Lanka," he said.

Special drive

The Cyber Crime Branch of Rajasthan police launched the month-long 'operation' on January 2 as a special campaign aimed at tackling cybercrimes, apprehending offenders, and raising public awareness. The initiative seeks to dismantle the infrastructure supporting the organised cyber-enabled economic

crimes in the State and address rising cyber threats.

Mr. Kumar said his 13member team had unearthed evidence of frauds worth ₹30 crore and blocked 135 bank accounts, 64 unified payments interfaces and 20 automated teller machines with account transactions. The material seized from the accused included laptop computers, mobile phones, ATM cards, WiFi routers, CCTV cameras, HDMI cables, bank pass

routers, CCTV cameras, HDMI cables, bank pass books, cheque books and passports.

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FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR Youngworld THE HINDU

Chhattisgarh silo crash: three more bodies recovered; death toll 4

Press Trust of India MUNGELI

The bodies of three workers were recovered on Saturday from the debris of a collapsed iron silo at a smelting plant in Chhattisgarh's Mungeli district after a 42-hour operation, taking the death toll to four, officials said.

On Thursday, a labourer was killed and another injured after the fly ash storage structure, weighing over 350 tonnes, crashed at Kusum Smelters Private Limited.

Teams from multiple agencies, involving over 400 personnel, launched a search and rescue operation, officials said. "The operation involving machines, cranes and gas cutters began on Thursday afternoon," Mungeli Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel said. He said moving the massive struc-

ture containing fly ash was an arduous task. "... the structure was shifted and fly ash removed, leading to the recovery of three bodies on Saturday morning," he said.

The three deceased

were identified as Jayant Sahu, Prakash Yadav, and Awdhesh Kashyap, he added. The labourer who was killed on Thursday was identified as Manoj Kumar Dhritlahre.

Omar inspects Z-Morh tunnel

The Hindu Bureau

Security arrangements were further tightened in Kashmir ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to inaugurate the Z-Morh tunnel on January 13. Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah visited the project on Saturday.

He appreciated the efforts in completing this vital infrastructure, officials said. He also visited the venue where the PM is scheduled to dedicate the project to the nation.

Mr. Abdullah also posted pictures on X. In response, PM Modi said, "I am awaiting my visit... You rightly point out the benefits for tourism and the local economy. Also, loved the pictures and videos!"





NRRIBE



JMM president Shibu Soren turns 81. workers celebrate

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) president Shibu Soren turned 81 on Saturday, and his family members and party workers celebrated his birthday in Ranchi. A cake-cutting ceremony was organised on the occasion at his residence in the presence of his son and Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren. Mr. Hemant Soren's legislator wife Kalpana Soren, Health Minister Irfan Ansari and several other leaders were present at the programme. One of the leaders who fought for the Statehood of Jharkhand, Mr. Shibu Soren became its Chief Minister thrice but was never able to complete each five-year term.

Four HMPV cases in Gujarat as 9-month-old tests positive

Gujarat has reported its fourth human metapneumovirus (HMPV) case, with a nine-month-old child contracting the infection in Ahmedabad, officials said on Saturday. All the cases have been reported in less than a week. The infant was admitted to a private hospital in the city on January 6 with cold, cough and difficulty in breathing. He has no history of foreign or other travel, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation said. On Friday, an eight-year-old boy from Sabarkantha district was confirmed to be infected with HMPV, making him the third case in the State.

Shiv Sena (UBT) to go solo in upcoming civic polls, says Sanjay Raut

Reacting to RS MP's announcement about contesting Mumbai and Nagpur elections, Maharashtra Cong. leaders say they will discuss the matter with Uddhav Thackeray and respect his decision

Snehal Mutha MUMBAI

mid the brewing tensions in the Indian National Democratic, Inclusive Al-(INDIA), the liance opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra faces another setback with Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Saturday announcing that the party intends to go solo in the upcoming municipal corporation elections in Mumbai and Nagpur. Reacting to it, State Congress leaders said they would discuss the matter with Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and respect his decision.

"On Uddhav Thackeray's instructions, we have decided to fight solo in the upcoming municipal elections. Whatever happens, will happen. It is also good for party workers as they were not getting an opportunity to contest elections due to the [MVA] alliance," he said, adding that he has also discussed the matter



Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar. FILE PHOTO

with Pramod Manmode, the Nagpur unit chief of Shiv Sena (UBT).

MVA blame game

Mr. Raut's statement on Saturday came after a blame game among the MVA constituents - Sena (UBT), Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) - in the aftermath of the alliance's crushing defeat in the recent Assembly election.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) ended up winning 20 constituencies, Congress 16 and NCP (SP) 10 as the ruling Mahayuti alliance

romped home with BJP winning 132 seats, Shiv Sena 57 and Nationalist Congress Party 41 in a House of

The poor MVA results came against the backdrop of a much better showing in the Lok Sabha election, where the three parties picked up 30 of the 48 parliamentary seats in the State.

Responding to Mr. Raut's comments, Mumbai Congress president and MP Varsha Gaikwad said that her party would make its own decisions concerning the local body elections. She agreed with Mr. Raut on party workers needing the opportunity to fight elections.

"Every party wants to grow, and nothing is wrong with that. Fewer seats were allotted to the party [Congress] in Mumbai in previous elections than expected. I will convey the feelings of the workers to the senior leadership," Ms. Gaikwad said.

She added that the matter will be discussed with Mr. Thackeray and his decision will be respected.

Mr. Raut also slammed Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar's comment on Friday blaming him for the delay in seat sharing ahead of the Assembly election. "In an alliance, the partners have to make adjustments. Those who are not able to do it have no right to be in the alliance," he said. Mr. Wadettiwar on Saturday said, "If they want to go solo then Congress and NCP (SP) will take this alliance ahead and fight the elections," he said.

Workers' unions ask Bengal BJP to help resume MGNREGS

Shiv Sahay Singh KOLKATA

Representatives of seven workers' unions on Saturday held protests outside the office of West Bengal Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) demanding the resumption of 100 days work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS), which has been suspended for over three years.

The workers met BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya.

A few days ago, Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity (PBKMS), a union of agricultural workers had blamed the politics of the West Bengal BJP behind the suspension of the MGNREGS funds for the

past three years.

The delegation of union representatives that met the BJP leader comprised Anuradha Talwar, Subha Protim Roy Chowdhury and Uttam Gayen, among others.

A press statement by the seven workers' unions stated that Mr. Bhattacharya assured them that being a Rajya Sabha MP, he shall raise the issue in the upcoming Budget session and

Rajya Sabha MP Samik Bhattacharya said he will raise the issue in the upcoming Budget meeting

undertake necessary communications with the relevant Ministry.

The unions also submit-

ted a memorandum to State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar stating that Section 27 of the MGNRE-GA empowers the Central government to stop funds only for a 'reasonable period'. "The Central government bears the bounden duty to take immediate steps to address the worsening crisis faced by rural workers in West Bengal, but still out of some petty political vendetta against the State government led by the Trinamool Congress, the Central government, led by the BJP, has thwarted funds under MGNREGS, thereby depriving the rural workers," a press statement by the unions said.

Funds under MGNREGS have been suspended since December 2021 on allegations of corruption in the implementation of the scheme.

Ram Temple gives hope to 'suppressed' civilisations: U.P. CM

Press Trust of India
AYODHYA

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is a reminder to the "suppressed" civilisations and cultures of the world that they can assert their rights democratically and constitutionally.

Addressing a programme held on the first anniversary of the consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla's idol at the temple, Mr. Adityanath said not losing patience even after countless sacrifices and going through an agnipariksha (trial by fire) was in-

tegral to the Ram Mandir campaign.

The Chief Minister bowed in front of Ram Lalla's idol, lit a lamp, offered flowers and performed an *aarti*. He also paid tributes to the late Ashok Singhal, former working president of the Vishva Hindu Parishad and one of the key architects of the Ram Temple movement.

Three-day event

Mr. Adityanath said to mark the completion of one year of the consecration of the idol of Ram Lalla, a three-day event has been organised by Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

Plea in SC seeks recall of T.N. Governor over walkout from Assembly

The Hindu Bureau

A writ petition has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking the recall of Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi, following his walkout on January 6 this year, over singing *Tamil Thai Vazhthu* instead of the national anthem ahead of his customary address to the Assembly.

The petition, filed by Supreme Court advocate and petitioner-in-person C.R. Jaya Sukin, called the Governor's conduct "shameful" as *Tamil Thai Vazhthu* [invocation to Mother Tamil] was being sung at the beginning of functions since 1967.

"In 1991, the State government introduced a rule that Tamil Thai Vazhthu would be sung at the beginning of functions and the national anthem at the end. This has not been a point of confrontation for 10 Governors since 1991," the petition said. It pointed out that Tamil Thai Vazhthu was the State's anthem. "State anthems are sung as per tradition in States, including Maharashtra and Odisha," Mr. Sukin said.

A statement issued by the Governor's office had said that Speaker and the Chief Minister had refused to listen to a request by the Governor to play the national anthem.

Reasons behind T.N. Governor's refusal to read customary address absurd: CM Stalin

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday said Governor R.N. Ravi's refusal to read his customary address in the Assembly on Monday was because he was "not able to stomach the progress made by the State."

In his reply to the Governor's address, Mr. Stalin said everyone knew about the "absurd reasons" behind the Governor's decision to avoid reading his address. "That is why I said his act was childish," he added.

The Chief Minister said as per established convention, the *Tamil Thai Vazhthu* [invocation to Moth-



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in the T.N. Assembly. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

er Tamil] was played at the beginning and the national anthem at the end of the address. But the Governor refused to accept this clarification, he added.

Recalling the late DMK leader M. Karunanidhi's dialogue in the film *Parasakthi*, that "the court had

also recovered a pair of

size 11 slippers, a yellow

dupatta, an alcohol bottle,

and fingerprints from the

bike, says a senior officer

from Kiratpur Sahib police

station, Rupnagar. He

further adds that Manin-

der's medical reports had

revealed that he had sex-

ually engaged with some-

their sources and learnt

that a man frequented

truck stands and often co-

vered his head with a du-

patta. "We worked out that

the man could be a sex

worker, maybe from the

transgender community,"

Up until his arrest, the

The police activated

one before his death.

witnessed a lot of strange cases," the Chief Minister said the Assembly had also seen a lot of "strange incidents" as far as Governor Ravi was concerned.

"As per Section 176 of the Constitution, the Governor should read the address prepared by the government. But he deliberately violated the rule," Mr. Stalin said.

"The Assembly has alrea-

"The Assembly has already celebrated its centenary and is made up of the feelings of crores of people. By daring not to respect the dignity of the House and the feelings of the people and insulting the *Tamil Thai Vazhthu*, he (the Governor) has sought to denigrate the post he is holding with political motives," he said.

However, the Chief Minister said the DMK would not mind the Governor's act because the party had emerged "despite neglects, humiliations, and oppressions."

A murder on a Punjab highway has exposed the struggles of transgender sex workers

SPOTLIGHT

Alisha Dutta

Trigger warning: The following article has references to rape and murder. Please avoid reading if you feel triggered.

On a foggy November evening, Preet, 37, was flirtatiously speaking to a potential client when she was intercepted by a police officer. Near a tea stall along the Ludhiana-Rupnagar route on National Highway 344A, the policeman produced a sketch and asked her a barrage of questions. "Have you seen an effeminate man (ladkiyon wali chaal chalan), one with a saffron dupatta covering his face? Is he one of you? Do you know him or where

Weeks later, she saw the face of the same man flash on televisions in every *dhaba* (roadside eatery) and *theka* (alcohol shop), and in every local newspaper. Some Hindi newspapers called him the "gay killer"; others went on to explain how a "gay man" had tar-

geted 11 men, looted and killed them, she recalls. On December 23, the

Punjab police arrested Ram Saroop, 47, also known as Sodhi, for allegedly killing Maninder in Kirtarpur Sahib area, Rupnagar. Later, the police learnt during interrogation that the case for which he was arrested was his 10th murder. Sodhi allegedly confessed that he had killed 11 men in Punjab's Fatehgarh, Hoshiarpur, and Rupnagar districts. All had refused to pay him for sex work. Among those killed are an ex-Army man, a mechanic, and a tea

"One body was recovered with the word *dhoke-baaz* (deceiver) written on his back with a pen. Most of the victims were found in a naked or semi-naked condition, with their pants below their waist," says Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Rupnagar, Gulneet Khurana. He adds that there was also a queerphobic slur scrawled on the man's back. All the victims had allegedly been

strangled to death using



Motive for murder: Police personnel inspecting a spot in Bharatgarh, Rupnagar district, in Punjab, where Ram Saroop alias Sodhi allegedly killed a man. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

dupattas, scarves, and shawls.

Character sketch

On a rainy August day, Maninder, allegedly the tenth man killed, who worked in the maintenance department in Moura toll plaza along the Chandigarh-Manali highway, asked his colleague to get two bundles of *arabi ke patte* (colocasia greens) for him. He was to cook the delicacy for his older brother and two sisters.

"Maninder usually returned home by 7.30 in the evening, but on August 18 (2024), when he did not come by 8.30, we started worrying," says a sobbing Manjeet, his elder brother.

Manjeet, his elder brother.
Around 9 p.m. Manjeet recalls starting his bike with shaky hands, minutes after he learnt from the toll plaza that Maninder had finished his shift and left just after 7.30 p.m. "I drove straight to the *theka* nearest to his workplace, along the same highway. I was

worried that he was drinking," he adds. There, he got to know that Maninder had bought a bottle of country liquor and left the *theka* with another man on pillion.

Manjeet jumped back on his bike and drove in the direction the *theka* owner had pointed him in. A few kilometres ahead, he saw his brother's bike parked next to a boulder. In the headlight, he saw a man trying to drag a body.

an trying to drag a body. police were unaware that "I quickly tried to get off" Sodhi had committed 10

says the officer.

my bike, but by then he other murders. After his ardropped the body and fled rest, the police asked rouon my brother's bike," he tine questions around morecounts. "I had to go back tive. Sodhi told them that and see whose body that Maninder, who had earlier was," Manjeet says. On agreed to pay him ₹300 for reaching the spot, he was sexual services, refused to horrified to find his brothpay him, minutes after the er's body in a clearing suract. "He told us this anrounded by shrubs. gered him a lot," an officer The police's sketch was says. Maninder also used a result of the description queerphobic slurs, which Manjeet gave. The police further angered him.

"During the interrogation, he took the notebook where we were writing down the details, and wrote about all those he had killed, and where, and started explaining why he had done so," the officer says.

The first incident was on January 24, 2024, when he was picked up in a car by a retired Army man, Harpreet Singh, 55, from Rupnagar, who had promised to pay ₹300 for his sexual services. Sodhi told the police that once the services were rendered, the man refused to pay and began abusing him. Then he allegedly stopped the car, picked up a stick and started beating Sodhi, who in turn grabbed the stick and beat him to death.

The making of a killer
The Punjab police's investigation has revealed that
Sodhi never carried a weapon and would take money
from his victims' wallets,
sometimes only as much as
they had agreed upon. "He
would also take their
phones and sell them to
truck drivers or alcohol
shop owners in exchange

for some money to sustain

A trans woman who

himself," the officer says.

practises sex work on Punjab's highways says that incidents of abuse are common. After a long sigh, she says that not receiving payment after sexual services is a problem that every sex worker faces. "But sometimes, they don't pay and also beat us up. But sometimes they pay and then bring their friends back, to loot and rape us," she says, adding that the list of abuse faced by sex workers, especially those from the trans community, is unending.

LINK TO FULL STORY

» https://bit.ly/3DNh49d

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DELHI

Classifieds

FEMADE SIMPLE

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

> **Classification Common** for Brides, Bridegrooms,

Brides & Grooms ASSAMESE

AWADHI

BENGALI BHOJPURI

BIHARI

CHHATTISGARHI ENGLISH

GUJARATI

HARYANI HINDI

KANNADA

KASHMIRI

KONKANI MALAYALAM

MANIPURI MARATHI

MARWARI NEPALI

PARSI

PUNJABI

SAURASHTRA

SINDHI TAMIL

TELUGU

URDU **ADVOCATE**

BUSINESS DEFENCE

DOCTOR

ENGINEER FINANCE/ BANKING

GOVERNMENT/ QUASI-GOVERNMENT

IAS/ ALLIED SERVICES

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

MBA/ CA/ ICWA

COSMOPOLITAN

DIVORCEE

PHYSICALLY

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

COSMOPOLITAN

ATTRACTIVE, CARING, 28, 168cm, active professional (US MS). Seeking driven, kind, compatible partner. Community no bar. Call/WA

HINDU ISSUELESS Divorcee 48 MBA, ACS Seeks Bride Groom CNB. Contact: 9445366062

HINDU TAMIL BC Doctor 27/ 175 cm 20003 Fair, Clear Horoscope Seeks Tall Handsome PG Doctors / PG Engineers / Well settled with Good Habits from Simple family.Contact with Full view photograph, hand biodata. Ph.7200365364

PG DOCTOR GROOM WANTED

Good looking Doctor girl MBBS, MD OG (pg ongoing) 24 yrs / 167 cm Star - Avittam Rasi -Makaram, Doctor Parents Nattar Kamma Naidu Own Hospital seeking clinical PG Doctor from Affluent / well educated family Contact: 6380069015 9790288125 WHATSAPP msg: 9976532632

HINDU, ADI DRAVIDA, 25yrs/156cms. Doctor Groom. Whatsup: 94442 18149

ENGLISH

Vadakalai, Kousigam, Poordam (4), May 1994 B.Com.,A.C.A.,C.S., Girl seeks Qualified Grooms only lyengar & lyer Contact: 9940598204

MUSLIM VERY fair / Beautiful girl 2003 born / High Class Family of Bangalore / is looking for a suitable Match 9743700029

MUSLIM VERY fair / Beautiful girl MUDALIAR 32 DM (Cardiology) Seeks PG Doctors / Engineers/CAs (Govt Officers from Any Mudaliar Community C1-04/45151998)

VISWAKARMA GIRL from elite family, 27/158 cm, Pooyam, MBA, Operations Analyst in MNC - 9447000579,

DELHI BASED Nair Girl 29 /145cm, Pooram 1.5 dosham pursuing PhD in Edinburgh UK Seek alliance pref from same community pref Palakkad / Tri-

Ezhuthachan Girl 24 years Engg. Graduate 172 cms Thrikketta. Parents seek Alliance from Employed Boys/Parents. Contact 9444859694 MALAYALAM VISWAKARMA Bride, 27/150, B.E., Civil., settled in Madurai,
Upper Middle Class, Good proposals
from Kollam or Thiruvananthapuram

SC/ADIDRAVIDAR/MSC DOB 1983 bride
SC/ADIDRAVIDAR/MSC DOB 1983 bride
SC/ADIDRAVIDAR/MSC DOB 1983 bride
SC/ADIDRAVIDAR/MSC DOB 1983 bride based family who settled in Madurai or Nearby District. Not Bureau. Ct: 7667765588

Hindu Telugu Never married 44/168 MS USA working seeking 45-47 Never married working in USA CNB

TAMIL MUSLIM, 30/159, AVP in MNC at Hyderabad, well settled, 24L PA seeks suitable Groom in Hyderabad/ Bengaluru. Ct.9080501299 NATHAMAR UDAYAR, Catholic 31 yrs,

HR Professional- MNC , with null and void order looking for catholic boy below 35 yrs, premier Institute or IT professional with null and void or unmarried with unmarried with

Ct 8138901281.

RC CHRISTIAN Vellalar, 31/176 CM, B. Tech MBA. PWC Bangalore 35LPA. Seeks God fearing, well Educated working Professional 8870520107 / 9952719542 Contact: CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 34 Yrs,

MCA, Engineer, Income 50 Lakhs. Ct 8138901097 CATHOLIC VELLALAR Girl 32 /171

MBBS MPH student visa Texas, USA Seeks professional from USA Ct:9150153743 BORN AGAIN Christian, 44yrs/152,

MBBS, MD doctor, Chennai, s christian groom, CT-9500188067 GROOM REQD Christian,27yrs, MBA

(UK), Well Educated Family, CNB, Need Abroad Profiles 9710093999/ RC NADAR Tamil, 31/153, Chithirai

M.E., Spiritual, Vegetarian, wants to be a home maker seeks Govt. Employed Groom. Ct: 9442247012

GOD FEARING Christian CSI Nada rich family invites Proposal for their daughter fair, beautiful, well educated employed in foreign Company in Chennai, drawing good Salary and also having good monthly rental Income from the share of her Commercial Building in Chennai. Groom should well educated from rich family, age 32 to 36. Parents Contact 9840129090.

CHRISTIAN, NADAR, 34 Yrs, Remarriage, MS, Doctor, Rich and affluent family. Ct 8138900537

CHRISTIAN, RC, 30 Yrs, B.E, Manager at London, Income 1 Crore. Ct 8138900530

Hindu SC/Fair/ 29 Yrs/ 152 M Law well settled/ seeks Groom/ CNB/ Chennai Contact: 6379521614.

HINDU NADAR, 28yrs, MBBS, MD, Elite business family, Seeks Suitable Groom Contact: 9380791999/9841329471

HINDU,SCAD ,29 years,MDS Tamil girl, Bangalore Seeks suitable bridegroom for early Marriage. Father is Former Director GOI. Contact 100000

MUDALIAR, HASTHAM, 39yrs/
162cm, B.E, M.B.A., working as V.P.Royal Bank, Canada. Seeks suitaG), Age 28,158 cm, Seeks Suitable ble qualified Groom in India/Abroad. Ct: 9843092595.

GROOM WANTED Mudaliyar 25yrs
B.Tech Own Schools & Colleges
Elite family in Chennai le class family. Ct 8138900487 9710093999/ 9710091999

DOCTOR MD 37y 165cm fair athletic divorced seeks well settled groom from Chennai. Call: 9445018192

HINDU, VEERA saivam, 34 Yrs, B.E, Engineer at Coimbatore, Income 1 Crore. Ct 8138900553.

MUDALIAR, 24/5.3" M.sc Neuro Lecturer Chennai seeks suitable Bride Groom Ct : 98400 37406 / 99404 SC AD 37 BE Software Engineer, TCS 1.50L/Month Chennai seeks suitable

1.50L/Month Chennai. seeks suitable Groom. Caste no bar. Ct: 99521 47216 SC/ST Community Girl (Hindu) 29/155 cm B.Tech (Chemical Engg) seeks groom from State Govt / Central Govt / Pvt organisation. Contact: 99692 28297 / 98196 30507 Mudalivar. 27/154cm Mirugasiris B.Com, MBA, Fair, Homely Girl, High Middle Class seeks suitable Groom Ct: 94445 47499 / 94449 35026

Tamil Hindu Nadar 34/158, Pooradan Dhanusu, IAS- Maharastra, Divorcee, no issue preferred Hindu Groom Caste DOCTOR MD (Pathology) DCH 39yrs

Hindu BC, Divorcee without child, working in a private hospital, seeks well settled, compatible, deseeks well settled, compatible, decent & affectionate Groom CNB Ct: 9176289180
Muslim Girl 22/162cm BE(CSE) Very Fair Selected in MNC Chennai Well to do Fmly in Chennai. Ph: 94455 56810.

AGAMUDI MUDALIAR Elite Family 33/
165 Mirugasim Raghu in Lagnam, PG
in HR (Asst. Manager,MNC) Seeks
IIM/PG Groom, Age Upto 38yrs.
9176780777.

GROOM WANTED Rich Naidu 24yrs MBA
Own Transports, Elite business family in Chennai 9710093999/

9840365908

munity Ct:9445151998

Own Transports, Elite business family in Chennai 9710093999 9710091999 **GROOM WANTED** Rich Mudaliyar 25yrs MBBS, MS Own Transports& Resorts business family 9710093999/ BALIJA NAIDU 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Ro family

HINDU, VANNIYAR, 26 Yrs, B.Arch, 9884846447 Architect at Chennai, Income 10 Lakhs. Ct 7356483111 RICH KAMMA Naidu, 25 yrs, MBBS

HINDU, PILLAI, 25 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Chennai Legeme 19 Lette Contact: 9710093999 / 9710091999 at Chennai, Income 12 Lakhs. Ct 8138900557 NAIDU 29/154/FAIR/CA/MNC Veg God Fear Seeks Educated PG Groom from

HINDU SC.AD Magam girl 29/157cm well settle MCA. TL @ Infosys 12LPA. Seeking 9444361010 Same caste groom from Chennai NAIDU 25/165 Fair Beautiful, MBBS MS-Doing, 700000.PA, Afflunet Family, CNB. 9043991629, 9043987029

25yrs, MBBS, MS, Elite Business Family Contact:9710093999 / KANNADA DEVANGA, 26 yrs, MBA, BEAUTIFUL, WARM, 26, 160cm, wellworks at Hyderabad, not particular educated, polished, UK-raised proabout Horoscope. Looking for a file minded match from the same by of doctors. Seeks active, drivormity. Contact Number: 7259528771. Number: 7259528771.

HINDU NADAR, 30 yrs, M.Arch, MS

MUDALIAR 26, BE, MBA, 162cm, Good

Looking well Settled Family Seeks Alliance CNB, Ct.8778514465/

7200866346

chur and nearby districts. Contact: HINDU VANNIYAKULA Kshatriya outlook professionally qualified post graduation from UK upper middle class family seeks professionally qualified well placed like minded grooms from good family background from same or similar costos What Ann 94/01/42929 castes WhatsApp 9840143838

seeks suitable qualified employeed bridegroom 9498313625

HINDU ARUNTHATHIAR Jana Kilai 36 Yrs Asst. Professor 5 Lakhs PA 6379366910, 9524829734.

HINDU, SC/AD, 38/163, Fair, B. Tech(CSE), SWP, Moolam-Dhanusu, Never married, Chennai, seeks Professionally Qualified, Never mar ried groom below 42 yrs, From In Caste-No-Bar.

GROOM WANTED Sujitha Mudaliar Caste No Bar 35 years BE MS Working in Boston. Ph: 9444141955

SWE, infosys, 900000.PA, Afflunet Family, CNB. 9043991629, 9043987029 nuil and void or unmarried with clean habits. WhatsAp 9443124608

CHRISTIAN, RC, 31 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Kanyakumari, Income 10 Lakhs.

CHRISTIAN, RC, 31 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Kanyakumari, Income 10 Lakhs.

> MUDALIAR (CNB): 24/ V. Fair, B.Tech ,MS (USA),MNC, Eng, USA, 500000PM, Seeks groom only Abroad-

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G), Age 28,158 cm, Seeks Suitable Groom from same Caste. Ct

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Business at Chennai, Income 20 Lakhs. Ct 8138901181.

No Bar. Ct: 9445282905 / 9445704985

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settled Decent Family

GROOM WANTED Rich Kamma Naidu,

9008373183

from same Caste.

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PILLAI, 29, 178 cms, MBBS, Doctor. Lives in

Singapore. Looking for a like minded match from

similar community. Preferably Singapore. Contact:

DEVAR, 33, 180 cms, MBBS, Doctor Lives in

Chennai. Parents is a retired professionals and passed away. Looking for a like minded match.

KONGU VELLALA GOUNDER, 31, 178 cms,

Doctor. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Doctor.

Parents are working professional and lives in Erode. Looking for a like minded match. Contact:

NAIDU, 28, 175 cms, MS, Entrepreneur. Lives in

Chennai. Father is a Businessman. Family is financially well off. Looking for a suitable match

from similar community. Contact: 6366448344

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SUNNI URDU 26, 163cm, Engg, Hijabi, Canadian citizen seeks professional religious groom from Muslim Girl 22/162cm BE(CSE) Very

MUSLIM 1981/ Citizen of USA/ Businessman/ High Class family is looking for match (Widow Divorce acceptable) 9743700029

MUDALIAR 25/160 Fair Beautiful, BE. HANDSOME NRI 44 173cm warm Harcome 10 Lakhs. Ct 8138900372.

come 10 Lakhs. Ct 8138900372.

MUSLIM URDU Bride 30, LL.M, M.S seeks qualified employed groom 30-3 yrs, Tamilnadu only. Ph: 9940641555

fessional religious groom from **Muslim Girl** 22/162cm BE(CSE) Very Canada/USA/UK, Whatsapp +1 403 830 Fair Selected in MNC Chennai Well to do Fmly in Chennai. Ph: 94455 56810

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Hindu Adi Dravida, 29/160cms, Fair HINDU, VISHWAKARMA, 28 yrs M.D., Anesthesia settled in Chennai. MBBS, Doctor at Mac seeks Doctor bride CNB. 63697 02539 Lakhs. Ct 8138900498.

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> mpragathees@gmail.com AGAMUDAIYAR, UTHIRAM/KANNI 35/180, BE, HRM, Job at Canada, Canadian Citizen, Seeks BE, Nursing any degree bride.CNB. Ct:9442993042

HINDU BOY 30/175 working SWE Lyon France, looks for girl employed in France. Ct 9486104471

MUDHALIYAR, CA, Age–40, Never married, Star: Kettai, Own House, Well settled. Sub Caste ok. 9677622641

HINDU, MUDALIYAR, 40 yrs, Diploma, Program manager at chennai, income 10 Lakhs. Ct 8138900372.

HINDU, NAIDU, 28 yrs, B.E, Engineer at UAE, income 20 lakhs. Ct 8138900466.

MBBS, Doctor at Madurai, Income

ELITE GROOMS WANTED

NADAR, 25, 170 cms, B.Com, LLB UK. Lives

Chennai, Business class family, Looking for a like

minded match from similar community. Preferably

NAIDU, 22, 165 cms, MBA, Software Professional Lives in Chennai Father is a

Businessman, Family is financially well off, Looking

for a like minded match from similar community from Chennai. Contact: 6366448344

ADI DRAVIDAR, 26, 160 cms, Doctor. Lives in Chennai. Father is a Working Professional. Family is financially well off. Looking for a like minded

CHRISTIAN CSI, 27, 160 cms, Masters in Pastry,

Entrepreneur. Father is a Tax planner. Mother is an Asst Professor. Family is financially well off.

Looking for a like minded match. Contact: 6366448343

(6)

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HINDU, CASTE no bar, 31 vrs. B.E.

MBA, Managing Director, Income 20 Lakhs. Ct 8138900547

AGAMUDAIYAR UTHIRADAM 34/180

B.Tech, TCS, Hyderabad, 2Lpm, seeks Equally Qualified bride, Caste No Bar. Contact:8220984182

REDDY PARENTS seek alliance for only son, BE(ECE), 35y/169cm, fair

HINDU, CASTE No Bar, 34 Yrs, B.E,

Engineer at Bangalore, Income 15 Lakhs. Ct 8138900412

HINDU NADAR Age 31 / 170 cms BE MSc VISCOM Senior Designer MNC Ban-galore, Seeks Vegetarian Bride, Caste No Bar. Ct: annapoorna53@ gmail.com, 9496601948

HINDU NADAR, 29yrs, BE, Elite busi-

ness family in Chennai, Seeks Suitable Bride Ct: 9380791999/

SAIVA PILLAI 39, Divorcee.BE/MBA,

MNC,Bangalore, Seeks First Mar-riage Bride in Thirunelveli/ Than-javur Saiva Pillai/ Karkathar Soci-

ety only.Ct: 8072215374/ 9344701672

HINDU ENGINEER 43, working at Malaysia Rs.30L/Yr Looking for a Bride with Equal Profile CNB Ct:9789889470

HINDU, SC, PR, 29yrs, 175cm, M.E., AE-NIOT, Ph.D, 6 LPA, Chennai Seeks

BRIDE WANTED Rich Mudaliyar 28yrs

MS(US) Own Industries in Chennal business family 9710093999/

35YEARS, B.TECH, 173cm, 70kgs. Brownish Colour, Working as Manager in Govt Bank, 18 LPA, Settled in Chennai, Father IRSS (Retd), Mother SBI (Retd), Own Houses in

Chennai, Seeking Suitable Match with Good Background. Ph:9940507235

IYENGAR BOY born 1991 B.Com MBA

working as TL in MNC seeks edu girl frm decent family. cell

9444050514

✔ HINDU KULALAR(UDAYAR) 44Y/ AGE 47, 2nd Marriage, Working in 169cm, M.Tech, Seeks Suitable Hospital at Qatar. Suitable Bride 169cm, M.Tech, Seeks Suitable Hospital at Qatar. Suitable Bride and caste no bar, Ph: who willing to come Qatar. Ct: 9384276066

suitable Bride. Ct: 9944692338

neer of Elite Matrimon

Chennai. Contact: 6366448344

match. Contact: 6366448343

1985/175CM, 50 Lakhs PA, Never Mar- HINDU, GRAMANI, 29 Yrs, 12th, Busi-

MUSLIM BOY 1996 Born MS in Engineering Working as a Engineer / USA Newyork Bangalore Resident is Likita for a chitcher match (1890)

MUSLIM BOY 1990 / 180cm/ MBBS (MD)
/ Bangalore Resident Affluent family is looking for good family (080-

Ct: 8072205041

9841329471

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MUSLIM BOY 1996 Born /Masters/ Working in France/Father returned from Saudi Arabia Bangalore resi-dent is looking for a suitable

for a suitable match (080-

TAMIL RC 31/175 M.E,Ph.D, (Canada) PR,Researcher Rs45 LPA affluent amily Chennai seeks Professional

SMART, HANDSOME 37, 175cm, MEng

(US), in Big Tech (\$400K+), broad-minded, US-based S.Indian. Seeks warm, beautiful, compatible bride. Language/caste no bar. Call/WA

CHRISTIAN NADAR, 34 Yrs. Remar-

riage, B.tech, IT Professional at Chen-nai, Income 20 Lakhs. Ct 8138900470

CHRISTIAN NADAR, Doctor, Divorcee 36yrs/178cm, MBBS, Dip in Cardiology better earning lives in Nagercoil seeks

qualified/ Divorced Bride.9003983230

RC CHRISTIAN, 42yrs/170, B.E. Soft-

ware Engineer, never married, works for mnc, Chennai, CT-

CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 25 yrs, MS, Software developer at California.

Affluent with a good net worth. Ct 8138900575.

9500188067

9384276066

oride working/willing to settl Canada. CNB– WA 9940054040

Bangalore.

dent is looking for match (080–69072090)

Thiruvathirai (Clean Horoscope) Unmarried Handsome Fair TeeTotaler, 52 Laks, Chennai. Seeks suitable match.Caste NoBar.9940434055, 9742010729

VELLALA 33 NON consummated marriage Vegan 179cm Gym body Fair MBA own Business Rich seeks Grad Veg/Vegan Bride CNB Call 9282141551

HINDU Nadar, 35Yrs/180 cm, Chennai based Groom, well settled, fair, BE IIM MBA, 35L seeks bride, CT: 989497991

183 cm born Nov 91 MNC Bangalore Sal 65 lacs seeks Bride Tamil Telugu. Contact: 7382620365

VELLORE AGAMUDAYA Mudalivar

MUDALIAR 30/180 BE, Handsome

BRIDE WANTED Hindu Nadar,28yrs,

VANNIAR 47/173 Sadhayam, M.Tech Chennai based boy, Working in US as Structural Engineer 1.5 Lpm (First Marriage). Seeks Slim Gradu-ate bride, Settled / Working in US. Ct: 8838274003

Contact: 9884398109 HINDU, CASTE no bar, 25 yrs, MBA, Production Manager at Bangalore Rich and affluent family. C

Production Manager at Chennai, Upper middle class family.Ct 8138900523

HINDU, CASTE no bar, 28 yrs, MSW, Finance manager at Coimbatore. Ct

HINDU, BRAHMIN, 31 Yrs. B.tech Business at Chennai, Income 7 Lakhs. Ct 8138901227

8138900305

ARCOT MUDALIAR MBA IIM 170/Sep'88 SIRKAZHI THENGALAI Iyengar Par-

BRAHMIN IYER Groom 43yrs /180cm, Pooradathi/ Meenam, TCS-Admin, Chennai. Seeks Suitable Bride.

WANTED BRIDE

SMART ADVOCATE 30 Mukkulathore only son Parents Professionals seeks any caste Professionals. India/ Abroad. Email : drskmddv@gmail.com

Rishabam,38/165,BE SWE,MNC Chicago USA,1L USD/A,Seeks working SWE.

Sr.SWE,Walmart 6000000.PA, Af-flunet Family, CNB. 9043991629, 9043987029

MUDALIAR:29/ 178CM, Handsome, B.Tech, Business, Having own Manufacturing Industry, Hotels, Com. facturing Industry, Hotels, Com. Complex, Chennai, Only son, Elite Family- seeks bride any degree - 9840866993, 8939012419

B.Tech, MBA,2lakhs pm, Elite Business Family Cont 9380791999 // 9841329471

AUDITOR/ 45 Chennai/ 30 L p.a Seeks Any Vegetarian Hindu Girl.

HINDU, MUDALIYAR, 25 Yrs, B.E,

Business at Madurai, Business class family. Ct 9072777801.

HINDU, BRAHMIN, 29 Yrs, MBA

ents, seeking alliance for their Divorced soon Vasishta,Anusham, Viruchigam Born 05.10.1989 working as Bank Manager. Sub sect No bar. Divorcee without issues or aged are accepted. Congirls are accepted. tact:9962737404/ 9442933688

9790827138

God Fearing Rich Family, Vanniyar Padayatchi Settled in Tiruchirappalli invites Proposal for their 2nd Son, Rasi-Viruchigam, Star-Kettai, Age 30, Fair,

175 cm, BE Civil. Owns a Luxury 4 Star Hotel (Hotel Vijayarani) Opp. Govt. Hospital, Trichy, adorns as MD of the Hotel and also Constructs his Own Apartment (Builder). Besides many Assets.

Caste No Bar rent Contac 94431 24712 ramalingaji@gmail.com

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WANTED BRIDE Hindu Mudaliyar

50+ Hindu Mudaliyar stablished CEO of a repute Ct:8248757840 organization, a divorcee with no children who deeply values family life and meaningful connections.

preferences are welcome), be gle, educated & family-oriente with a warm and caring nature. She should hold strong family values and have a desire to build a loving and supportive partnership.

Our ideal bride would belong to the same community (sub-caste

TAMIL IYER Boy 34 MS in FLORIDA On a short visit to Chennai.Seeking Any South Indian Brahmin Good look-ing Professional Girl from India/ ing Professional Girl from India Abroad WhatsApp ,+447885297926 +919444826978,Ph +919444826978

TELUGU DEVANGAR DOB:25/03/96, 165cm, MA, B.Ed Govt Teacher Seeks Bride Caste noBa 9380882648/ 9626517261

48/NAIDU, B.E, Software Engineer 35 Lakhs p.a., Divorce seeks suitable bride. CT. 9445691753

NAIDU 30/180 Handsome BE MS PRO. MR,Google USA,200000.USD PA,Elite Family 50.CR,CNB. 9043991629, 9043987029

BRIDE WANTED

or Telugu Brahmin 35 78 cms Pushyam B.Tech M.Sc Germany) Working in German arge MNC Citizen, Qualified ride employed in German from other Countries / Indivilling to migrate TFLUGU TAMIL / KANNADA BRAHMIN

Ct: 9840112664. rudram.eswara@gmail.com

✓ SMU BOY 34/177 Very fair MBA Central Govt Bank Employee, seeks SMU Girl fair religious & educated from decent family, should be willing to relocate at Hyderabad. Send Biodata & Photo (WhatsApp/Call) 9963874404

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fights and other banned games in Eluru, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A.P. police destroy rooster fight arenas

Rajulapudi Srinivas

With Sankranti festivities nearing, the police cracked the whip on rooster fight organisers at various places in Andhra Pradesh. They damaged the arenas with earthmoving machines and tractors and deployed additional forces in the villages.

The police erected banners and urged villagers through the public addressing system not to conduct rooster fights and other banned games.

"We will take severe action if anybody indulges in banned games," the police

The police served notices on the owners who leased their lands to rooster fight organisers and punters.

They warned of stern action, if anyone violates the High Court order on rooster fights.

Probe against Exalogic in public interest: Centre to HC

Centre defends action against company owned by Kerala CM's daughter Veena; says probe reveals that during operation of business, illegal payments have been made to political functionaries

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

he Centre has defended before the Delhi High Court its decision to probe the affairs of Exalogic Solutions Private Limited, owned by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's daughter T. Veena, Cochin Minerals and Rutile Limited (CMRL), and the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO).

In a written submission made to the court, which has already reserved its verdict on December 23, 2024, the Centre said, "The inquiries/investiga-



tions reveal that during the course of operation of business of the CMRL, several illegal payments have been made to various political functionaries and entities."

"These transactions involve illegally inflating the expenditure by the CMRL towards payment to vendors in transportation. sludge handling operations, etc. During the course of investigation, the amount so illegally paid is calculated to be around ₹185 crore," the Centre said. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs had in January 2024 ordered a probe into the affairs of Exalogic, CMRL, and the KSIDC by the SFIO.

The CMRL had moved the court in April last year challenging the Ministry's decision and also sought directives that documents and information furnished by it before the Interim Board for Settlement, Delhi, should be protected and should not be shared

with any individual, auth-

ority or law enforcement agencies.

The Centre and the Income Tax Department, however, stated that there was no restriction on sharing of information.

The Centre said there was "public interest" in calling for the probe as the allegation levelled against the companies under investigations (CUIs) was that the CMRL, on the basis of bogus bills, had made payments to Exalogic Solutions. "This itself involves public interest," it said.

"The use of a corporate entity for facilitating corruption can be termed as a transaction out of the purview of definition of public interest," the Centre said.

Case against P.C. George for hate speech

The Hindu Bureau **KOTTAYAM**

The Kerala Police have registered a case against BJP leader P.C. George for an alleged hate speech.

The action follows a complaint filed by the Erattupetta municipal committee of the Muslim Youth League, accusing Mr. George of making communally charged remarks about Muslims during a discussion on a news channel.

in Jharkhand school Dhanbad's Deputy Commissioner has formed a committee to investigate the

incident

Girls asked to remove

shirts as punishment

Amit Bhelari

In a shocking incident, the

principal of a private

school in Jharkhand's

Dhanbad district was ac-

cused of ordering more

than 100 girls in the tenth

grade to remove their

shirts after their friends

The parents of the stu-

dents have demanded

strict action against the

The incident occured

on Thursday, which was

the students' last day of

school before board ex-

ams. The tenth grade stu-

dents wrote good wishes

students requested the

school administration to

not take such a step but it

After reaching home, the

students narrated the or-

deal to their parents and

accused the school princi-

pal of mental harassment.

office of Madhvi Mishra,

Deputy Commissioner

The parents visited the

The parents said their

daughters are upset with

the incident, and asserted

that the principal did not

understand the effect the

incident will have on their

mental health. "They

were just celebrating the

last day of school and if

'Mental harassment'

on each other's shirts.

their blazers.

was to no avail.

(DC), Dhanbad.

principal.

wrote messages on them.

the school had any objection to doing so, then the parents should have been informed first. However, they were sent home after removing their shirts. Do our girls have no respect? We know how shameful it was for the girls to go home like that. What if the girls had taken some wrong step?" a parent

said, and added, "They

have their board exams

now and are already un-

However, the act did der mental pressure. This not go down well with the has increased their tenschool principal, who instructed them to remove **Resignation demanded** their shirts and go home in The parents have demand-As per the sources, the

arrest of the principal. Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Ragini Singh had also joined the parents in the DC's office in protest against the incident.

ed for the resignation and

While speaking to The Hindu, the DC said: "The parents had come to meet me in the Collectorate today regarding this matter and we have set up a committee comprising a District Education Officer, a Social Welfare Officer, Sub-Divisional Magistrate and officers from the local police station. Today, they have scrutinised the CCTV footage but we are still awaiting the report from the committee. We will take action according to the findings of the report."

Kerala police arrest 14 for sexually abusing minor girl

The Hindu Bureau PATHANAMTHITTA

The Pathanamthitta district police have launched a probe into a series of incidents in which over 60 persons abused a Dalit minor girl over a period of five

Nine persons were arrested on Saturday in connection with the case while the police arrested five persons on Friday.

The police have so far registered five FIRs across two police stations. These cases are based on state-

ments from the survivor, aged 18 now, who was allegedly subjected to abuse multiple times since the age of 13.

It is understood that the police are now gathering evidence on all individuals involved in the abuse. Details of the new FIRs and arrests are being handed over to the Child Welfare Committee. All those arrested so far are aged between 19 and 30.

Investigations have revealed that the girl was abused by 62 individuals, starting with her neighOver <u>60 persons</u> have abused the Dalit girl over a period of five years

bour. The accused also include friends of her father, the coaches who had trained the survivor, a sportsperson, and her fellow athletes.

According to the girl's statement, she used her father's mobile phone to communicate with the perpetrators. The police have identified about 40 individuals by verifying phone records and from the information in a note in her possession. Her parents were completely unaware of the

Since the incidents occurred when she was a minor, sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POC-SO) and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act will be invoked against the accused.

The Pathanamthitta Child Welfare Committee (CWC) has referred the vic-

tim to a psychologist for more in-depth counselling. The issue came to light

during a counselling conducted by the CWC after the girl's teachers noticed significant changes in her behaviour and informed the panel. The committee then notified the police, who initiated an investigation. The girl is currently housed in a shelter home.

Given the number of perpetrators involved, this may be the largest case of sexual abuse against a minor in the State's history, officials said.

nace. Your fairness of se-

lection will have no mean-

there, and it has become

an industry, a commerce."

Talking at the Bharat Elec-

tronics Ltd. R&D award ce-

Patent contribution

I work as per party's wishes and I do not want anybody's support, says D.K. Shivakumar

The Hindu Bureau SHIVAMOGGA

Karnataka's Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar has said he will not expect any MLA to raise his or her voice in his support and that he will work as per the Congress party's instructions.

Speaking to presspersons at Sringeri in Chikkamagaluru district on Saturday, he said, "I don't want anybody's support. I work as per the party's wishes." Reciting a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita, he said he would just work and not worry about the reward.

Asked about the demand of some party workers that



he should become the next Chief Minister, he said, "I do not want anyone putting pressure on my behalf. I do not want anyone's support. I don't want any MLA to shout out his support for me. It is between the Congress party and me. I will do whatever the party wants me to do. I am just doing my duty."

He said, "The people have blessed me and given me an opportunity. We will govern the State for five years. The Chief Minister and I will work as per the party's instructions. What others say does not matter."

Further, on his recent temple visits, Mr. Shivakumar said he is a believer and would pray to God every day.

"I pray for the welfare of the State, my well-wishers, and myself," he said, dismissing those who were ridiculing his "temple

Mr. Shivakumar was in Sringeri to participate in the Suvarna Bharati pro-

Actor Allu Arjun gets relief in bail conditions

The Hindu Bureau HYDERABAD

Actor Allu Arjun, who is on conditional bail in the Sandhya theatre stampede case, has been permitted by the Nampally court to travel abroad and the court also exempted him from appearing at the Chikkadpally Police Station every Sunday between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

He was required to appear before the police, a condition set by the IX Additional Chief Judicial Majistrate Court at Nampally while granting bail to him in the December 4 incident at Sandhya theatre where a 35-year old woman, Revathi, was killed in the stampede and her son grievously injured.

Extensions given to those in govt. service a setback for those next in line: Dhankhar

The Hindu Bureau

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar has disfavoured extensions given to those in government services, saving such a step affected the prospects of those next in line. He said there have been cases where employees, particularly those in premier services, never seem to be retiring and continuing in service even after their superannuation, by getting some ad hoc

Delivering the inaugural address at the 25th National Conference of Chairpersons of All-State Public Service Commissions (PSCs) in Bengaluru on Saturday, he said, "Extension of service defies the logical principle of expectation. We have a doctrine of expecta-



Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurating the 25th National Conference of Chairpersons of All-State PSCs in Bengaluru. ANI

tion. People devote decades to be in a particular groove. Extension indicates that an individual is indispensable. Indispensability is a myth. Talent abounds in this country. No one is indispensable."

The Rajya Sabha Chairman said appointments could not be driven by patronage or favouritism. "There are trends that are visible... We cannot have a PSC chairman or a member wedded to a particular ideology or an individual. That will be undoing the essence and spirit of the framework Constitution."

He expressed concern over question paper leaks and said: "This is a me-

remony, Mr. Dhankhar said: "In the global perspective, our patent contribution leaves much to be desired... Research has to be cutting-edge. Research has to be practical... There is no use having research which goes a little beyond

surface sketching."

He said, "The exemplification has to be, if it is recognised at global level, a research paper that has momentary importance of being presented and then goes in the shelf and gathers dust is something we must keep away from."

Kadamattam church gets a makeover



The mural of St. George and the dragon at the Kadamattam St. George Orthodox Church.

K.A. Martin

The popular Kadamattam George Orthodox Church has got a new lease of life thanks to efforts by history buffs, who see the preservation of the church and its famous murals in their original form as a way to provide a peek into the rich heritage of Christianity in Kerala.

The entire church has been restored using new materials with the damaged areas replaced by the same wood material as in the original church.

Father Sunny Varghese, vicar, who is also leading the team overseeing the work, said around 3,000 cubic feet of wood was used for the restoration

The murals at St. George Church provide a peek into the rich heritage of Christianity in Kerala

work. The original murals have been refurbished using natural colours. These organic colour combinations provide a view of the world when artists patiently experimented to get the right shades that went into the making of the murals. Father Varghese said the most prominent of the murals was that of St. George. He said that the church was originally believed to have been erected in the

Persian bishop. "There is also a Persian

9th century by Mar Abo, a

cross in the church, which is in prime condition even now," he said. The most important

mural is that of St. George and the dragon. There are also scenes from the Christian lores. The original Church at Kadamattam was set up in the 9th century. The church authorities said they have no record of the renovations later except in the year 1945.

Many believe that the tomb found near the church is that of Father Kadamattam. However, the popular belief has not been accepted by historians and church authorities. The restoration work started over three years ago, and the church will be rededicated on February 6 and 7.

Sabarimala gearing up for Makaravilakku

The Hindu Bureau PATHANAMTHITTA

To ensure the safety of pilgrims flocking to Sabarimala to witness the celestial light Makarajyothi during the Makaravilakku festival, authorities have implemented extensive arrangements.

Pathanamthitta District Collector S. Premkrishnan has announced strict limits on the number of devotees allowed at key viewpoints. Panjippara and Ilavunkal will each accommodate up to 1,000 pilgrims and Nellimala, 800. Attathode West will host 300 devotees and Attathode East, 2,500. The Pampa Hilltop, the largest viewing area, will hold 8,000 devotees. For safety reasons, entry to the Ay-



Taking stock: State police chief Sheikh Darvesh Sahib reviews the arrangements at Sabarimala on Saturday. LEJU KAMAL

yanmala viewpoint has been prohibited.

Each location will have medical support teams on standby, complemented by adequate parking facilities. As the festival concludes, 300 buses of the State transport utility will ferry devotees from Pampa to Nilackal. To manage the anticipated influx, the area has been divided into 13 zones. The Pathanamthitta Dis-

trict Medical Office has established a control room operating from Monday for

tees can reach the control room at 0468-2222642 and 0468-2228220. An additional fleet of 12 ambulances has been arranged, supplementing the existing 25. Seventeen emergency medical centres have been set up between Pampa and the Sannidhanam. To bolster security, the Travancore Devaswom

the next 72 hours. Devo-

Board Vigilance has installed 245 advanced surveillance cameras from Marakkootam to the Sannidhanam. State Police Chief

Sheikh Darvesh Sahib, who visited Sabarimala on Saturday, said 5,000 police personnel would ensure safety and order during the Makaravilakku festival on Tuesday.

THE HINDU -

From Page One

3 more bodies retrieved from Assam mine



The search operation at the coal mine disaster site in Kalamati village in Dima Hasoa district of Assam has been on for several days. RITU RAJ KONWAR

A few days ago, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the mine prima facie appeared illegal. Later, he said the mine had been abandoned 12 years ago, after being run by the State's Mines and Minerals Department.

A case connected with illegal mining was registered at the Umrangso police station on Tuesday. The leaseholder of the mine, identified as Punish Nunisa, was subsequently arrested.

The second arrest was made on Friday after the police caught Hannan Laskar, a financier of the operations, from the 3 Kilo area, the nearest major habitation from the mine.

Opposition parties said the wife of Debolal Gorlosa, Chief Executive Member of the autonomous tribal council that rules Dima Hasao, is a major stakeholder in the mining operations. A reaction from the couple is awaited.

SIT probe sought

Assam Congress MP and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into the Dima Hasao incident and rampant illegal rathole coal mining despite the National Green Tribunal's blanket ban in April 2014.

'BJP attempting to enrol fake voters in New Delhi'

"All these addresses are not in some distant part of the country but under the very nose of the EC office," Mr. Singh said.

He urged the media to check how many voters from these addresses exercised their franchise in the Lok Sabha election held recently and how many fresh applications were submitted in the past 15

"I am making these claims based on official EC documents. Each of these claims can be verified. Applications have been submitted, and it is the responsibility of the election officer to resolve these issues. The work that should be done by them, catching these irregularities, is unfortunately being carried out by us," Mr. Singh said

Many trapped in Kannauj station collapse

Besides the seven people grievously injured, at least 16 suffered minor injuries. "Three injured in the railway station accident were discharged from the hospital, while the treatment of 13 workers is going on in the district hospital," an official said.

Chief Minister Yogi Aditvanath directed officials to expedite relief efforts. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav asked the government to provide adequate compensation to the injured and speed up the relief work. "The government should provide the best possible treatment to the injured and also give them adequate compensation," Mr. Yadav said in a post on X.

Beed murder: eight accused face charges under MCOCA

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

While the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) has been invoked against the eight accused in the Beed Sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh murder case on Saturday, political leaders have raised concerns over Walmik Karad not being charged under the Act.

Mr. Karad, a close aid of **Nationalist Congress Party** (NCP) Minister Dhananjay Munde, has not been booked under the MCOCA as he was arrested in the extortion case, according to the police.

The MCOCA was invoked after the investigation revealed the involvement of organised crime syndicates in the murder.

The Special Investigation Team invoked the MCOCA at a time when allparty protests have been organised in various districts to demand justice for the family of Santosh Deshmukh.

On Saturday, a Jan Akrosh Morcha was organised in Dharashiv district of Maharashtra, where the Deshmukh family, political leader Suresh Das, and Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange Patil also joined the rally.

The protesters and political leaders demanded booking of Mr. Karad under the MCOCA and also Bharatiya the Nyaya Sanhita.

Himachal CM points out troubling trend of synthetic drugs

Sukhu addresses conference on drug trafficking by the NCB; Punjab CM seeks Centre's financial support to set up special court for drug menace

<u>Vikas Vasudeva</u> CHANDIGARH

imachal Pradesh Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday underscored a troubling trend towards synthetic drugs, even as his Punjab counterpart, Bhagwant Mann, sought the Union government's intervention to provide financial assistance to Punjab for setting up special Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) courts to check the drug menace, pointing to the problem impacting the socio-economic balance in Punjab.

Both Chief Ministers were virtually addressing the regional conference on "Drug trafficking and national security", organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi. The conference focused on addressing the nexus between drug trafficking and national security, with particular attention to eight northern States and Union Territories.

Mr. Sukhu said the NDPS cases had risen by 340% over the past decade, escalating from approximately 500 cases in



Enduring fight: Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu during the virtual meeting on 'Drug trafficking and national security' on Saturday. ANI

2012 to 2,200 in 2023. "Additionally, the percentage of cases involving heroin has doubled, rising from 29% in 2020 to 50% in 2024.

Pointing out a troubling trend towards synthetic drugs, which are not only more potent and addictive but also harder to control owing to their chemical composition, Mr. Sukhu emphasised the necessity of a comprehensive approach to tackle drug trafficking, particularly in inter-State border areas, which have become hotspots for illicit activities.

Mr. Mann urged the Union government to give a one-time financial assistance of ₹600 crore to the State to create special NDPS courts and recruit public prosecutors and support staff.

He said 35,000 NDPS cases had been pending for sessions trial as on January 1, 2025, adding that at the present rate of disposal, on average a sessions court takes seven years to complete the trial of pending case leaving aside all newly added cases.

Mr. Mann said that the drug problem in Punjab was impacting the socioeconomic balance. He added that the nar-

co-terror drug trade business in Punjab had links with the international cartels that smuggle drugs from Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries into the State.

Trade unions slam L&T CEO's remark on 90-hour work week

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The central trade unions on Saturday condemned a statement by the chairman and managing director of Larsen & Toubro, S.N. Subrahmanyan, favouring a 90-hour work week with employees working on Sundays too "rather than staring at" their spouses at home.

Though L&T later said that the statement reflected a larger ambition for making India a developed nation, it drew flak from various sections of society, including women's rights activists.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) said Mr. Subrahmanyan's statement was similar to the "satanic statement" earlier made by the Infosys founder N.R. Narayana Murthy, seeking an increase in working hours to 70 hours a week through statutory measures.

'Rogue competition'

"It seems that there is a rogue competition among the corporate messiahs to rinse the blood and sweat of Indian workers and they are in active connivance and collaboration with the corporate-communal regime in governance by Modi-led NDA [National Democratic Alliance]," CITU general secretary Tapan Sen said in a statement.

Mr. Sen said Indian workers, even permanent

Policy is against principles of human dignity'

NEW DELHI

Dattopant Thengadi foundation (DTF), an affiliate for the Rashtriya Swayamsecak Sangh (RSS), which works in the field of social, economic, and labour policy in India, has condemned Larsen & Toubro (L&T) chairperson S. Subrahmanyan's advocacy of a 90-hour work week.

In a communique, the DTF savs that such a policy contradicts the principles of quality of life and human dignity that are fundamental to a progressive

employees in the formal sector, were deployed for much longer hours of work compared with more productive countries, including China, Europe and even the U.S. "The stretching of working hours is very disastrously impacting upon the health and social life of Indian workers," Mr. Sen said.

The All India Working Women's Forum of the AI-TUC termed Mr. Subramanyan's statement patriarchal, scandalous, and condemnable.

"Mr. Subramanyan dehumanises women by reducing them to be mere spectacles. His statement disrespects women's autonomy and agency," the Forum's convenor Vahida Nizam said.

With retreat, Meghalaya Cabinet goes places

Rahul Karmakar GUWAHATI

For the first time, trekking became part of the Cabinet meeting drill for the Ministers in Meghalaya.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma led most of his Cabinet colleagues and officers of various departments to meet a sexagenarian who wove a living root bridge across a hill river to Siej, his village.

The trek for more than 10 minutes after an hour's bus drive from Sohra was a component of a two-day Cabinet retreat, a meeting mixed with travel and adventure.

More popular as Cherrapunjee, Sohra is one of the rainiest places on earth and about 54 km southwest of the the State's capital Shillong. Siej is under the Shella-Bholaganj Block in the East Khasi Hills district.



Conrad K. Sangma, Ministers, and officials with Hally War who initiated the weaving of a living root bridge in Siej. @CMO_MEGHALYA

"The trek to Siej was to see the Umkar Living Root bridge and meet Hally War, the man who initiated the weaving of the living root bridge, an essential part of the local culture for more than 300 years," Mr. Sangma said.

Mr. War, the Siej village headman for the last 40 years, said he began weav-

ing the root bridge when he was 10 years old. "I saw people facing difficulties in crossing the river. I remembered my grandparents sharing stories about the strength of the living roots and decided to build a lasting and sustainable bridge," he said.

Mr. Sangma said the root bridges remain a symbol of sustainable architecture and community-driven development - a template his National People's Party-led alliance government intends to follow in promoting tourism and other sectors.

"This root bridge shows ne nationice and dedication required to create something sustainable. It's a testament to the wisdom passed down through generations," he added.

During the visit, the Chief Minister announced new infrastructure projects to improve connectivity in the region, including the construction of new roads and the upgrading of school buildings.

"The government is committed to addressing the needs of rural communities," he said.

He also explained the idea behind the Cabinet retreat, touted by the government as a first of its kind.

"We are charting the Vision 2032 for the growth and development of Meghalaya when it attains 60 years of statehood," he said. On the first day of the retreat on Friday, the Cabinet approved CM-Assure, a market intervention scheme to support small

and marginal farmers by guaranteeing fixed-price procurement during market price decline to prevent distress sales. The State government budgeted a revolving corpus fund of ₹100 crore. Among the other deci-

sions taken were regularisation of 850 employees who were given ad hoc appointments before 2007, approval of the Meghalaya Factories (Amendment) Rules of 2025 to facilitate ease of doing business, and an upward revision of minimum wages for unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled workers.

Delhi HC rejects bail to IS associate in + terror case

The Hindu Bureau

The Delhi High Court has refused to grant bail to an alleged IS member in a terror case by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) over radicalisation of youth using cyberspace.

The court rejected the bail plea by Mohammad Heydaitullah, who allegedly used Telegram groups to propagate the ideology of the terrorist group in India and recruit other persons.

The accused challenged a trial court order declining any relief on the ground that mere association or support to a terrorist organisation would not constitute an offence under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The court rejected the contention saying Heydaitullah, a qualified MBA graduate working at an IT company in Gurugram, was not a "passive" supporter as material showed that he advocated "jihad in order to establish Khilafat" through violent even means.

"The Appellant admittedly in 2018 had taken an oath (Bayath) in the name of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Abu al-Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is admittedly a well-known leader of ISIS and as per the chargesheet had declared formation of 'caliphate' in June 2014," said the court in its January

10 judgement.

"ISIS had been declared to be a terrorist organisation and judicial notice can be taken of the fact that the world at large knows about the activities of ISIS... Appellant was well aware of the nature of activities of ISIS," it added. Dismissing the plea, the court said the bar on grant of bail under the UAPA was clearly applicable in the case.

Health professionals urged to communicate proactively to allay concerns on HMPV

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

The need for public health professionals to proactively reach out to people with the right information rather than waiting for them to become concerned about information circulating on social media was emphasised during a webinar that sought to put out facts about Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV).

The webinar, "HMPV: differentiating fact from fiction", was organised by The Hindu and Naruvi Hospitals, Vellore, as part of their 'Healthy India, Happy India' initiative on Saturday. Soumya Swaminathan, chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, and former chief scientist at World





Organization Health (WHO), emphasised the need to create more scientific literacy and scientific awareness to avoid the kind of panic that was seen when news of HMPV came

Bernhard Schwartländer, epidemiologist and former WHO official, observed that not much thought has gone into developing new ways of communicating more proac-

"It is no good to wait for the public to be concerned about information circulating on social media platforms when it is very difficult to then actually overcome it. As public health workers, we have to be much more proactive to reach out to people to explain what is going on. It is not good enough to have scientific statements hidden on websites of the national centre for disease control because that is not where people will look every day. We have to learn to do better to avoid such concerns," he said. On the HMPV situation

in China, he said that the country has a strong surveillance system and what they have seen so far is an expected increase in respiratory infections, which until now is somewhat lower when compared to the same time in the previous years. The distribution of the viruses was also not dissimilar to previous outbreaks with the influenza virus being clearly in the lead, and a whole range of other viruses coming be-

'Not a new virus' "We have been exposed to HMPV for a long time. It is

not a new virus, and so, we have immunity, and most children are exposed to it. It is a part of the common respiratory infections that children get," Dr. Soumya Swaminathan said. She added that HMPV is considered a mild infection causing upper respiratory

She stressed the need to take the 'One Health' approach considering the increasing risk of viruses and pathogens jumping from one species to another. It is important to understand the interconnections between various species and human beings, she added.

The webinar, moderated by Ramya Kannan, Health Editor, The Hindu, featured an exclusive question and answer session for subscribers.

Mob destroys Assam Rifles' makeshift camp in Manipur **Press Trust of India** They were angry

IMPHAL

A mob on Saturday stormed and destroyed a makeshift camp of Assam Rifles in Manipur's Kamjong district over alleged harassment and restrictions on transportation of timber, officials said.

Members of the group that attacked the camp in Hongbei area belonged to Kasom Khullen block of the Naga majority district. Tensions escalated on

Saturday when the Assam Rifles soldiers allegedly

barred transportation of timber intended for construction of houses in Kasom Khullen, officials said. Assam Rifles personnel used tear gas shells and

fired in the air to disperse the protesters, they said. The mob later destroyed the makeshift camp of the paramilitary force and demanded that they be removed from the area. No casualty was report-

over restrictions on

timber, say officials

transportation of

ed in the melee.

The Assam Rifles is one of the Central forces deployed in parts of Manipur, which has been in the grip of ethnic violence between Kukis and Meiteis, that left over 250 people killed and thousands homeless since May 2023.

'West Bank a cauldron that can explode any moment'

The Israeli Indologist says a third Palestinian *intifada* is likely at any moment, adding that Israel has a dysfunctional political system; he emphasises the worsening settler violence in the West Bank and suggests a confederation as a potential path to peace between Israelis and Palestinians; the conversation also goes into the systemic changes in 16th century southern India in major arenas

INTERVIEW

David Shulman

Stanly Johny

avid Shulman, Israeli Indologist, poet and peace activist, says the West Bank has witnessed enhanced settler violence ever since the latest war between Israel and Hamas broke out. Today's Israel looks like the South Africa at the height of Apartheid, "just a few years before the system collapsed", he says. Mr. Shulman speaks about his works on southern India, the crisis in West Asia and the prospects for peace. Edited excerpts:

You have written about 'systemic change' in 16th century South India. The 16th century was also a period where you saw, in Europe, the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, and the rise of the Westphalian system. Do you see any parallels between the southern India of the 16th century and Europe?

I think in both cases, there was a systemic change, a civilisational change, you new themes emerging and crystallising.

could say. In Europe, that

was the great watershed

when the Catholic Church

split into Protestants and

Catholics and they went to

war with one another, and

that was also the time of

the emerging imperial au-

tocracies like the Habs-

burgs in Vienna and Spain,

and also the French. That

eventually produced the

modern revolutions in

France and in America,

and later in Russia. It hap-

pened here, in India, in a

very different way, in an in-

digenous way that had

nothing to do with the in-

fluence of what was hap-

Systemic change means

that in all of the major are-

nas, there are substantial

structural changes – in the

social realm, in the eco-

nomic sphere, in the politi-

cal domain, for example.

We had a new kind of South

Indian States, with a new

mode of political thinking,

and new kinds of political

legitimisation. And in the

expressive domains, that

is, literature, music, graph-

ic arts, sculpture, architec-

ture, theatre, you can see

that there is a whole new

A new conceptual world,

a new understanding of

how the mind works, a new

understanding of what it

means to be a human be-

ing. You begin to see these

pening in Europe.

You have also written about 'newness'. Can you explain that?

Many people, for example Sheldon Pollock, actually have written about *navata* or newness. In early modern times, before the massive intrusion of the European powers, there was a palpable sense of novelty. Suddenly, people are talking about something being and feeling really new. This is also true of music, literature, and painting. There is an amazing sense of new discoveries. So, in music for example, in Carnatic music, which was formalised - you could say 'grammaticalised' - in 16th century Thanjavur, we begin to see an emerging corpus of Carnatic compositions, with strong introspective elements. In literature, we have what we call praband*ha* texts. This is something quite new. A prabandha text is a self-contained book, usually not too long, that can be recited over a period of maybe a week or two. It's meant to be read from the beginning via the middle to the end. That's a rather new thing in South India. The new prabandha forms demand sequential reading, that comes with



an acquired newness of taste and themes.

How do you look at the developments in West Asia in light of Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack and Israel's subsequent war on Gaza?

Well, we are in a very deep crisis. And that includes the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. The Hamas atrocities of October 7 were unparalleled in Israel's history. Now the war has gone on for some 15 months and shows no sign of stopping.

On the West Bank, we have Israeli colonisation that has been going on for several decades. All of the Israeli settlements, without exception, sit upon stolen Palestinian land, and the settler population has grown to several lakhs planted in the midst of a Palestinian population on the West Bank of some twoand-a-half million. The extremist settlers... are driving the Palestinians on the West Bank into a situation of horrible precariousness.

There is a system in place that supports this. That means the Army, the police, the military courts, the Israeli media, public and social media, and the government, which funds and supports the settlements.

The goal is to take as much Palestinian land as they possibly can with as few Palestinian people living on it as possible. That is been true for a long time. But since October 7, this situation has exacerbated enormously.

In addition to settler violence, there are military operations in Jenin and Nablus. The West Bank has become a cauldron that could explode at any moment. I think it is extremely likely that there will be a third intifada [uprising], worse than the first two. And it could happen at any time, because the Palestinian people are not going anywhere, and their life is no longer bearable.

States generally are violent. Still, you might see internal and external constraints on states. Do you think it doesn't work in the case of Israel?

I think it works to some extent. There are still some constraints, including on the Army operations in Gaza. But the figures of killed and wounded are shocking. In the northern part of Gaza, there are no buildings left standing, and the population has been displaced into tent cities farther south.

We have some two million people living in tents. There is not enough food, although there are attempts to bring in food. There is no clean water to drink. Obviously, no electricity. It's cold. And the shooting and the bombing continue. In the north, to make it even worse, now that they have cleared out most of the population, the Army is paving roads and putting up military camps. It looks like the government wants to stay there permanently, to annex it, either by some act of the Knesset or just de facto.

What is the way out, for Israel and Palestine?

I can tell you the way-not-

out - that is constant, eternal war. The only real way out is some kind of settlement with the Palestinians who are our neighbours. The only way to make life viable for everybody, Israelis as well as Palestinians, is to reach an agreement in which the Palestinians have some form of political framework which will allow them to realise their own cultural and civilisational ambitions. For the Israelis, for the Jews, we've got that, we have a State that embodies some form of collective identities. It's not a very effective State, in many ways, but it's there. But Palestinians don't have any such framework.

We have a dysfunctional political system, which is like a crazy jigsaw puzzle. This structural situation perpetuates the logic where the extreme right has complete control over what is happening. It's an absurd situation. [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu has devoted his life to preventing the emergence of a Palestinian State. There are two things that he really cares about. That is one, and the second is the perpetuation of his own government. And they are linked.

I think what should emerge someday, somehow, is some system that could be like a confederation, in which the Palestinians would have control over their own lives and their own security. It would have to be a demilitarised state. Israelis would have control over their lives, and there would be some overarching framework addressing security, policies, social services and everyday needs. I'm not saying it would be easy to achieve it. But people said that about Ireland. South Africa is another example. It is not a happy place, but nonetheless, the Apartheid was overturned. I think sometimes that today, we in Israel may be experiencing something like South Africa at the height of the Apartheid system. Just a few years before the system collapsed.

BJP attacks AAP over 'undisclosed' **CAG** reports

The Hindu Bureau

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Lok Sabha MP Anurag Thakur, citing media reports, on Saturday presented 10 findings from reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), criticising the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for causing a loss of ₹2,026 crore to the Delhi exchequer in the liquor scam. Mr. Thakur questioned why the AAP had not tabled the report in the Assembly and accused former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of deceiving the public in the run-up to the election.

Responding to the allegations, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh asked where the CAG reports were, why the BIP was not making them public, and whether they were "locked away in the BJP headquarters".

BJP leaders and the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi V.K. Saxena have been attacking the AAP over 12 reports by the CAG that were released over a year ago. The L-G has repeatedly asked the AAP-led Delhi government to table the reports in the Delhi Assembly. The issue is now in the Delhi High Court.

BJP president J.P. Nadda also attacked the AAP over the reports. "The intentional lapses in the policies implementation caused ₹2,026 crore losses to exchequer money," Mr. Nadda said in a post on X.

Hitting out at the promises made by the AAP, Mr. Thakur said that instead of making Delhi the capital of education, the AAP had made Delhi "the liquor capital".

"There is not just one but multiple scams that have taken place. Since Independence, there has been no government that has committed as many sins as AAP has. That is why 'AAP-da' must go from power," he said.

Delhi welfare schemes will not be taken away if BJP comes to power, says Shah

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Addressing slum residents in his first rally in Delhi since the announcement of the February 5 Assembly election, Union Home Mi nister Amit Shah reiterated on Saturday that welfare schemes in the capital would not stop if the BJP came to power. He promised that the BJP would better them, though he did not specify which schemes would be improved.

Mr. Shah was speaking at the Jhuggi Basti Pradhan Sammelan held at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium on Saturday.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has been attacking the BJP, warning that if it comes to power, it will stop welfare schemes, including those providing free electricity and water in Delhi.

However, Mr. Shah vowed: "No welfare schemes for the poor will be stopped if the BJP forms the government in the city." He also promised that if his party wins the election, every slum dweller will be provided a house under the PM Awas Yojana.

The residents of the cap-



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses the Jhuggi Basti Pradhan Sammelan, at Jawaharlal Nehru stadium on Saturday, ANI

ital's slums will throw away the 'AAP-da' and become liberators of Delhi, Mr. Shah said.

The Minister said that

despite its tall promises of clean water, good education, and a garbage-free city, the AAP government has forced slum dwellers to live in pathetic conditions, with dirty water, air pollution, broken roads, and garbage.

Congratulating the Delhi unit of the BJP for fighting against the AAP on behalf of the slum dwellers, Mr. Shah said, "Our leaders spent several nights in the JJ [jhuggi jhopri] clusters and made a list of all your trouble and submitted it to PM [Narendra] Modi. And keeping this in mind, we will bring our Sankalp Patra [poll manifesto], which the BJP will make sure is fulfilled because, unlike the AAP, all our promises

are done." The AAP is a disaster, Mr. Shah said, alleging that while India has progressed over the past 10 years, Delhi has stayed stagnant. Delhi has become hell because of 'AAP-da', he added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Kejriwal, in a post on X said: "Today Amit Shah ji abused me and the people of Delhi a lot. The people of Delhi will answer this in the elections. Tomorrow morning I will hold a press conference from a 'jhuggi basti' which they have planned to demolish after the elections. I will expose the dirty intentions of BJP with full evidence."

AAP MLA dies in 'accidental' firing from his own pistol

Press Trust of India LUDHIANA

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Ludhiana West MLA Gurpreet Bassi Gogi died of a gunshot injury on Saturday, with his family members and the State party chief saving he was hit by a bullet that got fired accidentally from his pistol when he was cleaning it.

Joint Commissioner of Police Jaskaran Singh Teja said the bullet pierced Mr. Gogi's temple and he was rushed to the local Dayanand Medical College and Hospital, where doctors declared him dead. The police said the case is under investigation.

Several political leaders including Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann expressed shock over Mr. Gogi's death. "Got the sad news of the demise of our party's respected MLA from Ludhiana West Gurpreet Gogi ji. Heartfelt condolences to the family in this hour of grief," Mr. Mann said in a post on X.

Mr. Gogi joined the AAP in 2022 after quitting the Congress. He had been with the Congress for almost 22 years.

Mr. Gogi (58) is survived by his wife, a son and a

Nadda appoints ex-Minister Ravindra Chavan working president of Maharashtra BJP

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit MUMBAI

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Ravindra Chavan was appointed as the Maharashtra State working president by the party's national president J.P. Nadda on Saturday night. A four-time MLA from Dombivli, he was the PWD Minister in the last government of

Mahayuti.

The process of key organisational appointments will begin from Monday under his leadership. He is also tipped to be the next State president of the BJP. The announcement comes amid intense political speculation, as the process was pending due to the elections in the State.

The party is holding a massive convention in Shirdi on Sunday to pass a resolution to congratulate the people of Maharashtra for bringing the BJP to power with a thumping majority. Over 15,000 office-bearers, including Maharashtra BJP Ministers, will attend the day-long convention.

"The janat dan prastaav will be kept in front of the members on Sunday," outgoing Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule told *The Hindu* from Shirdi on Saturday. He is now the Minister of Revenue in the State government.

"We have already enrolled 1.5 crore new primary members in Maharashtra. There are five lakh active members in all the booths. There are one lakh booths in the State. Each booth now has five active members. The booth presidents will choose the tehsil president who in turn will choose the zila presidents. The central observers will

visit thereafter to complete the process of the appointment of the State president," he said.

Sources said naming of Ravindra Chavan as the State president will be a mere formality now.

Proven performer

He is believed to be a 'performer'. During the recent State Assembly elections, he was given the responsibility of Konkan region, the coastal belt which posed a major challenge.

Recently, he was given bigger responsibilities in the State organisational structure, leading to murmurs about him being pegged to be the next State president in view of Mr. Bawankule becoming Revenue Minister. Chavan was appointed as the State incharge for 'sanghatan parv', a campaign to strengthen the of its organisational structure.

Goods & Service Tax Income Tax (IT Practitioner) GST COURSE CONTENT:1)Gst Concepts & GST/IT Registration Transition, 2)Registration, 3)Scope, 4)Time Of Supply, COURSE CONTENT: 1) Gst Concepts a sition, 2) Registration, 3) Scope, 4) Time Of Supply, uput Tax Credit, 6) Refund, 7) Eway Bill, 8) Returns. COURSE CONTENT: 1) Residential Status, 100 Course income House COURSE CONTENT: 1)Residential Status, me, 6)Income from other sources, 7)Returns filing **COMBO PRICE:** GST + IT Practitioner: Rs.5900/-Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

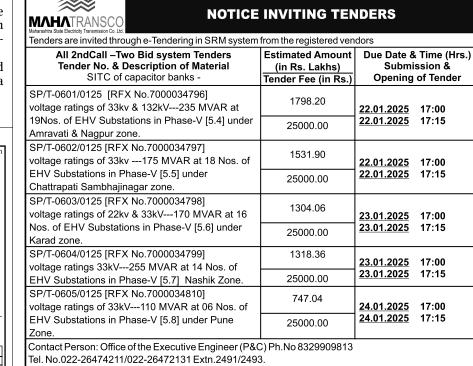
daughter. **GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, CUTTACK** No. Tender Online RWC-01/2025 Date:- 08/01/2025 Letter No.- 38 e-Procurement NOTICE Name of the work Construction of Road works Class of contractor c) Estimated cost more than Special Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities. Rs.6.00 Crore & upto Rs.50.00 Crore A Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class d) Estimated cost more than Rs.1.00 Crore & upto Rs.20.00 Crore of other licensing authorities B Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class c) Estimated cost more than Rs.20.00 Lakh & upto Rs.3.00 Crore of other licensing authorities **Time for Completion** As specified in the Column-7of the Annexure **Detail Projects** As per Annexure attached Other Details Bid Identification Availability of Tender on-line for bidding Last Date & Time of seeking tender Date & Time of opening of tende Constructio 17.01.2025

up to 05.00 P.M.

Sd/-Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Cuttac

11.30 A.M.

RWC-01/25



Email:secpa@mahatransco.in, eegrp6@mahatransco.in, eepc@mahatransco.in,

For further details visit our website http://www.srmetender.mahatransco.in Any further amendments will be published on the MSETCL website www.mahatransco.in. So bidder are requested to check the website.

Executive Engineer (P&C)

THE HINDU



BPSC sends legal notice to JSP founder Prashant Kishor

The Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) has sent a legal notice to Jan Suraaj Party (JSP) founder Prashant Kishor with regard to the allegations levelled by him on the commission. The commission has demanded evidence within seven days on the allegations of corruption levelled against the commission by him and his team. While speaking to *The Hindu*, BPSC secretary Satya Prakash Sharma said, "It was necessary to send him a legal notice because the kind of allegation he has levelled against the BPSC was unpardonable. The kind of atmosphere he has created was sending the wrong message among the genuine candidates."

Bengal CID issues summons to Arjun Singh, son for Jan. 13

The West Bengal CID on Saturday issued fresh summons to BIP leader and former Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh and his son, asking them to appear before its investigating officers on January 13 in connection with a financial corruption case related to approval of tenders worth ₹4.5 crore by Bhatpara municipalit. "Mr. Singh and his son have been asked to appear before our officers on January 13 in connection with the financial corruption case of tenders by Bhatpara municipality," a CID officer said. Although Mr. Singh had appeared before the CID on January 9 for the same case, his son Pavan Singh, had skipped the appearance on that day. PTI

Two dead in accident at construction site in Raipur

Two workers were killed while six sustained injuries when a centering frame on an under-construction building collapsed here on Saturday. The accident was reported around 3 p.m. on VIP Street, metres away from the VIP Road, a stretch that connects the city to the Raipur airport. The residential building has three multi-storey towers, each at a different stage of construction. While the project is run by a prominent construction firm from the State. those at the site said that it is subcontracted to various contractors. The work to remove the debris from the site was going on till late Saturday night.

Manufacturers of medical devices seek MRP monitoring

Medical device manufacturers have called for monitoring of maximum retail prices (MRP) of imported medical devices into India so that domestic consumers can get affordable rates. In its pre-Budget memorandum to the Union Ministry of Finance, the Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMeD) has highlighted that the government's efforts to reduce import duty on devices goes in vain since consumers/patients pay "10-30 times the landed price of imported devices". AiMeD, an umbrella association of Indian manufacturers of medical devices, said that the current scenario is "against Indian manufacturers in every way".

SUDOKU

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Solution to vesterday's Sudoku

DIFFICULTY RATING:

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

Civil operators told to ground Dhruv copters after January 5 crash

Armed forces have already grounded all 330 choppers in their fleet; HAL has issued the advisory to BSF, Jharkhand govt., Mauritian Police Force

NEW DELHI

industan nautics Ltd. has operators to ground the indigenous Dhruv advanced light helicopter Mark-III until the cause of the crash in Porbandar last week is identified.

The armed forces have already temporarily grounded all their 330 Dhruvs following the January 5 crash of the Indian Coast Guard helicopter during a training sortie that killed all three crew members, Commandant Saurabh, Deputy Commandant S.K. Yadav and Pradhan Navik Manoj.

The HAL has informed its operators that the helicopter involved in the accident did not respond to pilot control inputs in the final three or four seconds, according to a helicopter industry source.

An HAL spokesperson neither confirmed nor declined the advisory. The Border Security Force has six of these choppers on its fleet, and the Jharkhand government has at least one Dhruv helicopter. The HAL also handed one Dhruv to the Government of Mauritius in February



Precarious ride: There have been nearly 20 crashes involving the ALH over the past two decades. FILE PHOTO

2023 to be used by the Mauritian Police Force.

The Coast Guard has constituted a Board of Inquiry into the accident, which is the third crash of a Dhruv in the past two

In September, one crashed during a medical evacuation off the Porbandar coast, killing all three aboard. In March 2023, a Dhruv of the Coast Guard crashed shortly after takeoff in Kochi. There were no fatalities.

"There have been nearly 20 crashes involving the ALH over the past 24 years. While some of these have

been due to operational reasons because of the extreme conditions the chopper flies in such high altitudes and low visibility conditions at night, there have also been concerns over control rods, which were found to be broken. Subsequently, the rods were changed with an up-

The inquiry spearheaded by the ICG will reveal whether the cause of the crash was due to operational circumstances or a manufacturing flaw," Wing Commander Unni Pillai (Retd), former chief test pilot at HAL, told *The Hindu*.

graded material.

Denotified tribes' anger growing amid a stagnating scheme, classification issues

Abhinay Lakshman NEW DELHI

With the Centre's SEED scheme for denotified tribes only now taking off, caste certificates being denied to them in 29 States, and the Idate Commission's 2017 report in cold storage, anger among the denotified tribes (DNT), semi-nomadic tribes (SNT), and nomadic tribes (NT) is growing across States such as Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Gujarat. This anger is now also frustrating members of the Union government's Development and Welfare Board for DNTs, SNTs, and NTs (DWBDNC), who are making fresh attempts to push for the implementation of the Idate panel recommendations, which include a permanent commission, proper classification, and a detailed

caste census. Bharatbhai Babubhai Patni, DWBDNC member, said that the government can no longer shut out voices calling for the Idate Commission's recommendations to be implemented. "A Schedule must be put out listing out all the DNTs. Alongside the issuing of SC/ ST/OBC certificates, there must be directions to issue joint certificates like SC-DNT, ST-DNT, OBC-DNT."

The government had constituted the National Commission for DNTs/NTs/ SNTs in 2015 under the chairmanship of Bhiku

Fresh attempts made to push for the implementation of the Idate Commission recommendations

Ramji Idate, which had put out its final report in 2017, calling for the government to expedite the final classification of these communities, count their population by including a caste census column in the 2021 census, and provide a sub-quota for them under SC/ST/OBC quotas in public education and employment. The Idate commission had concluded there were a total of 1,526 DNT, NT, and SNT communities across the country, of which 269 were not yet categorised as SC, ST, or OBC.

Certificates sought

B.K. Lodhi, who was Member Secretary in the Idate Commission and is now part of the Vimukt, Ghumantu, and Ardh-Ghumantu Janjatiya Vikas Parishad (Akhil Bharatiya) in Uttar Pradesh, said, "We were the first to resist British rulers and branded criminal for it. How can this government not sort out these basic issues like DNT certificates across States?"

Uttar Pradesh is among the seven States that technically have begun issuing DNT community certificates. But Dr. Lodhi, who attended the national

workshop in New Delhi last week, said, "They are saying they have issued some 200-300 certificates and painting it as some huge achievement. It strikes at a core area, denying our identity. If the government cannot get States to issue DNT certificates, they might as well brand us criminal again, at least we will get our identity."

Welfare measures

The SEED scheme (Scheme for the Economic Empowerment of DNT/NT/SNT communities) was meant to be the Centre's flagship scheme for these communities. Launched in February 2022, the scheme offered assistance for education, livelihood, healthcare, and housing. But it took over two years for the scheme to take off.

In a meeting of top officials, chaired by Social Justice Minister Virendra Kumar last month, the government had resolved to urge States and UTs to start issuing DNT certification along with regular caste certificates.

"The Minister has assured us of action but there are real concerns about the lack of implementation of the Idate Commission's recommendations. So many people are not getting community certificates because of belonging to sub-castes, or spelling it differently, or having a hyphenated caste name," Mr. Patni said.

New National Museum in Delhi to display artefacts in chronological and thematic order

Sreeparna Chakrabarty NEW DELHI

North Block and South Block in the national capital, which are set to house the new National Museum. will have artefacts arranged chronologically and thematically, according to a draft proposal under consideration of the Union Culture Ministry.

North Block, which is likely to be the first one of the buildings where retrofitting will be completed, is expected to house the artefacts in a chronological order, while South Block is likely to have theme-based sections, sources told *The* Hindu.

India signed a memorandum of understanding with France on December



Plans made: India signed an agreement with France on December 19 last year for the development of the new museum. PTI

19 last year for the development of the new museum, along the lines of the Louvre in Paris. The museum will be developed through adaptive reuse in collaboration with France, which is renowned for its expertise in such projects exemplified by the

Louvre, the Grand Palais, and the Hotel de la Marine. This approach mirrors France's 'Grand Projects' initiative that transformed government buildings into iconic cultural spaces.

The chronological arrangement will have about 50 sections each with 5-6

rooms and thus around 250 galleries in total. The thematic section would have displays based on different subjects such as literature, architecture, and art. There would also be galleries with augmented reality, educational centres and children's corners.

2,06,000 artefacts

North Block houses the Ministries of Finance and Home Affairs, while South Block houses the Prime Minister's Office, and the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs.

Offices in both the buildings are being moved to the Common Central Secretariat (CCS) building on Janpath as part of the Central Vista plan.

new museum, The

which has been named 'Yug Yugeen Bharat' museum, will be able to house an estimated 25,000-30,000 artefacts and is expected to be the largest such museum in the world when completed.

As of now, the National Museum has 2,06,000 artefacts in total, out of which, 7,000-8,000 are on display.

"We have sought artefacts from all museums across the country for display in the upcoming new museum. While they are most welcome to send things on a permanent basis, we can also display them on a temporary basis and keep rotating them," B.R. Mani, Director General of the National Museum, told The Hindu.

Rijiju to ink pact for Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Riiiiu on Saturday embarked on a five-day visit to Saudi Arabia to sign a bilateral agreement for the Haj pilgrimage of 2025, where India is seeking an additional quota 10,000 pilgrims.

Mr. Rijiju is scheduled to meet Saudi Arabian Minister Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah on Monday when the two leaders are expected to sign the bilateral agreement. "I look forward to visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to sign the bilateral agreement on Hajj 2025 and strengthen the people-to-people ties between our two great nations," Mr. Rijiju said in a post on X.

Mr. Rijiju will also meet Saleh Al Jasser, the Saudi Minister of Transport and Logistic Services and discuss Haj flight operations and the pilgrimage-related bus and train services with

He will visit the Jeddah Haj Terminal, used by Indian pilgrims, where the government has dedicated an office space for facilitation.

India's Haj quota for 2025 was fixed by Saudi Arabia at 1,75,025 pilgrims, and the government is seeking an additional 10,000 quota.

Mr. Rijiju will also visit Madina.

Out of the total Haj pilgrims quota allocated to India, 70% would be handled by the Haj Committee of India (HCoI) while the remaining 30% will be allocated to private Haj group organisers, according to the government's Haj Policy for 2025.

In 2024, the HCoI was allotted 80% while the private Hajj group organisers got 20% of the quota.

India joins UN panel on data for official statistics

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI

India has joined the UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics, a statement by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said.

The panel was created

to further investigate the challenges of Big Data, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on Sustainable Development Goals. India will contribute to shaping global standards and practices in harnessing Big Data and data science for official statistical purposes.

This membership is a strategic opportunity for India to align its domestic advancements in Big Data and data science.

Kolkata second in global list of cities with slowest traffic; Bengaluru third

Serish Nanisetti HYDERABAD

Kolkata's roads were the second most congested in the world in 2024, and the most congested in Asia, the latest survey by the Netherlands-based location technology firm TomTom said. According to the report, drivers in the city spent an average of 34 minutes and 33 seconds to travel a distance of 10 km.

Kolkata was followed closely by Bengaluru, where drivers spent 34 minutes and 10 seconds to cover 10 km. Pune finished third with a travel time of 33 minutes and 22 seconds for the same distance, leaving India with three cities in the global top five.

Hyderabad (31.5 minutes) was the other Indian city in the top 20 globally,



drivers waiting on roads for hours. FILE PHOTO

taking the 18th spot. Barranquilla City (36 mi-

nutes, six seconds) in Colombia took the top spot and London (33 minutes, 17 seconds) rounded up the top five of the rankings.

While 110 hours were lost per year due to traffic

conditions in Kolkata, it was 117 hours in Bengaluru, 108 hours in Pune and 85 hours in Hyderabad. Featuring 500 cities

across 62 countries on six continents, the 14th edition of TomTom Traffic Index evaluated cities by

30 minutes and 20 seconds to cover 10 km while Mumbai (29 minutes, 26 seconds) was 39th.

times.

Areas with the highest congestion in Hyderabad were Ameerpet, Khairatabad, Erragadda, Balanagar, Somajiguda, and Begumpet. Comparatively, the

their average travel time

and congestion level. The

study used Floating Car Da-

ta (FCD) to calculate travel

Chennai was 31st in the

list, with drivers spending

western and eastern parts of the city remained relatively free of congestion. On Saturday, while jokes about empty streets in Hyderabad owing to families leaving for their home towns flooded social media, the traffic map still blinked in red, showing congestion in many areas.



BHEL. ONGC to collaborate for new, renewable energy

Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL) and ONGC will explore collaboration in the area of new and renewable energy, including fuel cell, electrolyser and battery energy storage system projects. The State-owned entities will leverage the combined strengths for collaborating in emerging areas within the clean energy ecosystem and contribute to the country's National Green Hydrogen Mission, BHEL said in a release on signing of an MoU with ONGC.

IOB to raise MCLR by 5 bps for 3 tenors, 10 bps for 1 tenor

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) will raise its marginal cost of funds based lending rate (MCLR) by 5 bps for three tenors and 10 bps for one tenor effective January 15. The rate will be raised by 5 bps for three month tenor to 8.65%; six month to 8.90%; and one year 9.10%. For the two year tenor, the MCLR is being increased by 10 bps to 9.10%, the State-owned lender announced after its Assets and Liabilities Management Committee meeting on Friday. One basis point equals 0.01%.

NLC arm, APDCL to develop solar projects in Assam

NLC India Ltd. on Saturday said its renewables arm has entered into a joint venture pact with Assam Power Distribution Company Ltd. (APDCL) for developing 1000 MW solar power projects in Assam. The pact has been signed between NLC India Renewables Ltd. (NIRL) and APDCL. While NIRL will have 51% stake in the JV, APDCL will have 49%. Power purchase pacts will be signed with Assam discoms for the sale of 100% of the generated power for 25 years. PTI

No more actions to curb derivatives trading on anvil: SEBI

The stock market regulator's wholetime member Ananth Narayan said an expert group is examining steps to improve risk management systems

Press Trust of India MUMBAI

he capital markets regulator is not planning any more measures to curb or restrict activity in derivatives, SEBI's wholetime member Ananth Narayan said on Saturday.

An expert group under former RBI executive director G. Padmanabhan continues to work on bettering the system, and some moves on ease of doing business and better risk management are being mulled, he added.

"At this point in time, there is no thought of SEBI taking any further steps in this particular regard," Mr. Narayan said, addressing an event organised by SE-BI-promoted NISM here.

He also made it clear that the SEBI was not mulling any steps on "suitability and appropriability", which would determine who could trade in the derivatives market.

It may be noted that in November, SEBI imposed a set of restrictions to curb highly speculative trades in the futures and options market after data pointed out that retail investors lost money in 93% of the trades over the last three years.

Making it clear that SEBI had nothing against derivatives and that they helped in price discovery and dee-



Refrain mode: SEBI is not mulling any steps on "suitability and appropriability", said Mr. Ananth Narayan. ANI

pening the market, Mr. Narayan assured that the tweaks would be introduced only consultations.

Some of the measures being discussed within the markets regulator included steps to better measure risk in the derivatives market. "What you need ideally is that the volumes in the cash market should be nice and liquid, and there should be depth in the market. And likewise, the volumes in the derivative market should also have depth, should also have good volumes," he noted.

It is important to make sure that there is some kind of connectivity in the liquidity of the two markets, he said.

Mr. Narayan said the SE-BI is also considering linking market-wide position limits to delivery volumes.

Linked to the same, it is considering a revision of index training limits imposed during the COVID

pandemic to control volatility, the wholetime member said. SEBI is also looking at the question of having indices with futures and options with very high concentrated weightages of some specific stocks from a perspective of ensuring trust in the system, Mr. Narayan added.

"Often in social media, we hear murmurs that something wrong is happening, especially in index trading. That there is some manipulation happening in the cash market, which is leading to some kind of activity in the derivative markets, and overall, it is creating...either huge volatility or no volatility and that it is being done as a manipulation for some people to profit," he said.

One of the questions the regulator is grappling with, is whether should there be restrictions on how much weightage the top stock or the top three stocks have in the F&O indices.

Waaree Energies to acquire EGP India for ₹792 crore

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

Waaree Energies Ltd., a manufacturer of solar PV modules, said on Saturday that it had signed a definitive agreement to acquire 100% of Enel Green Power India Pvt. Ltd. from Enel Green Power Development S.R.L for ₹792 crore.

"This acquisition positions Waaree among the leading renewable energy independent power producers in the country and expands its project development pipeline, building on recent successes, including a utility auction win in Madhya Pradesh," the company said.

The acquisition will diversify revenue streams, enhance execution capabilities for wind projects, and expedite growth of Waaree's IPP business, Waaree Energies added.

"This acquisition marks a significant milestone in our overall growth strategy. By integrating EGP India's portfolio, we have a strong runway for additional business opportunities," said Hitesh Doshi, CMD, Waaree Energies Ltd.

"According to Enel's strategic plan, this deal furthers the optimisation of the group's international footprint and asset portfolio with an asset rotation and capital allocation strategy focused on core geographies with an integrated energy market presence," said Stéphane Zweguintzow, Enel's Head of Asia and Oceania.

India's economy likely to be a tad weaker in 2025: IMF MD Georgieva

Press Trust of India WASHINGTON

The Indian economy is expected to be "a little weaker" in 2025 despite steady global growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said.

Ms. Georgieva also said she expected quite a lot of uncertainty in the world this year mainly around the trade policy of the U.S.

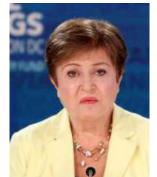
In her annual media roundtable with a group of reporters on Friday, she said global growth was expected to be steady in 2025, but with regional divergence.

Ms. Georgieva said she expects the Indian economy to be a little weaker in 2025. However, she did not explain it any further. The World Economy Outlook update week will have more details about it.

"The U.S. is doing quite a bit better than we expected before, the EU is somewhat stalling, (and) India a little weaker," she said.

Brazil was facing somewhat higher inflation, she said. In China, the world's second-largest economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was seeing deflationary pressure and ongoing challenges with domestic demand, she said. "Low-income countries,

despite all the efforts they are making, are in a position when any new shock can affect them quite negatively," Ms. Georgieva said. "What we expect in



2025 is to have quite a lot of uncertainty, especially in terms of economic policies. Not surprisingly, given the size and role of the US economy, there is keen interest globally in the policy directions of the incoming administration, in particular on tariffs, taxes, deregulation and government efficiency," Ms. Georgieva said.

"This uncertainty is particularly high around the path for trade policy going forward, adding to the headwinds facing the global economy, especially for countries and regions that are more integrated in global supply chains, medium-sized economies, (and) Asia as a region," she said.

That uncertainty is actually expressed globally through higher long-term interest rates, even though short-term interest rates have gone down, the IMF Managing Director said.

On inflation, the IMF expects global disinflation to continue, Ms. Georgieva remarked.

Akasa's unique dilemma: too many pilots, too little flying



employs far more pilots than needed for its operations. FILE PHOTO

Jagriti Chandra NEW DELHI

The global shortage of new aircraft has disrupted Akasa Air's expansion plans, creating a surplus of hundreds of pilots.

With Boeing 737 MAX deliveries slowing in 2024, nearly 400 of Akasa's 850 pilots remain grounded. Originally scheduled for 12 months, post-joining training timelines have stretched to 18 months, with some pilots fearing a further delay of 6 months.

Akasa currently operates a fleet of 26 aircraft but employs far more pilots than needed for its operations. The airline offers grounded pilots a salary equivalent to 40 flying hours, resulting in incomes 50% lower than peers involved in active flying. This financial strain affects both mid-career pilots and new recruits burdened by training loans of ₹60 lakh to ₹1.2 crore. In response to a detailed

questionnaire from The Hindu, the airline's spokesperson said, "Despite the changes in the aircraft delivery schedules, more than 60% of our pilots have begun to accumulate flying hours." The airline added that by the end of 2025, it would be able to ensure a vast majority of pilots start

flying. Since launching in August 2022, Akasa had ambitious plans to grow its fleet to 72 Boeing 737 MAX 8s within five years. However, supply chain disruptions and regulatory issues in the U.S. in 2024 limited its fleet growth to just three aircraft last year, down from the initial pace of one aircraft per month in 2022 and 2023. By March 2025, Akasa expects to have 27 aircraft – 15 fewer than planned.

But the airline has been on a spree to recruit pilots in large numbers from the "very beginning" in what some call a "calculated risk". Three years since the launch it seems "the worst case scenario has played out for the airline", said a former executive of the airline. The person explained that Akasa needs nearly 18 pilots per aircraft keeping in mind the pace with which it planned to double its fleet. This would mean that with 26 aircraft the airline needs only 468 cockpit crew of the nearly 850 it has employed.

Aspects of pilot training have now come under scrutiny with complaints of favouritism in pilot release schedules and training lapses leading to fines and suspensions by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

e - Procurement Notice (Amendment) 1) 'e'- Procurement Notice No. 01/SE/IC-2/2024-2025, Date: 02.01.2025 Name of Work: I&CAD Dept., "Adoption of National Framework with Revenue

Generation Model for Sediment Management and Restoration of Storage Capacity of Reservoirs in 1) Lower Manair Dam at Alugunur(V), Thimmapur(M), Karimnaga Dist. 2) Mid Manair Dam at Manwada(V), Boinpalli(M), Rajanna Siricilla Dist & 3 Kadam at Kadam(V), Kadam(M) Nirmal Dist". Date/time From document available For: 04.01.2025 from 03.00 PM; Read as: 12.01.2025 from 03.00 PM; Last Date and Time for download of Tender schedules Online: For: 21.01.2025 up to 03.00 PM Read as: 27.01.2025 up to 03.00 PM. Superintending Engineer(FAC) Karimnagar Dist. 505 527

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PHE2425 Water Supply Scheme for Augmentation of UWSS WSOB07236 Kushalgarh, District Banswara including 05 years O&M

after 01 year of Defect Liability Period under AMRUT 2.0

377	4-25 WLOB07257 Pr	ater supply scheme for Augmentation of UWSs aratpgarh, Chhoti Sadri and Dhariawad, District atapgarh including 05 years O&M after 01 year of efect Liability Period under AMRUT 2.0					
Sr. No.	Events	Date & time as per Existing schedule	Date And Time as per extended/ amended schedule	Website/Location https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in and https://eprocrajasthan.gov.in			
1	Last Date for Submission of Bid Document	07.01,2025 06:00 PM	16.01.2025 06:00 PM				
2	Last Date for physical Submission of Bid Security and other mandatory Documents	01:00 PM	17.01.2025 01:00 PM	https://sppp.rajasthan. gov.in and https://eproc. rajasthan.gov.in			
3	Date of Online	08.01.2025	17.01.2025	https://sppp.rajasthan.			

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Millions of diabetes, heart disease cases linked to sugary drinks

The Hindu Bureau

A new study estimates that in 2020, 2.2 million new cases of type 2 diabetes and 1.2 million new cases of cardiovascular disease occur each year globally due to consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, representing 9.8% and 3.1%, respectively, of all incident cases. The study estimated sugar-sweetened beverage-attributable type 2 diabetes and cardiovasdisease burdens

across 184 countries in 1990 and 2020.

As per the study, in developing countries, the case count is particularly sobering. The highest sugar-sweetened beverageattributable percentage burdens were in Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean, they contributed to nearly 24% of new diabetes cases and more than 11% of new cases of cardiovascular disease. In SubSaharan Africa, it found that sugar-sweetened beverages contributed to more than 21% of all new diabetes cases. "From 1990 to 2020, the largest proportional increases in sugarsweetened beverage-attributable incident type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease cases were in sub-Saharan Africa, 8.8% and 4.4%, respectively," the

study found. Colombia, Mexico, and South Africa are countries that have been hard

hit. While more than 48% of all new diabetes cases in Colombia were attributable to consumption of sugary drinks, nearly onethird of all new diabetes cases in Mexico were linked to sugary drink consumption. In South Africa, 27.6% of new diabetes cases and 14.6% of cardiovascular disease cases were attributable to sugary drink consumption.

Sugary beverages are rapidly digested, causing a spike in blood sugar levels

with little nutritional value. Regular consumption over time leads to weight gain, insulin resistance, and a host of metabolic issues tied to type 2 diabetes and heart disease, two of the world's leading causes of death. Men are more likely than women to suffer the consequences of sugary drink consumption, as are younger adults compared to their older counterparts, the researchers

They call for a multi-

pronged approach, including public health campaigns, regulation of sugary drink advertising, and taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages. Some countries have taken steps in this direction. Mexico, which has one of the highest per capita rates of sugary drink consumption in the world, introduced a tax on the beverages in 2014. Early evidence suggests that the tax has been effective, particularly among lower-income individuals.

IIT Roorkee uses bacterial enzymes to degrade plasticizers

Once integrated into bacteria, the enzymes remain active for a longer time and the bacteria can be used continuously for degrading the plasticizers

R. Prasad

esides plastics, the amount of carcinogenic plasticizers in the environment is increasing at an alarming rate. Plasticizers are chemicals added to plastics and personal care products to enhance flexibility and shine and are commonly found in items such as baby toys, shampoos, soaps, and food containers. Plasticizers can be absorbed through the skin, making them a direct

threat to human health.

A team of researchers

headed by Dr. Pravindra Kumar, Professor at the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, IIT Roorkee has successfully used an enzyme – esterase enzyme - produced by soil bacteria Sulfobacillus acidophilus to break down diethyl hexyl phthalate (DEHP) plasticizer. While a Chinese team had characterised this enzyme to degrade low molecular weight phthalate diester plasticizers, which can be degraded by several reported esterase enzymes. the IIT Roorkee team has identified its actual potential and used it for degrading difficult to degrade high molecular weight phthalate plasticizers. The research was funded by THDC India Limited, Rishikesh, and the results were published recently in the journal Structure. The group has also discovered that the esterase enzyme can bind to molecules similar to polypropylene used in plastics, making it a potential tool for extracting polypropylene from contaminated water sources.

Cleaning up using soil bacteria enzymes

Plasticizers, which are added to plastics and personal care products, can be absorbed through the skin

■ The researchers have used esterase enzyme produced by soil bacteria Sulfobacillus acidophilus to break down diethyl hexyl phthalate (DEHP) plasticizer

A Chinese team characterised the esterase enzyme to degrade low molecular weight phthalate diester plasticizers, while the IIT Roorkee team uses it to degrade high molecular weight phthalate plasticizers

■ The esterase enzyme was structurally characterised using X-ray crystallography

■ In 2017, the team isolated another soil bacteria which use three enzymes in sequence to break down phthalates into carbondioxide and water

Enzyme production: The esterase enzyme is produced in large-

scale by cloning the enzyme genes into *E. coli* bacteria. REUTERS

■ The researchers have used all five enzymes in sequence to break down DHEP plasticizer into water and carbon-dioxide

■ The team is trying to insert the genes of all five enzymes into bacteria to directly convert DEHP plasticizer into water and carbon-dioxide

Once integrated active for a long time and the bacteria can be used continuously to degrade the plasticizer

The esterase enzyme was structurally characterised using X-ray crystallography. "This helped in identifying the active sites of the enzymes and in understanding the detailed mechanism by which this enzvme DEHP plasticizer," says Shalja Verma from IIT Roorkee and the first author of the paper. Other sophisticated biochemical and biophysical approaches were also used to understand the efficiency of the enzyme to degrade the plasticizer.

The esterase enzyme remains active for about a month and catalyzes the degradation of DEHP plasticizer with significant efficiency. For large-scale production of this enzyme, the researchers cloned the genes of the EstS1 esterase

enzyme into E. coli bacteria and the enzyme was produced on a large-scale through aerobic culture.

The enzyme breaks

down the DEHP plasticizer into two products – mono-(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (MEHP) and 2-ethyl hexanol. According to Prof. Kumar, this esterase enzyme, along with other enzymes identified by their group previously can convert high molecular weight phthalate plasticizers into water and carbon-dioxide. And this is where the IIT Roorkee team appears to have an edge. "The results of our research mark a significant advancement in addressing one of the most pressing environmental challenges - providing a promising path toward a plastic and plasticizer-free future," says Dr. Kumar.

Other researchers involved in the work include Shweta Choudhary, Kamble Amith Kumar, Jai Krishna Mahto, Ishani Mishra, Dr. Ashwani Kumar Sharma, Dr. Shailly Tomar, Dr. Debabrata Sircar and Dr. Jitin Singla.

In 2017, the team isol ed another soil bacteria Comamonas testosteroni that breaks down the phthalates produced by DEHP degradation into carbondioxide and water. In the lab, the researchers used the enzymes in sequence first down DEHP to MEHP and 2-ethyl hexanol using esterase enzyme, which then was degraded to phthalate using another enzyme. The phthalate is then converted to intermediate compounds using a third enzyme (phthalate dioxygenase). The intermediate compound produced after this step is converted

protocatechuate by the enzyme phthalate decarboxylase. Once protocatechuate is produced, the tricarboxylic acid cycle of the bacteria converts it to carbon-dioxide and water.

While the esterase enzyme used for breaking down DEHP MEHP and 2-ethyl hexanol is from Sulfobacillus acidophilus bacteria, the three other enzymes used in sequence are from Comamonas testosteroni bacteria. "In the lab, we have tried using the enzymes in sequence break down DEHP into water and carbon-dioxide," says Ms. Verma. "We are now trying to insert the genes of all the five enzymes into bacteria directly convert the DEHP plasticizer into water carbon-dioxide."

Putting all five enzymes into bacteria will speed up the degradation process not only because the enzymes will act sequentially but also because degradation of the enzymes becomes a non-issue once they are integrated into bacteria. Once integrated into bacteria, the enzymes remain active for a longer time and the bacteria can be used continuously for degrading the plasticizers. But when the enzymes are used without integrating into bacteria, a fresh batch of enzymes needs to be produced to continue the degradation process. "We are also undertaking enzyme engineering to speed up the degradation process inside the bacteria," says Ms. Verma.



Insights into coevolution of lice eggs with early bird hosts

Fossilised chewing lice eggs preserved in mid-Cretaceous Burmese amber have been discovered, marking the first direct evidence of ectoparasitic lice feeding on feathers of stem-group birds during the Mesozoic. This offers insights into the origins of lice and their early coevolution with vertebrate hosts. The discovery of the lice eggs in association with feather of enantiornithine, an extinct group, supports the hypothesis that Mesozoic bird lice were parasitic on early feathered vertebrates.



Tumor-secreted protein may be a key to treat brain tumor

Targeting a protein called endocan and its related signaling pathway could be a new approach for treating glioblastoma, an aggressive and lethal type of brain cancer. The researchers discovered that endocan, which is produced by endothelial cells lining blood vessels in the tumour, activates PDGFRA, a receptor on glioblastoma cells that drives tumour growth and makes the cancer resistant to standard therapies such as radiation. They suggest a path toward the development of therapies that specifically inhibit this interaction.



Oldest known dinosaur in northern hemisphere

It is generally thought that dinosaurs emerged on the southern portion of Pangea called Gondwana millions of years before spreading to the northern half named Laurasia. A newly described dinosaur whose fossils were uncovered in present-day Wyoming is challenging that narrative. The creature, named Ahvaytum bahndooiveche, is now the oldest known Laurasian dinosaur, and with fossils estimated to be around 230 million years old.

Putting the gene editing tool to use



When you edit a letter or a document, you make specific changes in the words and phrases to make the meaning clearer. Gene editing involves changing the sequence of DNA using specific enzymes which can cut DNA at a precise location, thus permitting the removal, addition, or replacement of genetic information within a gene. The process is akin to correcting a misspelled word in a sentence or replacing it with a more appropriate word. In organisms, this modification directly alters the genetic instructions en-

coded in the DNA. In earlier days, if we wanted to modify the mes-

sage in the DNA to a desired function, it involved two enzymes - one to cut the DNA at a specific site, and another to help insert the desired genetic change. While such twin-enzyme methods worked, they were laborious.

This was when Drs Jennifer Doudna of University of California, Berkeley, U.S., and Emmanuelle Charpentier of Humboldt University, Germany came out with a double action gene modification method, called CRISRP-Cas9. This is a mechanism that can edit the genomes of humans, pathogens,

plants. CRISPR stands for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats, and Cas9 (which stands for CRISPR- associated Protein 9) cuts DNA strands at a specific location, creating a gap that can be filled with new DNA. Doudna and Char-



Restrictive: Researchers in India can use CRISPR-Cas9 only for academic purposes. GETTY IMAGES

pentier shared the Nobel Prize in 2012.

However, Prof. Feng Zang who was then at a Southern California University, published a paper wherein he showed genome engineering using the CRISPR-Cas9 system. But he was not included as the third scientist by the Nobel Committee. He then went ahead, obtained a patent, and moved to Boston, where he works and this patent is owned today by the MIT-Harvard University combine, called Broad Institute, which uses the CRISPR-Cas9 system for a variety of applications such as the mouse model for cancer, identifying genes that make cancer drugs ineffective, and modification of immune cells, plus training people in the technology. While CRISPR-Cas9 pa-

tented technology has

been used for the above-

mentioned diagnostic and

genetic uses, agricultural scientists and botanical researchers have been using this method to genome engineer plants. The group of Dr. Holger Puchta of the Karlsruhe Botanical Institute, Germany has published several papers, notably on how to use Cas9, Cas 12, and Cas13, for targeting plant genomes. Most recently, CRISPR-Cas9 based 'knockout' of two genes in tomato plants increased their sweetness with no loss in weight. Similar studies on other plants and fruits will surely follow. However, a recent re-

port by Dr. Anurag Chaurasia, titled "How CRISPR patent issues block Indian farmers from accessing biotech benefits", points out that the IPO has granted a local patent to ERS Genomics of Dublin, which allows Indian researchers to use CRISPR-Cas9 only for academic purposes. Our rural farmers are thus still left 'classical'.

Visually handicapped For people afflicted with eye disorders, scientists and clinicians at LV Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad, in collaboration with a group in IGIB, have used one of these high precision methods to correct inherited mutations in patientspecific stem cells (Nature Communications, 2024). These mutation-corrected stem cells could then make retinal cells, which showed restored expression of the missing protein.

This has opened the possibility of developing autologous cell therapies for certain inherited eye disorders. A similar approach can be adapted for other diseases affecting other tissues and cell types of the body.



Question Corner

Snake alert

How do monkeys recognise snakes so fast?

A Japanese researcher has found that a monkey's ability to rapidly detect snakes is because of the presence of snake scales as a visual cue. The findings highlight an evolutionary adaptation of primates to identify snakes based on specific visual characteristics. In an experiment the researcher demonstrated that monkeys exhibited an immediate response to images of snakes but not to images of salamanders, implying a specific fear of snakes. On the basis of this, the researcher wondered what would happen if he edited the

images of the salamanders to have snakeskin without changing anything else. When edited images of salamanders with snakeskin were shown to monkeys, they reacted to the altered images of the harmless creature equally fast, or even faster, than to the snake. The results are "consistent with the snake-detection theory that snakes were a strong selective pressure favouring modifications in the primate visual system that allow them to detect snakes more quickly or reliably".

Readers may send their questions /



Is groundwater contamination high in India?

What are the contaminants? What happens if nitrate presence is high in groundwater?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

n assessment of India's groundwater by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) found that several States are grappling with a serious problem of nitrate contamination.

Which are the sources of contamination?

The most concerning finding was that the number of districts with excessive nitrate in their groundwater rose from 359 in 2017 to 440 in 2023. This works out to nearly 56% of India's districts having excessive nitrate in ground water, defined as having more than 45 mg/l (milligram per litre). Of the 15,239 groundwater samples collected from across the country for testing, 19.8% samples had nitrates nitrogenous compounds – above safe limits though it must be said that this proportion has not substantially changed since 2017. In the 13,028 samples analysed in 2017 for instance, 21.6% had excessive nitrate. There are two major concerns with excess nitrate content: one is methemoglobinemia, or a reduced ability of red blood cells to carry oxygen.

A bigger problem with excessive nitrates are environmental: once the nitrates in the groundwater rise to the surface and become part of lakes and ponds, algal blooms throttle the health of aquatic ecosystems.

The most common contaminant identified in

The Central Ground Water Board estimates that the country's degree of groundwater extraction is 60.4%, or roughly the same as it has been through the years since 2009

groundwater is dissolved nitrogen in the form of nitrate in sub-surface waters. Since, the nitrogen content of soil is generally quite low, farmers have to look for external sources of nitrogen by using ammonium nitrate, calcium nitrate,

urea, diammonium hydrogen phosphate etc. Although nitrate is the main form in which nitrogen occurs in groundwater, dissolved nitrogen also occurs in the form of ammonium (NH4+), ammonia (NH3), nitrite (NO2-), nitrogen (N2), nitrous oxide (N2O) and organic nitrogen.

Which places had serious contamination?

Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu reported the highest proportion of tested groundwater blocks with nitrate exceeding permissible levels – 49%, 48% and 37% of the tested samples respectively reported numbers beyond the limit.

Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have long-standing nitrate problem with relative levels fairly constant since 2017, the report says. However a growing concern are blocks in central and southern India, which are reporting an increasing trend, and therefore is a reason for worry. "Maharashtra (35.74%), Telangana (27.48%), Andhra Pradesh (23.5%) and Madhya Pradesh (22.58%) also show notable levels of nitrate contamination," the report notes.

Is nitrate the only chemical contaminant?

Other major chemical contaminants affecting groundwater quality are arsenic, iron, fluoride and uranium. Just as 19.8% samples of tested groundwater had excess nitrate, 9.04% of samples had fluoride levels above the limit.

Fluoride concentrations exceeding the permissible limit were "a major concern" in Rajasthan, Haryana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Rajasthan and Punjab reported the maximum number of samples with uranium concentration exceeding 100 ppb (parts per billion). Anything over 30 ppb is considered unsafe and several of these samples were predominant in regions of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, where groundwater was over-exploited: more water was being drawn out than replenished by rains or other means.

What was the state of groundwater in 2024?

Along with its report on groundwater quality, the organisation also produced a report on the quantity of groundwater in various blocks, enumerating the availability of groundwater across India. The CGWB estimates that on the whole, the country's degree of groundwater extraction is 60.4%, or roughly the same as it has been through the years since 2009. About 73% of the blocks are in the 'safe' zone, meaning that they are replenished enough to compensate for water drawn out.

How are groundwater levels measured?

The CGWB relies on a network of about 26,000 groundwater observation wells that require technicians to manually measure the state of groundwater in a region. Since 2023, however, around 16,000-17,000 digital water level recorders were connected to piezometers in the wells. Piezometers measure groundwater levels and transmit the information digitally to a centralised location. In the next three years, the CGWB aims to increase its network from the existing 26,000 to about 40,000. When combined with similar networks possessed by other institutions, India will have about 67,000 digitally recordable units to monitor ground water dynamics.

Why is Meta shutting down fact-checkers?

Is crowd-sourced fact-checking a better way of implementing content moderation? What role did fact-checkers play during the COVID-19 pandemic? How have fact-checking communities responded to Zuckerberg's announcement? When are policy changes likely to be implemented?

<u>John Xavier</u> Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:

n January 7, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the company will get rid of fact-checkers and simplify content policies by removing restrictions on topics as it is "out of touch with mainstream discourse." In a five-minute video, he said that the company will return to its roots as the fact-checkers have been "too politically biased" and "destroyed more trust than they created, especially in the U.S."

How did Meta get into fact-checking?

After the 2016 U.S. presidential election results were out, Meta, then known as Facebook, faced serious backlash for amplifying political posts that helped tilt the election in favour of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump. To build back its reputation, Facebook roped in content moderators globally and developed technology to filter harmful content.

Meta started its independent fact-checking programme in partnership with the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN). Over time, Meta became one of the largest donors to IFCN.

Meta worked with fact-checkers to address misinformation on its platforms, Facebook, Instagram and Threads. While the fact-checkers worked on finding misinformation and rating them based on the seriousness of content violation, Meta followed up with action and informed users of the measures it took. Beyond fact-checking, partner organisations worked across Meta's platforms to carry out research,



Policy shift: Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Meta. AFP

Topics including *'immigration* and gender identity', a subject of frequent political discourse, will be discussed

and rate content on a qualitative scale – false, altered, partly false, missing context, satire, and true. Per IFCN's 'State of Fact-Checkers in 2023' report, income from Meta's Third-Party Fact-Checking Programme and grants remain fact-checkers' predominant revenue streams. And 68% of fact-checking organisations have 10 or fewer employees, whereas only 6.6% employ 31 or more people.

Why was there a need for fact-checkers?

Fact-checkers play a vital role in finding false and misleading content promoted on social media platforms by domestic accounts, and at times by foreign regimes. They also played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic by correcting misinformation on social platforms. If the rated content on Meta is false or altered, its distribution across Meta's apps will be reduced. If key information is missing or the content is satirical, Meta might provide the needed facts. Content rated poorly by a fact-checker may not be suggested to users, and repeat offenders could be hit with penalties such as restricted reach, being unable to monetise their content or turn their content into a news page.

What other steps were taken by Meta?

Apart from relying on fact-checkers, Meta set up an Oversight Board to adjudicate cases involving serious content policy violations. The board heard serious content violation cases and made binding decisions to uphold or overturn Meta's own actions. Gradually, Meta started to move away from news content in general to keep its platform free from disinformation-prone content. The company said it will not "proactively recommend content about politics on recommendation surfaces across Instagram and Threads", noting that it wants these apps to be a "great experience" for all.

Now that is starting to change under Joel Kaplan, Meta's new chief of global affairs. Mr. Kaplan said "civic content" about elections and politics would return to the apps, and that users can choose what they want to see. He expanded on Mr. Zuckerberg's video clip, noting that the platform will also get rid of a number of restrictions "on topics like immigration and gender identity that are the subject of frequent political discourse and debate". He said, "It's not right that things can be said on TV or the floor of Congress, but not on our platforms."

What is Community Notes?

Meta will be moving towards an X platform styled content moderation system called 'Community Notes'. Under this model, instead of a centralised authority taking action against misinformation, users work together to add additional context that will appear under false or even blatantly illegal content.

The feature itself goes beyond the Elon Musk-era Twitter. It was originally conceived as Birdwatch, where users could add context to posts they see that require more information. Initially launched in 2021, the feature gained prominence in March 2022 when misinformation on the Russia-Ukraine conflict was rife on the platform.

While crowd-sourced fact-checking is seen as a better way of implementing content moderation, Community Notes can also reflect biased majority viewpoints regarding controversial subjects. The feature can also be slow, meaning false or hateful content may go viral long before the specific context is added to clarify the post. Furthermore, under X's current style of content moderation, even posts glorifying slavery and Nazism are allowed to remain online, unchallenged.

In an open letter to Mr. Zuckerberg, IFCN said, "There is no reason Community Notes couldn't co-exist with the third-party fact-checking programme; they are not mutually exclusive. A Community Notes model that works in collaboration with professional fact-checking would have strong potential as a new model for promoting accurate information."

But, Meta has decided on a hands-off approach to content moderation, by stopping its demotion of fact-checked content and removing the full-screen warnings over flagged posts. The company will focus more on illegal content and high-severity violations while adjusting content filters to make it more challenging to take down flagged content – even though this means catching "less bad stuff," as per Mr. Zuckerberg.

What is the significance of the new policy?

Mr. Zuckerberg's shift in stance comes at a time when a new Trump administration takes charge. The tech CEO dined with the President-elect at his Mar-a-Lago resort in November to repair a fraught relationship. Earlier, he publicly praised Mr. Trump's conduct after the former President survived an assassination attempt. In the video clip, Mr. Zuckerberg referenced the 2024 election as a "cultural tipping point" and committed to "restoring" free expression across Meta platforms. In essence, he was aligning his values with the new conservative government by making a clean break from the old one.

While the plan to end the fact-checking programme in 2025 applies only to the U.S., there are similar programmes Meta is running in more than 100 countries. Some of these countries are highly vulnerable to misinformation that spurs political instability, election interference, mob violence and even genocide. If Meta decides to stop the programme worldwide, it is almost certain to result in real-world harm in many places, the IFCN said in its open letter.

Are lithium batteries on flights dangerous?

Why has the airline pilots' body called attention to fire risks? What causes lithium-ion batteries to catch fire? What are the fire-safety equipment and protocols that need to be in place? What happened when Hurricane Helene struck the U.S. in November last year?

batteries

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

n January 2, the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) issued three position papers on the fire risk due to the use of lithium-ion batteries in airport and aircraft settings. The papers are motivated by air operators' increasing use of electric vehicles (EVs) and lithium-ion batteries as well as the batteries becoming more energy-dense.

What is IFALPA?

The IFALPA is a global nonprofit representing the international community of professional pilots. After the Second World War, the UN established the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in 1947 to coordinate air transport and its principles worldwide. A year later, ICAO organised a conference in London where pilots could interact with its leaders. The IFALPA was born at this event with 13 pilots' associations. According to a source on the ICAO website, IFALPA encompassed 104 member associations representing one lakh professional pilots worldwide around 2013. Per the same source, "The belief [is] that the unique perspective of pilots operating in scheduled



New risks: A technician working on a lithium-ion battery. ISTOCKPHOTO

Studies have flying would be of significant benefit to the found that creation and adaptation of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) through which existing fire ICAO regulates international civil aviation." The kits have not IFALPA also provides inputs to the International been able to Air Transport Association, the Airports Council respond International, and the International Federation adequately of Air Traffic Controllers' Association. to fires of lithium-ion

Why are there fears about lithium batteries? Almost every major industry in the world is mechanised to a significant degree, and the

energy for these machines has traditionally been produced by burning fossil fuels. As climate mitigation has become more pressing, industries are under pressure to replace this thermal energy – the principal cause of global warming – with electric energy.

For example, EVs draw electric energy from a battery to drive an electric motor and supply kinetic energy to the wheels. In an internal combustion engine, heat energy released by burning fossil fuel moves pistons, whose motion is converted to rotary motion of the wheels.

Lithium-ion batteries have emerged as a popular solution to storing electric energy because they are energy-dense, rechargeable, and can be made in almost any shape, which is useful when there are space constraints as onboard an aircraft. But lithium-ion batteries have been known to catch fire when they are subjected to certain physical stresses.

The fire is the result of the stress creating a short-circuit inside the battery, leaving it to keep producing electric current, heat, and oxygen. The battery's internal components can become corroded while the risk of catching fire increases. The short circuit can be the result of mechanical, electric, and/or thermal abuse, which respectively deforms the internal structure, degrades its electric performance, and causes heat to accumulate.

For example, after Hurricane Helene struck the U.S. in November 2024, 48 lithium-ion batteries reportedly caught fire.

University of South Carolina mechanical engineer Xinyu Huang said they may have been the result of EV batteries rarely being rated to be waterproof when they are sitting in salt water for more than 30 minutes. Such situations are more likely to occur during flooding, which is becoming more common due to climate change and poor urban planning.

What do the IFALPA papers say?

The three position papers are numbered POS01, POS02, and POS03. POS02 and POS03 are more general whereas POSO1 is more specific.

POSO2 is motivated by the different kind of fires caused by lithium-ion batteries (compared to internal combustion engines). As Mr. Xinyu wrote, "When a lithium-ion battery pack bursts into flames, it releases toxic fumes, burns violently and is extremely hard to put out. Frequently, firefighters' only option is to let it burn out by itself." The position paper thus asks "airports, rescue and fire-fighting services, operators, and ground service providers" to acquire or develop purpose-built fire-safety equipment and protocols.

POSO3 extends these concerns to the flight deck - the area colloquially called the "cockpit" in civilian aircraft – where the batteries may be present in components required to operate the aircraft. It also calls attention to studies by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency finding that existing fire kits couldn't respond adequately to fires of lithium-ion batteries with an energy rating of 100 Wh or higher.

POS01 is concerned with the safe transport of lithium-ion batteries, especially UN regulations 3480 and 3481. Since the UN classifies these batteries as "miscellaneous dangerous goods", the regulations specify the packaging and labelling standards required to transport them by air. UN3480 applies to lithium-ion batteries transported in bulk and UN3481 to lithium-ion batteries fit inside some equipment that's being transported in bulk.

One difference between the two regulations is that UN3480 requires the batteries to be charged to less than 30%, also known as state of charge (SOC) 30%, whereas UN3481 doesn't. POS01 contends that UN3481 didn't adopt this restriction because it assumed manufacturers would install safeguards in the equipment to prevent a fire from one battery spreading to others. But as the energy density of batteries and the number of settings in which they are used is increasing and the size of the equipment that uses them is shrinking, IFALPA's position is that the SOC 30% limit should be extended to UN3481 as well.

Back in power with fewer friends

Nicolas Maduro

Venezuela's strongman has been sworn in for a third term at a time when the Latin American country is facing international isolation and economic woes, besides concerns about growing repression at home

Srinivasan Ramani

ore than 11 years after assuming power as Venezuela's interim President following the death of popular leader Hugo Chavez, Nicolas Maduro has yet again been sworn as the President of the Latin American country. The circumstances of the retention of his post and the reactions to the ceremony from international actors provide a sense of

In 2019, when Mr. Maduro was sworn in for the second time as President, nearly 40 countries including the U.S., neighbouring Colombia and Brazil and those belonging to the EU, refused to recognise his presidency. Sixteen UN-recognised countries sent representatives, including Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

In 2025, however, only two Presidents - Cuba's Miguel Diaz-Canel and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega attended. International condemnation of the manner in which Mr. Maduro was declared President after the elections held on July 28, 2024 has been more severe this time around. Since 2019, there has been a new Pink Tide in Latin America with countries such as Colombia, Brazil and Chile electing leftist Presidents. All three leaders have rejected Mr. Maduro's "victory".

Meanwhile, the Opposition candidate, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, who exiled himself to Spain and had recently visited two countries ruled by the Right in Latin America Argentina and Panama – withdrew plans to return to Caracas for his own "inauguration".

The results in question and the process in which Mr. Maduro was declared the winner raise severe doubts about the Venezuelan elections in 2024. The UN, which sent a panel of experts to Caracas, criticised the National Election Council of Venezuela for declaring Mr. Maduro as the winner before providing detailed table-level

The electoral system consisted of an

electronic voting machine which produced a paper receipt after voters registered their choice at the polling booth. At the end of polling, each machine would print a tally sheet showing the candidates' names and the votes that they received. The National Election Council traditionally put up only the vote counts at the end of the election on its website, but the site was down during the counting and after disputing the results, the Opposition demanded the release of the tally sheets which was not done.

The Opposition could, on its own, access 83% of the tally sheets from 30,026 polling stations, which "revealed" that Mr. Gonzalez polled 67% votes. The CNE's figures were different, favouring Mr. Maduro with 51.95% of the vote to Mr. Gonzalez's 43.2%.

Considering the wide differences on this issue and the fact that the Maduro regime had used intimidatory tactics throughout the election process, several international actors sought the release of the tally sheets to confirm the winner but that was not done.

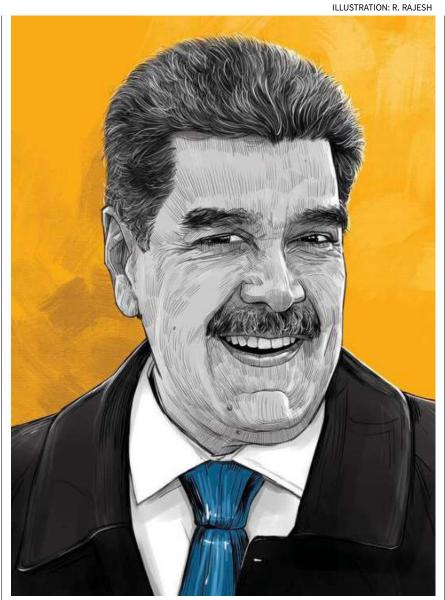
Economic decline

The 11 years of rule by Mr. Maduro has coincided with a significant decline in Venezuela's economic standing, with severe increases in the poverty rate, persistently high inflation and food shortages in the country. While inflation had eased to 23.58% in October 2024, hyperinflation has characterised the economy since 2018.

As of October 2023, the UNHCR estimated that more than 7.7 million Venezuelan citizens fled the country to become refugees and 6.5 million among them (84%) are in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Critics of Mr. Maduro blame the catastrophic economic situation on the stark authoritarian turn since he came to power. Some suggest that the economic decline was inevitable as Venezuela was overly dependent upon the petroleum sector $-\operatorname{crude}$ constituted 95% of the country's exports in 2014 and the oil price crash in the same year sent it into a spiral.

Critics argue that the seeds of the



economic decline were laid during Chavez's regime, as he tried to undo the remnants of the country's liberal democratic order to create a personalised state with concentrated powers for the executive presidency. The Chavistas instituted a series of measures, including constitutional referendums and structural changes, most of which received popular support as Chavez won several elections. The Chavistas argue that the regime enhanced grassroots participation in the polity and built

cooperatives while using the proceeds of the extractive economy to fund pro-poor programmes. And while the regime was cognisant about diversification, the lack of it during the oil price crash resulted in the economic crisis, which was exacerbated by a series of economic sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the EU after Mr. Maduro came to power.

Since his ascent to power, Mr. Maduro's regime has moved away from a popular regime that was dependent upon grassroots mobilisation and

participatory democracy to an authoritarian system.

The first Donald Trump administration in August 2017 imposed sanctions prohibiting the Venezuelan government from accessing U.S. financial markets, a move that affected Venezuela's state-run oil company, PDVSA. The U.S. went on, in 2019, to impose further and direct sanctions on PDVSA, preventing it from being paid for petroleum exports to the U.S, froze its U.S. assets and disallowed the supply of diluents that aided the refining of Venezuelan heavy crude, among other measures.

The U.S.-imposed economic sanctions were compounded by the EU's own embargo on arms and material to be traded with Venezuela, imposed in 2017. Restrictions still remain. The country got a respite when the U.S. eased some sanctions following an agreement signed between Mr. Maduro and representatives of Opposition parties in October 2023 in Barbados with political prisoners being released. The country's oil output saw an increase, resulting in more exports and a partial easing of the severity of the economic situation. However, in April 2024, the U.S. announced that sanctions would be reinstated on the oil sector.

International opprobrium Just prior to the inauguration of his

third term, the U.S. announced a \$65million bounty for the arrest of Mr. Maduro even as he received support from Russia and China apart from staunch allies in Cuba and Nicaragua.

The international opprobrium and increased polarisation in Venezuela is not deterring Mr. Maduro from doubling down on authoritarianism. A proposed law – the Simon Bolivar law – now stipulates severe punishment for dissidents and repression of civil movements. With Mr. Trump returning to power in the U.S., hostilities are set to renew afresh and the biggest casualty could be the millions of Venezuelans pushed into poverty from a combination of poor economic policies, international sanctions and authoritarianism under Mr. Maduro.

THE GIST

In 2019, when Nicolas Maduro was sworn in for the second time as President, nearly 40 countries refused to recognise his presidency, but 16 countries sent representatives, including Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua and El Salvador

In 2025, however, only two Presidents — Cuba's Miguel Diaz-Canel and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega — attended Maduro's inauguration

The Opposition could access 83% of the tally sheets from 30,026 polling stations, which "revealed" that Maduro's opponent Gonzalez polled 67% votes. The official figures were different, favouring Maduro with 51.95% of the vote

Rocket scientist

V. Narayanan

The cryogenic pioneer is taking over ISRO when the agency is working on a series of high-profile missions, from the Gaganyaan human spaceflight programme to Chandrayaan-4

Tiki Rajwi

he first big news from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in the New Year seems to have an in-built element of surprise in it. On January 7, V. Narayanan, a rocket and spacecraft propulsion expert, who heads the ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, was named successor to S. Somanath, the current chairman of the space agency.

The face of ISRO since January 2022, Mr. Somanath is highly regarded, cutting a dynamic and impressive figure, especially with the younger ISRO hands. Insider-speak is that many within the organisation were expecting his term to be extended. Comparisons with his predecessor will be par for the course when Mr. Narayanan, who joined the ISRO 40 years ago, eases into the top spot on January 14.

The change of guard is happening at a critical moment for ISRO, now guided by the Space Vision 2047. On the one hand, a series of high-profile missions are in the works; the Gaganyaan human spaceflight programme, the Chandrayaan-4 lunar mission, the development of the Bharatiya Antariksha Station – India's own space station - and landing an Indian on the moon by 2040, to name a few. On the other, the Indian space sector is in a state of flux, with the Space Policy, 2023 opening it up to private players.

Ever since the first U.S.made Nike-Apache sounding rocket lifted off from Thumba, Thiruvananthapuram, in November 1963, the Indian space programme has largely remained a jealously-guarded government concern.

To his credit, Mr. Narayanan is someone who knows the ins and outs of the ISRO, having joined the space agency's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram in 1984, where he worked on solid propulsion. He moved to the LPSC in 1989 to work on cryogenic propulsion, and has remained there since, initially playing his part, and in subsequent years taking the lead role, in the propulsion aspects of ISRO

As LPSC Director, Mr. Narayanan was leading the development of propulsion systems for the Gaganyaan programme when he was named the next Secretary, Department of Space, and Chairman, Space Commission, for a period of two years.

ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Success story

In many ways, his is the quintessential hard-wonsuccess tale, the kind that parents in post-Independence India loved to inspire their children with.

Hailing from a humble background at Melakattuvilai, a village in Kanniyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, young Narayanan attended a nearby Tamil-medium school. Teachers announcing Neil Armstrong's successful 1969 moon landing is part of his childhood memories. He subseobtained his M.Tech. in cryogenic engineering in 1989 with a first rank from the IIT, Kharagpur. He took his Ph.D. in aerospace engineering in

At the ISRO, he has contributed to major missions and projects, including the Chandrayaan series and the successful development of the cryogenic upper stage for the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV).

The LPSC website describes him as "one of the few cryogenic members who have worked in this area from the beginning, carrying out fundamental research, theoretical and experimental studies and contributing to the successful development and testing of cryogenic sub systems".

One of the tried-andtested hands of the space agency, Mr. Narayanan comes across as affable and polite. Within the ISRO community, he is viewed as hard-working and tenacious, as someone who gets things done. That his long career has largely been confined to LPSC is seen as a disadvantage, given the fast-evolving, multispeciality nature of present-day space-tech.

Many of the past chairpersons have headed multiple ISRO facilities such the LPSC and VSSC before moving on to the Bengaluru headquarters.

To his advantage, Mr. Narayanan has experience on his side. In the changing, competition-driven global space ecosystem, IS-RO has the added responsibility of hand-holding Indian space-tech startups and driving industry participation. As its next Chairman, Mr. Narayanan faces the task of steering the space agency through challenging and happening

The island of interest **Greenland**

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump says he won't rule out use of military force or coercion to annex or buy the world's largest island

Joan Sony Cherian

n January 1, the King of Denmark unveiled a new coat of arms after more than 50 years. It features the polar bear and the ram (symbolising Greenland and the Faroe Islands, respectively) more prominently than before. Amid calls for independence in Greenland and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's aggressive push to buy/annex the island, the Royal House seems to be underscoring the Danish realm's unity.

Greenland, the world's largest island with a population of 57,000, is an autonomous territory controlled by Denmark. This effectively means that while it has a Parliament which deals with domestic affairs such as business taxes, immigration, and mining, most of its foreign, monetary and military policy are dictated by Denmark. The Arctic island was colonised by the Danes in the 18th century and has been associated with Europe, though geographically it is part of the North American continent and closer to the U.S. than Copenhagen.

During the Second World War, the U.S. briefly occupied the region and defended it when Denmark was under siege by Nazi Germany.

Noting the region's geopolitical importance, the U.S. in 1946, after the War,



Greenland, with a population of 57,000, is an autonomous territory controlled by Denmark

had offered to buy it from Denmark. Denmark rejected the offer and ever since Greenland has been a part of the Danish realm with home rule granted to the island in 1979. The U.S. runs and operates an air base on the island. However, of late, calls for complete independence from Denmark have been rising in the island. Greenland's Prime Minister Múte Egede in his New Year address talked about taking the "next step" and removing "shackles the colonialism".

U.S. aspirations

In his first term in office, Mr. Trump had floated the idea of buying Greenland. However, this time it seems the President-elect is serious. "For purposes of National Security and Free-

dom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity," he said in December. Following such a declaration, Donald Trump Jr., Mr. Trump's son, visited Greenland this year as a "private individual". Both Greenland and Danish Prime Ministers have shut down such threats and plans. Mr. Egede has categorically stated that "Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders".

Mr. Trump seems unfazed. Speaking to the press last week, Mr. Trump said he won't rule out military or economic coercion to annex/buy the island.

The island is surrounded by the Atlantic on one side and the Arctic waters on the other. Due to climate change and global warming, glaciers and ice sheets in the Arctic Sea are melting, leading to potentially new shipping routes, which could greatly enhance trade. Moreover, Russia and China have already agreed to develop new trading routes in the Arctic waters as relations with the West sour and tensions in West Asia loom

Last November, both countries developed a subcommittee for cooperation on the northern sea route, which spans 5,600 km from the Barents Sea near Scandinavia to the Bering Strait near Alaska. With the threat of Russia-China cooperation in the region, annexing Greenland could give the U.S. significant control over the area, letting it decide who gets to run and operate in these

strategic waters. The island is also rich in minerals. As per a 2025 survey, 25 of 34 critical raw materials, which are used in EVs and batteries, were found in Greenland. The melting of almost 28,000 square km of Greenland's ice sheets makes drilling for oil, gas and other critical raw materials easier. Currently, China is the world's largest exporter and producer of critical minerals. Buying Greenland could make the U.S. compete with China for that status.

Mr. Trump has also issued calls to buy/annex the Panama Canal and Canada. While all of them have been touted as necessary for the U.S.'s economic and national security, the U.S. is breaking the first and fundamental rule of the UN Charter: recognising the sovereignty of nations. With respect to Greenland, the U.S. is going against the NATO agreement as well.

Similarly, the Arctic waters are a global common under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The incoming U.S. President's policies are bringing to the forefront the true anarchical nature of international politics.

WASHINGTON

Biden blasts 'shameful' decision by Meta to scrap U.S. fact-checking



U.S. President Joe Biden blasted Meta for scrapping fact-checking in the U.S., calling the move "really shameful" after a global network warned of real-world harm if the tech giant expands its decision to other countries. "Telling the truth matters," he said, adding that the move was "completely contrary to everything America's about." AFP

SEOUL

Jeju Air jet black boxes stopped recording before crash: S. Korea



The black boxes holding the flight data and cockpit voice recorders for the crashed Jeju Air flight that left 179 people dead stopped recording four minutes before the disaster, South Korea's Transport Ministry said. "Plans are in place to investigate the cause of the data loss during the investigation," the Ministry said. AFP

KYIV

Ukraine says it is questioning two captured North Korean soldiers



Ukraine said investigators were questioning two wounded North Korean soldiers after they were captured in Russia's Kursk region, saying they provided "indisputable evidence" that North Koreans were fighting for Moscow. In December, Ukraine had said it took several troops captive but they died from serious wounds. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan, China to further deepen ties for CPEC 2.0 development



Musk, former

EU tech chief

over Germany

Agence France-Presse

Elon Musk escalated a spat

on Saturday with the form-

er EU digital chief Thierry

Breton, describing him as a

His latest outburst

against Mr. Breton came af-

ter he said Europe could

take action to avoid interfe-

An account shared an

excerpt of Mr. Breton's interview claiming he said

"the EU has mechanisms

to nullify a potential elec-

tion victory of the AfD".

prompting Mr. Musk to rail

at what he termed "the as-

tounding absurdity of

Thierry Breton as tyrant of

Mr. Breton rejected the

claim in an X post. "The EU

has NO mechanism to nul-

lify any election. Not at all

what is said in the video below related only to the ___

application of the DSA"

"tyrant of Europe".

rence in elections.

Breton spar

Pakistan and China vowed to deepen their "all-weather strategic" partnership, including work on the "high-quality development" of the second phase of the China Pakistan Economic Partnership. The announcement was made at the fourth round of Pakistan-China Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) in Beijing on Friday. PTI

China, U.K. resume talks on finance after six years

Associated Press

China and Britain restarted economic and financial talks on Saturday after a six-year hiatus during a visit by Britain's Treasury chief to Beijing, as the U.K.'s Labour government seeks to reset strained ties with the world's secondlargest economy.

Accompanied by a delegation of British business executives and finance officials, Chancellor Rachel Reeves met with Chinese leaders, including Vice Premier He Lifeng and Vice President Han Zheng. Ms. Reeves emphasised the need for a "stable, pragmatic" U.K.-China relationship as she wrapped up talks in Beijing.

Deals inked

The two nations inked agreements on Saturday in areas such as finance "worth £600 million over the next five years for the U.K. economy," Ms. Reeves said without outlining the specifics of the deals.

Violence was mostly political in nature: Bangladesh Police

In a report, the police state that only 20 incidents had communal undertones, while 1,234 cases were politically motivated; at least 35 held while 61 complaints were found to be false, it says

Kallol Bhattacherjee NEW DELHI

he Bangladesh Police have filed a report based on a complaint by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Unity Council that claimed that a total of 1,769 communal attacks had taken place since August 2024 following the ouster of then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. However, it argued that "majority" of the cases were "not communally motivated" but had "political" overtones. The report claimed while 1,234 incidents were political in nature, 20 incidents were communal.

"Police have communicated with the persons and authorities claimed to have been the targets of the violence. The police have also visited all and every place, establishment, and persons mentioned in the report of the Council. Proper security of the aggrieved people has been ensured,"



Fallout: A total of 1.769 communal attacks had taken place since August 2024 following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. REUTERS

claimed.

the Bangladesh Police report has stated.

However a major claim of the police, previously accused of failing to discharge its duties, is that "It was found that in the majority of the cases, the attacks were not communally motivated - rather, those were political in nature".

"At least 161 claims were found to be false or untrue," the report has

According to the report that was shared with The Hindu, at least 35 culprits have been arrested and out of the 1,769 allegations, the police have registered 62 cases on the merits of the complaints. The police have collected the list of allegations prepared by the council and urged "all aggrieved persons" to lodge complaints with the police. The interim government led by Professor Mohammad Yunus on Saturday asserted that it has "zero toleof communal rance" violence in Bangladesh.

The police administration system in Bangladesh had broken down in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Hasina government. It was against this backdrop that the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Unity Council decided to record every act of violence against minority religious communities, especially the Hindus who were perceived to be supporters of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League.

The report further informed that the police received additional complaints of 134 communal incidents in Bangladesh that took place during August 5, 2024 to January 8, 2025. Out of these incidents, at least 53 cases have been filed and 65 perpetrators have been arrested in these cases.

Los Angeles fires expand as winds forecast to pick up



No respite: A helicopter drops water on the Palisades Fire behind a home with Christmas lights in Mandeville Canyon in Los Angeles. AP

Agence France-Presse LOS ANGELES

The largest of the Los Angeles fires spread toward previously untouched neighborhoods on Saturday, forcing new evacuations and dimming hopes that the disaster was coming under control.

Across the city, at least 11 persons have died as multiple fires have ripped through residential areas since Tuesday, razing thousands of homes in destruction that U.S. President Joe Biden likened to a "war scene." Winds were forecast to

pick up again on Saturday after a brief lull, posing the risk of new fires as embers are blown into dry brush. Los Angeles residents have increasingly demand-

for the disaster as they grapple with the ruin. As reports of looting grew, a sunset-to-sunrise

ed to know who is at fault

curfew was imposed in evacuated areas. Five separate fires have so far burned more than

The DSA is the landmark EU's Digital Services Act, which demands platforms clamp down on ille-37,000 acres, destroying around 12,000 buildings. gal content online.

Europe."

China's Wang Yi visits Maldives, holds talks with President Muizzu

Press Trust of India BEIJING/MALE

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a surprise visit to the Maldives, during which he held talks with President Mohamed Muizzu and discussed the state of bilateral relations, amid Male's recent warming up to India.

Mr. Wang, who is also a member of the powerful Political Bureau of the Communist Party, met Mr. Muizzu during his stopover in Male on Friday while on his way back from a tour, official media reported.

First major visit

This was the first major visit by a Chinese official to the Maldives after Mr. Muizzu visited China in January last year, months after his election.

During Mr. Muizzu's visit, the two countries elevated the bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and signed some key agreements.

In his meeting with Mr. Wang, Mr. Muizzu stressed the importance of fasttracking key infrastructure projects outlined in the agreements and Memoranof Understanding (MOUs) between the two countries, Maldives media reported.

He emphasised the need to prioritise social housing and road development projects, which are among the most urgent re-

Muizzu sought to expedite social housing and road development schemes

quirements for the Maldivian people, and referred to China's commitments in this regard.

Additionally, Mr. Muizzu highlighted his administration's focus on economic diversification, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, and requested China's support in advancing these crucial sectors.

Mr. Muizzu said he was glad to see Chinese people becoming the largest source of tourists for the Maldives in recent months.

Mr. Wang said that Muizzu's successful state visit to China was a highlight in China-Maldives relations.

Joint commitment

During the visit last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mr. Muizzu agreed to upgrade bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and jointly commit to building a China-Maldives community with a shared future, which has laid out broad prospects for bilateral relations, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Mr. Wang praised Mr. Muizzu's development vision for the Maldives and reiterated China's ongoing support for the country's sustainable development.

OFFICE OF THE RAJASTHAN STATE HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY, JAIPUR

Short Term Notice Inviting Bid (42/2024-25)

Bids for collection of user fee on "Losal-Salasar-Ratangarh section of SH-07 & 92 Km 0+000 (Losal) to Km 32+321 (Nechhwa) and Km 45+968 (Salasar) to Km 91+995 (Ratangarh)" are invited from interested bidders upto 11:30 AM on 15.01.2025. Other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, htpp://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state. The estimated value of Annual Remittance is ₹ 5,39,39,718/-

UBN: PWD2425SLOB13487

DIPR/C/501/2025

(A.K.Jain) Member (C & PPP)

कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता, जन स्वास्थ्य अभियांत्रिकी विभाग, क्षेत्र-प्रथम, जोधपुर Tel: 0291-2651750, Email: rj_acejo@nic.in

मांकः अमुअ/जो./प्रथम/24-25/9739-9755

बिड संशोधन सूचना, NIB संख्या 07-08/2024-25 इस कार्यालय की निविदा संख्या 07-08/2024-25 के निविदा प्रपत्र में संशोधन https://eproc than.gov.in एवं https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in पर अपलोड किया गया। निविदा संख्या 07/24-25

(UBIN No.: PHE2425WL0B07155), (Tender ID: 2024_PHCJ0_437790_1)

निविदा संख्या 08/24-25 (UBIN No.: PHE2425WL0807156), (Tender ID: 2024_PHCJ0_437802_1)

(जुगल किशोर करवा),

DIPR/C/368/2025 जन स्वास्थ्य अभियांत्रिको विभाग, क्षेत्र प्रथम, जोधपुर

THE RAJASTHAN SMALL INDUSTRIES CORPORATION LTD

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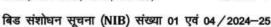
Equip, Operate, Manage & Transfer Business Services at ICD Jodhpur from the eligible and experienced bidders" up to 5.00 PM dated 10.02.2025 Other details/ terms and condition of the bid may be seen on the procuremen portal (https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in) o

UBN No: RSI2425SLOB00040 Raj.Samwad/C/24/10202

कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियंता, जन स्वास्थ्य अभियांत्रिकी विभाग, क्षैत्र-पाली E-Mail: acephedpali@rajasthan.gov.in



कमाक अमुअ/जन.स्वा./क्षेत्र पाली/त.स./24-25/



इस कार्यालय के पत्रांक अमुअ/जन.स्वा./क्षेत्र पाली/त.स./24-25/राजकाज रेफ. नं. 12471697 दिनांक 17.12.2024 द्वारा जारी की गई निविदा संख्या 01/2024-25 (UBIN No. PHE2425WLOB07274), निविदा संख्या 02 / 2024-25 (UBIN No. PHE2425WLOB07275), निविदा संख्या 03/2024-25 (UBIN No. PHE2425WLOB07276), निविदा संख्या 04/2024-25 (UBIN No. PHE2425WLOB07277) के तकनिकी दस्तावेज एवं तिथियों में आवश्यक संशोधन जारी किया जाकर

	NIB No. 01/2024-25		NIB No. 02/2024-25		NIB No. 03/2024-25		NIB No. 04/2024-25	
	Existing Date	Amended Date	Existing Date	Amended Date	Existing Date	Amended Date	Existing Date	Amended Date
Availability of Bid Document	18-12- 2024 03:00 PM	18-12- 2024 03:00 PM	18-12- 2024 03:00 PM	18-12- 2024 03:00 PM	18-12-2024 03:00 PM	18-12-2024 03:00 PM	18-12-2024 03:00 PM	18-12- 2024 03:00 PM
Date & time of Pre-Bid Meeting	26-12- 2024 3:00 PM	26-12- 2024 3:00 PM	24-12- 2024 3:00 PM	24-12- 2024 3:00 PM	24-12-2024 3:00 PM	24-12-2024 3:00 PM	24-12-2024 3:00 PM	24-12- 2024 3:00 PM
Bid Submission Start Date	30-12- 2024 3:00 PM	30-12- 2024 3:00 PM	30-12- 2024 3:00 PM	30-12- 2024 3:00 PM	30-12-2024 3:00 PM	30-12-2024 3:00 PM	30-12-2024 3:00 PM	30-12- 2024 3:00 PM
Last date & time for Online Download of Bid	20-01- 2025 5:00 PM	05-02- 2025 5:00 PM	30-01- 2025 5:00 PM	13-02- 2025 5:00 PM	05.02.2025 5:00 PM	10.02.2025 5:00 PM	11.02.2025 5:00 PM	11.02.2025 5:00 PM
Last date & time for Online Submission of Bid	20-01- 2025 6:00 PM	05-02- 2025 6:00 PM	30-01- 2025 6:00 PM	13-02- 2025 6:00 PM	05-02-2025 6:00 PM	10-02-2025 6:00 PM	11-02-2025 6:00 PM	11-02- 2025 6:00 PM
Last date & time for physical Submission of Bid Security and other mandatory Documents	21-01- 2025 11:00 AM	06-02- 2025 11:00 AM	31-01- 2025 11:00 AM	14-02- 2025 11:00 AM	06-02-2025 11:00 AM	11-02-2025 11:00 AM	12-02-2025 11:00 AM	12-02- 2025 11:00 AM
Date of online opening of Technical Bids	21-01- 2025 3:00 PM	06-02- 2025 3:00 PM	31-01- 2025 3:00 PM	14-02- 2025 3:00 PM	06-02-2025 3:00 PM	11-02-2025 3:00 PM	12-02-2025 3:00 PM	12-02- 2025 3:00 PM

DIPR/C/396/2025

(जगदीश चन्द्र व्यास) अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियंता, जन स्वास्थ्य अभियांत्रिकी विभाग, बौत्र–पाली



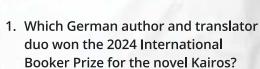
Website: Industries. Rajasthan. Gov.in/rajsico E-mail:rajsico@rajasthan.gov.in CIN:- U91110RJ1961SGC001118 **NOTICE INVITING BIDS**

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Managing Director





2. P.G. Wodehouse's iconic vale was named after Warwickshire cricketer Percy _____, whose impeccable bowling inspired the author. Fill in the blanks.

3. Name the South Korean author who won the Nobel Prize in Literature 2024.



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CHRIST

Scan QR code or visit newsth.live/LFL2025QZ take the quiz. Top 3 winners* every day win gift vouchers.

Answer to yesterday's quiz:

1. Poomani | 2. Neerathikaaram | 3. Tommy and Tuppence Beresford 1. Mithun Singh, Faridabad | 2. Srinithi Thirupathi, Madurai | 3. Rajeev Kumar,

THE HINDU

IN THE RECORD BOOKS

Monfils becomes oldest singles champion in ATP Tour history



Gael Monfils became the oldest singles champion in ATP Tour history when the 38-year-old Frenchman swept to victory in the final of the Auckland Classic. Monfils beat Belgian qualifier Zizou Bergs 6-3, 6-4, to eclipse Roger Federer in the record books. Federer was two months younger when he won the Swiss Indoors in 2019.

SECOND TITLE

Kessler upsets Mertens to clinch the Hobart WTA crown



Rising American McCartney Kessler upset two-time champion Elise Mertens to win the Hobart International and secure her second WTA title on Saturday with a battling 6-4, 3-6, 6-0 victory. The world No. 67 needed just over two hours to topple the 34th-ranked Belgian, who won her first two crowns in Hobart in 2017 and 2018.

PERFECT PREP

Auger-Aliassime and Keys emerge triumphant in Adelaide



Felix Auger-Aliassime and Madison Keys completed the perfect preparation for the Australian Open, winning at the Adelaide International on Saturday. Keys upset top seed Jessica Pegula 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 to win the event for a second time. Auger-Aliassime fired 10 aces to beat Sebastian Korda 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 for his sixth career trophy.

SOME CHEER

Consolation win for Sri Lanka as New Zealand batters fumble



Sri Lanka razed New Zealand's top-order on Saturday to comfortably win the third ODI in Auckland by 140 runs and salvage a lone victory in the series.

The scores: Sri Lanka 290/8 in 50 overs (Nissanka 66, Henry 4/55) bt New Zealand 150 in 29.4 overs (Chapman 81).

Toofans edge past a fighting Soorma Club

Hyderabad outfit wins shootout 4-3 and claims a bonus point for its third victory; goalkeeper Dixon, dragflicker Amandeep play a key role; UP Rudras bounces back to defeat Delhi Pipers

Y.B. Sarangi ROURKELA

oung drag-flicker Amandeep Lakra scored the equaliser and goalkeeper Dominic Dixon made some vital saves in the penalty shootout as Hyderabad Toofans edged out JSW Soorma Club via sudden death in a cliff-hanger in the Hockey India League at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Saturday.

Following a 1-1 draw in the regulation period, Toofans held their nerve to win the shootout 4-3 and claimed an important bonus point from their third win.

Missed chances

Toofans made more circle entries but could not make the most of a couple of chances in the opening quarter. Soorma's attacks looked more effective. Nicolas della Torre earned the first penalty corner and converted it too in the eighth minute.

His drag-flick got deflected off Toofans' first rusher's stick to beat goalkeeper Vikas Dahiya.

Against some gritty and clinical defence of Soorma, On target: Amandeep played a key role for the Hyderabad Toofans. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Toofans continued to grapple with their finishing woes and wasted at least three more field goal opportunities in the second

Arshdeep Singh missed a sitter. Later, Darshan Gawkar and Talwinder Singh also wasted chances.

Toofans thwarted Soorma's second short corner before converting their first, thanks to two local lads, to level the scores in the penultimate quarter.

Shilanand Lakra fed perfectly and Amandeep made no mistake in putting it past seasoned custodian Vincent Vanasch's right.

Toofans pressed hard to create more chances but could not find success.

Soorma, who missed the services of Harmanpreet Singh after the team's captain injured his left leg with a minute and 47 seconds left, earned two more short corners in the closing seconds, but Toofans foiled those to take the

contest to the tie-breaker. The deadlock continued as both goalkeepers, Vanasch and Dixon, did well in the first five shots of the shootouts.

Zachary Wallace found the target, while Nicolas Poncelet shot wide in sudden death to the delight of Toofans.

In the other match, UP Rudras rallied to defeat Delhi SG Pipers 3-1 and

The results: Hyderabad Toofans 1 (Amandeep 40) drew with JSW Soorma Hockey Club 1 (della Torre 8) (Toofans bt Soorma 4-3 in shootout)

UP Rudras 3 (Wortelboer 30, Russell 43, Tanguy 54) bt Delhi SG Pipers 1 (Whetton 29)

Shami returns to India squad; Axar is Suryakumar's deputy

ENG IN IND

Amol Karhadkar MUMBAI

Mohammed Shami will return to international cricket after a prolonged injury hiatus. The pacer was picked in India's 15-member squad for the fivematch T20I series against England, starting January

The national selection panel met here in person on Saturday to finalise the squad and take stock of the Indian cricket team.

The Hindu understands that Shami, who last featured for India during the 2023 World Cup final, is also set to be picked in the provisional squad for the Champions Trophy.

However, with Shami's ankle and knee injury having taken much longer than expected to heal, the selectors and the team management will keep a keen eye on the pacer's match fitness during the England white-ball series.

Update on Bumrah

It is understood that the selectors will finalise the squad for the three ODIs against England next week since they are keeping a close watch on the Vijay Hazare Trophy knockouts and are also awaiting a medical update on Jasprit Bumrah.

Besides Shami's return, Dhruv Jurel has been pre-



FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

ferred as the reserve wicketkeeper, with Rishabh Pant rested along with most of the squad members in Australia.

Nitish Kumar Reddy, who has been the find of an otherwise forgettable season so far, has been preferred in place of Shivam Dube as the second pacebowling allrounder

Interestingly, Axar Patel has been announced as Suryakumar Yadav's deputy for the T20Is.

Axar is also expected to be handed the captaincy by his Indian Premier League franchise Delhi

Capitals for the forthcoming edition.

Immediately after the selection meeting, the BCCI had a meeting to take stock of a disastrous season of Test cricket and plan the way forward.

The meeting was attended by Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma, head coach Gautam Gambhir, chief selector Ajit Agarkar, secretary-in-waiting Devajit Saikia and former secretary Jay Shah.

All the personnel were huddled together at a south Mumbai hotel, before Shah's felicitation by the BCCI for having been elected as the International Cricket Council chair.

Transition It is understood that the

meeting discussed the role of the coaching staff and contemplated charting out the transition of the longer format squads. Neither Rohit nor Virat Kohli – both out of form - are in danger of their place being questioned for the Champions

The squad: Suryakumar Yadav (Capt.), Axar Patel (Vice-capt.), Sanju Samson (wk), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Rinku Singh, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Shami, Varun Chakaravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Dhruv Jurel (wk)

The schedule (T20Is): Jan 22: Kolkata; Jan 25: Chennai; Jan 28: Rajkot. Jan 31: Pune; Feb 2: Mumbai

Fielding in focus as Women In Blue look to seal the deal

Press Trust of India RAJKOT

Following a commanding performance by the youngsters in the opener, India will eve another clinical display from them to seal the three-match series when it faces Ireland in the second women's ODI here on Sunday.

Captain Smriti Mandhana continued her fine form, laying the foundation with a forceful 41, while the efforts of Pratika Rawal and Tejal Hasabnis were crucial.

Titas Sadhu stepped up, striking in her first spell. Sayali Satghare also impressed while Saima Thakor bowled a tidy 10-over spell.

However, India's fielding was subpar in the first ODI.

The squads (from): India: Smriti Mandhana (Capt.), Deepti

Sharma (Vice-capt.), Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Jemimah Rodrigues, Uma Chetry (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Tejal Hasabnis, Raghvi Bist, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuia Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, and Sayali Satghare.

Ireland: Gaby Lewis (Capt.), Ava Canning, Christina Coulter Reilly, Alana Dalzell, Laura Delany, Georgina Dempsey, Sarah Forbes, Arlene Kelly, Joanna Loughran, Aimee Maguire, Leah Paul, Orla Prendergast, Una Raymond-Hoey, Freya Sargent and Rebecca Stokell. Match starts at 11 a.m.

A cautiously optimistic beginning to Women's HIL

Santadeep Dey RANCHI

The Women's Hockey India League (HIL-W) would hope that the bumpy ride from the garage to the start line fades into a distant memory before lights-out here on Sunday.

This is the first time an exclusive league for women has found a place in the HIL framework, paving the way for a more inclusive future for Indian hock-

With the inclusion of two more franchises deferred until next season, only 96 players could be slotted into Delhi SG Pipers, ISW Soorma Hockey Club, Shrachi Rahr Bengal Tigers, and Odisha War-

The franchises will play each other twice in the pool stage, with the first match set to be played between the Warriors and Pipers. The top two teams will clash in the finale on January 26. In its efforts to popularise the event, HI has decided to forego revenue from ticket sales by making entry free for all.

Big guns target glory as action begins at Melbourne Park

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agencies MELBOURNE

The Australian Open begins in Melbourne on Sunday, with the world's top players competing for glory in the year's first Grand

Aryna Sabalenka, who is going for a third straight title at Melbourne Park, faces Sloane Stephens while men's world No. 2 Alexander Zverev launches another bid for his first Grand Slam crown when he takes on wild card Lucas Pouille.

Sabalenka begins her title defence against the 2017 U.S. Open champion, and the Belarusian world No. 1 is in strong form after kicking off the season with a trophy in Brisbane.

Aiming to become the first woman since Martina Hingis in 1999 to win three straight Australian Open titles, Sabalenka has beaten Stephens in all four of their previous meetings.

She has also been dominant in hardcourt Grand Slams in recent years, boasting a 27-1 record since the start of 2023.



Gearing up: Sabalenka has been in red-hot form in the lead up to

Top Picks

Men: 2-Zverev vs Pouille; 6-Ruud vs Munar; 20-Fils vs Virtanen; 26-Machac vs Naga Women: 1-Sabalenka vs Stephens; 5-Zheng vs Todoni;

11-Badosa vs Wang; 14-Andreeva vs Bouzkova

Grand Slam success has so far eluded Zverev but after a 2024 season in which he won the Masters 1000 titles in Rome and Paris and reached the French Open final, the German is once again among the favourites in the men's draw.

He will be hoping to improve on last year's semifinal run at Melbourne Park during which he defeated Carlos Alcaraz.

Novak Djokovic is targeting an 11th Australian Open title and record 25th Grand Slam crown but faces an uphill battle against Jannik Sinner and Alcaraz. Diokovic may be 37 but

the Serb can never be writ-

ten off on Melbourne Park,

where he has enjoyed enormous success. Italian Sinner won his maiden Grand Slam title in Australia last year, beating Daniil Medvedev in the final, and went on to establish himself as the undisputed world No. 1.

But the 23-year-old's season was rocked by doping accusations that he

Punjab men set up title clash with holder TN

Sports Bureau

Punjab beat Railways 69-63 to set up the title clash against defending champion Tamil Nadu in the men's section of the 74th National basketball championship in Bhavnagar on Saturday. The women's final will be between Railways and Kerala.

The results: Men: Semifinals:

Punjab 69 (Nawaz Singh Panaich 16, Kanwar Gurbaz Singh Sandhu 15, Amritpal Singh 15) bt Railways 63 (Sahaj Pratap Sigh Sekhon 16, Palpreet Singh 14, Tushal Singh 14). Tamil Nadu 78 (Anantharai 17. Aravind Kumar Muthukrishnan 16, Muin Bek Hafeez 12) bt Karnataka 51 (Samanth Sathyanarayan 13, Abhishek Gowda 11). Ouarterfinals: Railways 79 (Sahaj Pratap Singh Sekhon 11, Sahil Kalyan 11, Princepal Singh 11) bt Rajasthan 53 (Sharad Dadich 14). Women: Semifinals: Kerala 69

(R. Sreekala 18, Susan Florentina 12, Swapna Merin Jiju 12) bt Delhi 62 (Namrata 17, Garima Goswami 15); Railways 85 (K. Sathya 18, Dharshini Thirunavukkarasu 14, P. Priyanka 14) bt Tamil Nadu 62 (Ashmitha 16, C.S. Anumaria 13). Quarterfinals: Kerala 68 (R. Sreekala 16, Irin John 11, Susan Florentina 10) bt Maharashtra 27.

Mohammedan pulls off a stunning win over Bengaluru

N. Sudarshan BENGALURU

Mohammedan SC pulled off a stunning heist as it snatched a 1-0 win over Bengaluru FC in the ISL at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday.

Mirjalol Kasimov's sup-

erb free-kick from just outside the penalty area in the 88th minute beat Gurpreet Singh Sandhu at the near post to hand BFC its first home defeat of the season.

The victory - only the visitors' second of the campaign, both away - came on the back of two goalless draws, and lifted Andrey Chernyshov's wards from the bottom of the table into 12th position (10 points) above Hyderabad FC.

BFC remained second (27 points) but its fourth loss in the last nine fixtures will hamper its chances of a top-two finish, with FC Goa and Jamshedpur FC breathing down its neck.

The host will rue the chances attackers Alberto Noguera and substitute Shivaldo Singh missed from point-blank range in



Job done: Mohammedan SC players are ecstatic after the final whistle. K. MURALI KUMAR

the first and second periods respectively. But it shouldn't mask what was a largely subdued performance from BFC.

didn't Mohammedan quite impress. Defender Florent Ogier nearly turned one into his own net in the first half while midfielder Alexis Gomez lost the ball routinely from promising positions.

Killer blow

But the Kolkata side stayed tight when it mattered and landed the killer blow to ensure that this new year has so far been without blemish.

PTI reports from Guwa-

Riding on Jamie Maclaren's record second-minute goal, Mohun Bagan SG extended its dominance in the Kolkata derby with a 1-0 win over East Bengal FC. Maclaren scored the fastest goal of the Kolkata derby in ISL and it was enough for the reigning champion to edge its archrival, while going eight points clear (35) at the top.

The results:

At Bengaluru: Bengaluru 0 lost to Mohammedan 1 (Kasimov 88). At Guwahati: MBSG 1 (Maclaren 2) bt East Bengal 0.



Sidharth Rawat goes down to Maxim Zhukov in semifinals

Qualifier Sidharth Rawat's fine run was broken by Maxim Zhukov in the semifinals of the \$30,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the Arera Club in Bhopal on Saturday. Zhukov won 6-4, 6-1 to set up a title clash against the champion of the last tournament in Indore, Alastair Gray of Britain, who beat Eric Vanshelboim 6-3, 6-4. India's Chirag Duhan and Dev Javia defeated Korea's Yeongseok Jeong and Uisung Park 4-6, 6-1, [10-2] in the doubles final. While it was the maiden title in the professional circuit for the 21-year-old Chirag, it was the third doubles crown for the 22-year-old Javia.

Satwik & Chirag lose in Malaysia Open semifinals

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's impressive run at the Malaysia Super 1000 badminton tournament came to an end following a 10-21, 15-21 loss to Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae in the semifinals, in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

Rutuja-Chong pair goes down in the final

Rutuja Bhosale in partnership with Eudice Chong of Hong Kong was beaten 4-6, 6-0, [10-6] by Sujeong Jang and Wushuang Zheng in the doubles final of the \$60,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Nonthaburi, Thailand, on Saturday.

Triple crown for Ankur, double for Abhinandh

Bengal's Ankur Bhattacharjee completed a treble, winning the u-19 boys' singles and doubles titles to go with the team title West Bengal clinched the other day, in the 86th UTT junior and youth National table tennis championships here on Saturday. Tamil Nadu's P. B. Abhinandh won a double, bagging the u-17 singles and doubles crowns.

The results (finals): Boys: U-19: Ankur Bhattacharjee bt P.B. Abhinandh 11-4, 8-11, 13-11, 11-7, 11-7; **Doubles:** Ankur & Shankadip Das bt Punit Biswas & Oishik Ghosh 12-10, 8-11. 11-4, 11-4. U-17: P.B. Abhinandh bt Punit Biswas 11-9, 3-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-9; Doubles: Abhinandh & S. Sriram bt Atherva Gupta & Sarthak Arya 5-11, 11-8, 11-6, 10-12, 11-7.

LIVE TELECAST

Vijay Hazare Trophy: JioCinema, 9 a.m.

Badminton: Malaysia Open, Sports 18-3 & Hotstar, 10.30 a.m. India Women vs Ireland Women: 2nd ODI, Sports 18-1 & Hotstar, 11 a.m I-League: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1 & 3.30 p.m.

Australian Open: Evening session, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m

Serie A: gxr.world, 5, 7.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday) LaLiga: gxr. world, 6.30 & 8.45 p.m.

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8 & 10 p.m. Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV,

Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30

Padikkal slams hundred as Karnataka edges Baroda

Opener Rawat's maiden List A ton goes in vain for the home side; speedster Koushik and leg-spinner Shreyas strike timely blows to take their team into the semifinals

HAZARE TROPHY

S. Dipak Ragav VADODARA

evdutt Padikkal kicked off the new year in style by slamming a breezy 102 (99b, 15x4, 2x6) and headlined Karnataka's five-run win over Baroda in a closely fought quarterfinal match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here at the Motibaug Cricket ground on Saturday.

Asked to bat first, Karnataka managed 281 for eight after Padikkal and K.V. Aneesh (52) laid the foundation through their 133run second-wicket partner-

In reply, Baroda opener Shashwat Rawat (104, 126b, 9x4, 1x6) shepherded the chase expertly, scoring his maiden List A hundred. He found able allies in Atit Sheth (56) and Krunal Pandya (30), whose contributions kept the home side in the hunt for most of the chase.

However, pacer V. Koushik (two for 39) and leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal (two for 38) gave timely breakthroughs during the middle-overs to get the southern giant back into the contest.

Shreyas removed Sheth while Koushik had Krunal caught behind by keeper K.L. Shrijith, who took a superb one-handed catch diving to his left. Their dis-



Free-flowing knock: Padikkal was in his element as he brought up his ninth List A century. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ciplined bowling prevented Baroda from scoring a boundary for more than 10 overs and pushed the asking rate to nearly 10.

Despite Rawat's heroics and some useful cameos from Bhanu Pania (22) and

Bhargav Bhatt (20), Baroda was bowled out off the penultimate delivery of the match. Needing seven off two, Bhargav slogged to the leg-side and tried to complete a double to retain strike but was run out, much to the disappointment of hundreds of fans cheering for the host.

Earlier, Padikkal was at his free-flowing best, clearing the in-field with lofted drives and square cuts. He quickly brought up his half-century off just 51 balls. From there, the 24year-old stepped up a gear and smashed the spinners to all corners of the park.

He used his feet well against Mahesh Pithiya to target the leg-side, collecting a handful of boundaries and a maximum over long-on. He also swept well and moved to the 90s by lofting Raj Limbani over long-off for his second six and reached his ninth List-A ton in just 96 balls.

Limbani and Sheth then helped Baroda dry up the runs, taking three wickets each. However, Abhinav Manohar, Shreyas and Prasidh Krishna hit a flurry of boundaries in the climactic stage of the innings to help their team get 69 runs in the last 10 overs. Those runs proved decisive in a game of fine margins.

The scores: Karnataka 281/8 in 50 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 102, K.V. Aneesh 52, Rai Limbani 3/47, Atit Sheth 3/41) bt Baroda 276 in 49.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 104 Atit Sheth 56).

Maharashtra 275/6 in 50 overs (Arshin Kulkarni 107, Ankeet Bawane 60, Nikhil Naik 52 n.o., Arshdeep Singh 3/56) bt Punjab 205 in 44.4 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 48, Arshdeep Singh 49, Mukesh Choudhary 3/44).

Jincy's century helps Team-B get the better of Team-D

Sports Bureau CHENNAI

Jincy George (104, 119b, 13x4) and Arushi Goel (55 n.o., 81b, 4x4) helped Team-B cruise to a fivewicket victory over Team-D in the BCCI Senior Women One Day Challenger Trophy on Saturday.

The scores:

At MAC: Team-E 147 in 47.4 overs (Soumya Tiwari 57) lost to Team-C 148/5 in 31.3 overs (Tripti Singh 32, Yastika Bhatia 52).

At SSN: Team-D 235 in 48.5 overs (Vrushali Bhagat 75, M. Dakshini 30, Isha Pathare 3/41) lost to



Jincy George (Team-B, 104)

Team-B 237/6 in 47 overs (Jincy George 104, Arushi Goel 55 n.o.).

Grand treble for **Ashad Pasha**

MOTORSPORTS

Sports Bureau CHENNAI

Ashad Pasha clocked the fastest time, besides winning a triple crown in the South Zone qualifier of the FMSCI-National autocross championship at the Madras International Circuit here on Saturday.

Provisional results: INAC1 Class B: 1. Kiran Reddy (02:39.825)

INAC1 Class C: 1. Ashad Pasha (02:28.615); 2. Amandeep Singh (02:57.160); 3. Ashish Gupta (03:08.219).

INAC2 Class B: 1. Ashad (02:35.871); 2. Kartik Konchady (02:50.345)

INAC2 Class C: 1. Ashad (02:29.400); 2. Areeb Rahman (02:41.547); 3. Saneesh Sharma INAC2 Class E: 1. Nameer Pasha

(02:36.185); 2. Areeb Rahman (02:37.118); 3. Saneesh Sharma (02:41.330)

INAC3 Stock Class A: 1. Amey Desai (02:52.865); 2. Konchady (02:55.585); 3. Karan Panikar (02:56.968)

INAC3 Stock Class B: 1. Kushal Chaudhari (02:51.735); 2. Althaf Hussain (03:14.388)

INAC3 Stock Class C: 1. Konchady (02:41.524); 2. Desai

(02:49.772); 3. Sravan Kumar Kuttoor (03:01.017) INAC3 Stock Class E: 1. Karan Chaudhary (02:39.694); 2. Desai

(02:46.588); 3. Kushal Chaudhari (02:55.132) Ladies Open: 1. Pallavi Yadav (03:30.081); 2. Reshma Inchalkar

(03:44.312). 4WD Open: 1. Raunak Jana

(02:44.311); 2. Kuttoor (02:50.769). Amateur: 1. Nameer

(02:35.441sec); 2. Ashish Gupta (03:45.346).

A ND-NDE

Gritty Maaya rallies to

stands on show court No.6, it was Tupitsyna who was serving for the match at 5-3 in the second set. However, she did not hold serve then, and thereafter in the whole match, perhaps because she was grappling with a painful stomach.

HAM, 3. SEE MY ATTITUDE

9. Park Lane (5) Md. Ismail 53.5, 10. Sucker Punch (8) G. Naresh 52 and

11. Top In Class (2) Kuldeep Sr. 52.

1. SOPRANOS, 2. PARK LANE, 3. DARLING'S BOY

TROPHY (1,400m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) –

3.40: 1. Uchchaihshravas (11) Neerai

60.5, 2. Espionage (2) Kuldeep Sr. 59, 3. Juramento (3) Shivansh 58.5,

4. Kings Best (9) Gaurav 58.5, 5. Star Forever (7) G. Naresh 55, 6.

Sun Dancer (14) Saqlain 54.5, 7. Colt

Pistol (13) Ajay K 54, 8. Assured Success (10) Rafique Sk. 52, 9. Mir-

acle Mary (8) Md. Ismail 52, 10. Em-

perors Charm (6) Akshay K 51.5, 11. Miss Marvellous (12) P. Ajeeth K

51.5, 12. Windsor (4) Afroz K 51.5,



proved a hard nut to crack for Roshan Santhosh as he dropped only two games.

The seasoned coaches, Singh, trophies.

Donghvun Hwang (Kor) bt Roshan Santhosh (USA) 6-1, 6-1; **Girls**: Maaya Rajeshwaran bt Ekaterina Tupitsyna 3-6, 7-5, 6-2.



hyun Hwang of Korea

The results: Finals: U-18: Boys:

beat Tupitsyna

NEW DELHI

Maaya tennisRajeshwaran showed great character and fighting spirit to bounce back from the brink of defeat to beat Ekaterina Tupitsyna 3-6, 7-5, 6-2 in the final of the ITF junior tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex on Saturday.



Champions Donghyun Hwang and Maaya Rajeshwaran.

In front of the packed

In the boys final, Dong-



KAMESH SRINIVASAN

Balram Singh and Nar presented the

13. Anemoi (1) Santosh Raj 51 and 14. Gloria (5) Surya Prakash 50.

1. UCHCHAIHSHRAVAS, 2. ESPION-AGE, 3. EMPERORS CHARM Secret Option (7) Abhay 52, 10. Tupac (3) Surya Prakash 52, 11. Hoping Wind (11) Kuldeep Jr. 51 and B DECCAN BOOKMAKERS WEL-FARE ASSOCIATION DARLEY 12. Arnaz (10) P. Sai K 50. ARABIAN MILLION (GR. 3) (1,200m), 1. ALWAYS SPECIAL, 2. BELLING-

3-y-o only – 4.15: 1. Cherie Chevalier (1) P. Sai K 56, 2. Home Run (3) Akshay K 56, 3. Racing Ruler (4) G. COMMON LAND PLATE (Div. I) (9) Shivansh 60, 2. Calista Naresh 56, 4. Smart Operator (5) Mukesh 56 and 5. Pacific Heights (2) Saglain 54.5. Girl (4) Gaurav 59, 3. Kenaf (3) Saqlain 59, 4. Darling's Boy (11) Ak-1. PACIFIC HEIGHTS, 2. CHERIE saqiani 33, 4. Dalinig 8 boy (II) Ak-shay K 57.5, 5. Sangreal (10) P. Sai K 56.5, 6. Sopranos (6) P. Ajeeth K 55.5, 7. Mix The Magic (1) Mukesh 54, 8. Mark My Day (7) Nakhat 53.5,

9 RED SATIN PLATE (Div. III) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 4.50: 1. Shoolin (6) B. Nikhil 60.5, 2. That's My Mission (1) Saqlain 59.5, 3. Dali's Champion (10) P. Ajeeth K 56.5, 4 Golden Inzio (9) P. Sai K 55, 5. Self

Image (4) B.R. Kumar 54.5, 6. Country's Maximus (5) H.M. Akshay 53.5, 7. Exponent (2) Md. Ekram 53, 8. Petra Act (7) Mukesh 53, 9. Niloufer The Great (8) G. Naresh 52.5 and 10. Talking Stick (3) Ajay K 50. 1. GOLDEN INZIO, 2. DALI'S CHAM-

PION, 3. THAT'S MY MISSION Day's Best: UCHCHAIHSHRAVAS Jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. (ii) 5, 6, 7, 8 Mini Jackpot: (I) 2, 3, 4 & 5, (ii) 6, 7,

Treble: (I) 1, 2 & 3, (ii) 4, 5 & 6, (iii) Tanala: All races



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Pacific Heights may score an encore in feature event 3 CHALLURI SUSHEELA Peppi (4) Ashad Asbar 54, 7. N R I Star (6) Santosh Raj 53.5, 8. Oskars Officer (5) H.M. Akshay 52.5, 9.

NARASIMHA REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (1,400m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-

y-o only – 1.25: 1. La Quinta (11) Md. Ekram 56, 2. N R I Blaze (10)

Kuldeep Sr. 56, 3. Certainty (8) Gaurav 54.5, 4. Global Fashion (6)

Nakhat 54.5, 5. Infinia (2) Ashad As

bar 54.5, 6. Konaseema (9) Abhay

H.M. Akshay 54.5, 8. Nijinsky Star (7) Saqlain 54.5, 9. Pride Aside (3) G. Naresh 54.5, 10. Screenshot (5)

Md. Ismail 54.5 and 11. Whistle

down (1) Akshay K 54.5. 1. N R I BLAZE, 2. NIJINSKY STAR, 3.

WHISTLEDOWN

ngh 54.5, 7. Miss Smiley Angel (4)

HYDERABAD: The three-year-old filly Pacific Heights, who won well in her last start, may score an encore in the Deccan Bookmakers Welfare Association Darley Arabian Million (Gr. 3), the feature event of Sunday's (Jan. 12) races.

RED SATIN PLATE (Div. I) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 12. 25 p.m.: 1. Inderdhanush (10) Deepak 62, 2. Fashion Icon (1) Gauray 59.5, 3. Genie (2) Nakhat 56.5, 4. The Pious (6) Akshay K 56, 5. Dhanadeepa (3) Mukesh 54.5, 6. Elegant Girl (9) Rafique Sk. 53, 7. Wandring Warrior (5) Abhay Singh 53, 8. Club Queen (4) Md. Ekram 52.5, 9. Desert Sultan (8) B.R. Kumar 52.5 and 10. Splendour On Grass (7) Ajay K 52.5.

1. THE PIOUS, 2. CLUB QUEEN, 3. DHANADEEPA

(1,200m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) – 12. 55: 1. Dyanoosh (2) Shiyansh 60, 2, Gazelle (1) H.M. Akshay 57.5, 4. P. Sai K 55.5, 6. Shadow Fax (9) Mohit 54, 8. Deccan Spirit (8) B.

1. DECCAN SPIRIT, 2. SHADOW FAX,

4 RED SATIN PLATE (Div. II) (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 1.55: 1. Star Cruise (2) Kuldeep Sr. 61, 2. Normui (1) Mukesh 59.5, 3. First Lady (7) Santosh Raj 57, 4. Sargent (5) H.M. Akshay 57, 5. Grey Sky (9) R.S. Jodha 54.5, 6. Cherish The Lady (10) P. Sai K 53, 7. Pancho (8) 2 COMMON LAND PLATE (Div. II) B. Nikhil 53, 8. Politics (4) Md. Is-

mail 53, 9. Politics (6) Gaurav 52.5 and 10. Most Beautiful (3) Ajay K 52. Malibu (6) Saqlain 60, 3. Golden 1. SARGENT, 2. FIRST LADY, 3. STAR Blissful (4) R.S. Jodha 57, 5. Rival (7) B. VIIAY REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (1,600m) Maiden, 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 2. Nikhil 53.5, 9. Happy Soul (10) Kuldeep Jr. 52.5 and 10. Hurricane 30: 1. See My Attitude (8) Afroz K 61, 2, Bellingham (1) B.R. Kumar 58, Wave (5) Afroz K 50.5. 3. Always Special (12) Mukesh 55, 4. Golden Unicorn (9) Kuldeep Sr. 54, 5. Hoping High (2) Mohit 54, 6.



Leaving a mark: A Navy aircraft fires flares as it performs a fly-past.



Close call: Two naval skydivers collide mid-air before safely landing in the sea during a rehearsal of the operational demonstration.



In sync: Indian Navy personnel perform a continuity drill during the Eastern Naval Command's operational demonstration in Visakhapatnam.

Might over the sea

At a display in Visakhapatnam, the Indian Navy's Eastern Command demonstrates its operational excellence, resilience, and technological prowess



K. R. Deepak

he Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy held an operational demonstration in Visakhapatnam on January 4, showcasing a breathtaking display of maritime prowess and precision.

The grandeur unfolded with a submarine sail-past, followed by a gripping demonstration from the Marine Commando Force that featured the stealth and combat skills of the naval special forces. An oil rig demolition drill emphasised the Navy's readiness to tackle maritime emergencies, while a helicopter rescue operation illustrated their ability to execute daring lifesaving missions.

The skydiving team's performance stood out, especially after an incident during the final rehearsal two days ago, when two skydivers became entangled mid-air and had a choppy

landing in the sea. They were promptly rescued and brought back to the shore. Undeterred by the mishap, the team executed a flawless landing during the main event, earning cheers from the audience. A composite fly-past by Chetak helicopters, Hawk jets, and Dornier planes highlighted the synchronised operations of the naval air fleet.

The evening concluded with a mesmerising beating retreat ceremony. Drone formations lit up the night sky, narrating tales of naval valour and technology. Fireworks and a laser show from the deck of a ship captivated the audience, culminating in firing of flares and illumination of naval vessels, casting a glow over the coast.

The demonstration was a testament to the Indian Navy's operational excellence, resilience, and technological prowess.



Visual treat: Naval officers with their families watch as fireworks go off during the demonstration.

S ND-NDE

News in Frames



Red skies: Illuminated naval vessels fire flares to the sky making for a brilliant spectacle at night.

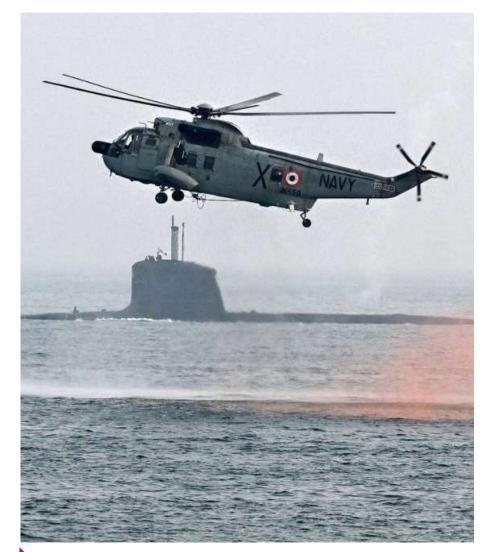


Combat ready: Marine commandos simulate a beach assault.



No glitches: Skydivers perform flawlessly during the main event, after getting over a mistake during rehearsal.

S ND-NDE



Across elements: A Navy helicopter hovers above a submarine performing a sail-past.



In control: Navy personnel simulate a blast as part of a demonstration of beach assault by marine commandos.

ÇM YK