

WEST BANK

'A cauldron that can explode any moment'

Israeli Indologist David Shulman predicts a third Palestinian 'uprising', suggests a confederation as path to peace with Israel

NEWS » PAGE 8





Nicolas Maduro: Back, but with fewer friends

PROFILES » PAGE 13



Why is Meta shutting down fact-checkers?

FAQ » PAGE 12



Shami returns for England T20Is

SPORT » PAGE 15

Parties in Capital trade barbs 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 BJP, 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?

SANDEEP DIKSHIT
Former Delhi MP, Congress leader

Sachdeva termed the former CM's claim about Mr. Bidhuri “an absolute lie” and said that “all the BJP candidates are our chief ministerial candidates”.

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 ministerial candidate?”

BJP FIELDS KAPIL MISHRA » PAGE 2

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
UMRANGSO

Rescue 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 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 Shrestha (38), a resident of Udayapur district in Nepal, was recovered on Wednesday.

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 » PAGE 7

IN BRIEF



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

MUMBAI
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
NEW DELHI

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 using the residential



AAP's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and party chief Arvind 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 EC.

“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 at 212 VP House, applica-

tions have been made for 24 voter registrations. It is 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 Prayagraj, 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

Jagriti Chandra
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 collapses at Kannauj station

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



A rescue operation under way at the Kannauj railway station on 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

the workers who are trapped. We are using all resources at our disposal for the rescue efforts.” Kannauj District Magistrate Shubhrant Kumar Shukl said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7

Seven special courts will be set up to hear sexual assault cases, says T.N. CM

The Hindu Bureau
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



For timely justice: CM Stalin said a special committee headed by 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-

iminal 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

Classifieds

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

Matrimonial

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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
ORIYA
PARSI
PUNJABI
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MBA/ CA/ ICWA
NRI
COSMOPOLITAN
DIVORCEE
PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED
MARRIAGE BUREAUS
WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

COSMOPOLITAN

ATTRACTIVE, CARING, 28, 168cm, active professional (US, MS). Seeking driven, kind, compatible partner. Community no bar. Call/WA 9345634365.

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

DOCTOR

HINDU TAMIL BC Doctor 27/ 175 cm Fair, Clear Horoscope Seeks Tall Handsome PG Doctors / PG Engineers / Well settled with Good Habits from Simple family.Contact with Full view photograph, horoscope and 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: 9978532632

HINDU, ADI DRAVIDA, 25yrs/156cms, Fair, M.B.B.S settled in Chennai seeks 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 & Iyer Contact : 9940598204

KANNADA

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

KANNADA DEVANGA, 26 yrs, MBA, works at Hyderabad, not particular about Horoscope. Looking for a like minded match from the same community. Contact Number: 7259528771.

MALAYALAM

VISWAKARMA GIRL from elite family, 27/158 cm, Pooyam, MBA, Operations Analyst in MNC - 9447000579, 9074673232.

DELHI BASED Nair Girl 29 /145cm, Pooram 1.5 dosham pursuing PhD in Edinburgh UK Seek alliance pref from same community pref Palakkad / Tiruchur and nearby districts. Contact: 9818364188.

Ezhuthadean 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 based family who settled in Madurai or Nearby District. Not Bureau. Ct: 7667765588

NRI

Hindu Telugu Never married 44/168 MS USA working seeking 45-47 Never married working in USA CNB 9866274192

TAMIL

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 clean habits. WhatsAp 9443124608

CHRISTIAN, RC, 31 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Kanyakumari, Income 10 Lakhs. Ct 8138901261.

RC CHRISTIAN Vellalar, 31/176 CM, B. Tech MBA, PWC Bangalore 35LPA. Seeks God fearing, well Educated working Professional Contact: 8870520107 / 9952171952

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 AGNOR Christian, 44yrs/152, MBBS, MD doctor, Chennai, seeks christian groom, CT-950018067

GROOM REQD Christian 27yrs, MBA (UK),Well Educated Family,CNB, Need Abroad Profiles 9710093999/ 9710091999

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 Nadar 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

MUDALIAR, HASTHAM, 39yrs/ 162cm, B.E, M.B.A., working as V.P.Royal Bank, Canada. Seeks suitable qualified Groom in India/Abroad. Ct: 9843092595.

GROOM WANTED Mudaliyar 25yrs B.Tech Own Schools & Colleges Elite family in Chennai 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 20003

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

DOCTOR MD (Pathology) DCH 39yrs Hindu BC, Divorcee without child, working in a private hospital, seeks well settled, compatible, decent & affectionate Groom CNB Ct: 9176289180

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 Mudaliyar 25yrs MBBS, MS Own Transports& Resorts business family 9710093999/ 9710091999

HINDU, VANNIYAR, 26 Yrs, B.Arch, Architect at Chennai, Income 10 Lakhs. Ct 7356483111

HINDU, PILLAI, 25 Yrs, MBBS, Doctor at Chennai, Income 12 Lakhs. Ct 8138900557

HINDU SC,AD Magam girl 29/157cm MCA, TL @ Infosys 12LPA. Seeking Same caste groom from Chennai. 9840365908

MUDALIAR 32 DM (Cardiology) Seeks PG Doctors / Engineers/CAs /Govt Officers from Any Mudaliar Community Ct:9445151998

BEAUTIFUL, WARM, 26, 160cm, well-educated, polished, UK-raised professional from affluent Nadar family of doctors. Seeks active, driven, compatible partner. Call/WA 9345634365

TAMIL

MUDALIAR 26, BE, MBA, 162cm,Good Looking well Settled Family Seeks Alliance CNB, Ct.8778514465/ 7200866346

HINDU NADAR, 30 yrs, M.Arch, MS (US) Elite Business Family in Chennai 9841329471 / 9380791999

✓ **HINDU VANNIYAKULA Kshatriya girl** Chennai 27 yrs smart modern 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 castes WhatsApp 9840143838

SC/ADIDRAVIDARMSC DOB 1983 bride seeks suitable qualified employed 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 married groom below 42 yrs, From India/Abroad, Caste-No-Bar, 934564566571

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

MUDALIAR 25/160 Fair Beautiful, BE, SWE, Infosys, 900000.PA, Affluenet Family, CNB, 9043991629, 9043987029

MUDALIAR: 25/V,FAIR, MBA, doing Father Business, Chennai, Elite family - Seeks groom Business / Industrialist - 8925019776

MUDALIAR (CNB): 24/ V Fair, B.Tech ,MS (USA),MNC, Eng, USA, 500000PM, Seeks groom only Abroad- 9962530015

URDU

35YRS GOOD looking fair complexion well settled divorcee seeks pious Urdu Muslim groom, willing to settle in tirupur. Contact - 9443746696

SUNNI URDU 26, 163cm, Engg, Hijabi, Canadian citizen seeks professional religious groom from Canada/USA/UK, Whatsapp +1 403 603 8019.

URDU

SUNNI/ URDU/ CHENNAI girl, ACCA (financial consultant) 33/175 employed in Bangalore seeks Qualified Professionals employed in Bangalore - 9445714602

MUSLIM URDU Bride 30, LL.M, M.Sc seeks qualified employed groom 30-35 yrs, Tamilnadu only. Ph: 9940641555

Muslim Girl 22/162cm BE(CSE) Very Fair Selected in MNC Chennai Well to do Fmly in Chennai. Ph: 94455 56810.

BRIDES WANTED

COSMOPOLITAN

SMART, SUCCESSFUL, 30, 180cm, UK-educated professional from cultured family. Seeking educated, attractive, compatible partner. Religion & community no bar. Call/WA 9345634365.

ALLIANCE SOUGHT for chennai based employed christian groom 50 divorcee without encumbrance. Ph- 9444582781

BRIDE WANTED Age 46 Second Marriage Very Well Settled, Expectation 9 Crore Above, Widow, Divorcee, Physically Challenged, Age Caste No Bar. Whatsapp: 98846-71173

DIVORCEE

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

HANDSOME NRI 44, 173cm, warm, Harvard-educated, Europe-based diplomat. Divorced; no kids. Seeks thoughtful, compatible partner. Religion & community no bar. Call/WA 9345634365

DOCTOR

Hindu Adi Dravida, 29/160cms, Fair M.D., Anesthesia settled in Chennai seeks Doctor bride CNB. 63697 02539

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ELITE BRIDES WANTED

PILLAI, 29, 178 cms, MBBS, Doctor. Lives in Singapore. Looking for a like minded match from similar community. Preferably Singapore. Contact: 6366448344

DEVAR, 33, 180 cms, MBBS, Doctor. Lives in Chennai. Parents is a retired professionals and passed away. Looking for a like minded match. Contact: 6366448343

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: 6366448343

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

ELITE GROOMS WANTED

NADAR, 25, 170 cms, B.Com, LLB UK. Lives in Chennai. Business class family. Looking for a like minded match from similar community. Preferably Chennai. Contact: 6366448344

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 match. Contact: 6366448343

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

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TAMIL

HINDU,SCAD 29 years,MDS Tamil girl, Bangalore Seeks suitable bridegroom for early Marriage. Father is Former Director GOI. Contact:70911 91206

HINDU PILLAI PG in Medical, MS (O&G), Age 28,158 cm, Seeks Suitable Groom from same Caste. Ct. 9600098127

HINDU, CASTE no bar, 25 yrs, LL.M, Legal Advisor at Chennai, Upper middle class family. Ct 8138900487

IVENGAR THENKALAI Srivatsam Magam 1994 BE MS employed in Sweden seeks qualified family groom employed in Europe/India Whatsapp 9008373183

HINDU, SC, 30 yrs, Divorced, BE , Business at Chennai, Income 20 Lakhs. Ct 8138901181.

SC AD 37 BE Software Engineer, TCS 1.50L/Month Chennai. seeks suitable Groom. Caste no bar. Ct: 99521 47216

Mudaliyar, 27/154cm Mirugasirisai B.Com, MBA, Fair, Homely Girl, High Middle Class seeks suitable Groom Ct: 94445 47499 / 94449 35026

Tamil Hindu Nadar 34/158, Pooradame Dhanusu, IAS- Maharashtra, Divorcee, no issue preferred Hindu Groom Caste No Bar. Ct: 9445282905 / 9445704985

Muslim Girl 22/162cm BE(CSE) Very Fair Selected in MNC Chennai Well to do Fmly in Chennai. Ph: 94455 56810.

TELUGU

GROOM WANTED Rich Naidu 24yrs MBA Own Transports, Elite business family in Chennai 9710093999/ 9710091999

BALIJA NAIDU 30yrs/ 153cm (Star-Rohini) Working in Pvt Company. Seeks Suitable Groom @ Chennai 9848464447

RICH KAMMA Naidu, 25 yrs, MBBS, MS, Elite Family in Chennai Contact: 9710093999 / 9710091999

NAIDU 29/154/FAIR/CA/MNC Veg God Fear Seeks Educated PG Groom from well settled Decent Family. 9444361010

NAIDU 25/165 Fair Beautiful, MBBS, MS-Doing, 700000.PA, Affluenet Family, CNB. 9043991629, 9043987029

GROOM WANTED Rich Kamma Naidu, 25yrs, MBBS, MS, Elite Business Family Contact:9710093999 / 9710091999

Telugu 34yrs Girl B.E, M.S, Divorced Working in USA, seeks BrideGroom must work in USA, Caste No Bar. Cont: 90922 80967

HINDI

1985/175CM, 50 Lakhs PA, Never Married, Bangalore. WhatsApp: 96290 12248

KANNADA

MUSLIM BOY 1996 Born /Masters/ Working in France/Father returned from Saudi Arabia Bangalore resident is looking for a suitable match (080-69072090)

MUSLIM BOY 1996 Born MS in Engineering Working as a Engineer / USA Newyork Bangalore Resident is looking for a suitable match (080-69103101)

MUSLIM BOY 1990 / 180cm/ MBBS (MD) / Bangalore Resident Affluent family is looking for good family (080-69103101)

NRI

TAMIL RC 31/175 M.E,Ph.D, (Canada) , PR,Researcher Rs45 LPA affluent family Chennai seeks Professional bride working/willing to settle in Canada. CNB- WA 9940054040

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 9345634365

TAMIL

CHRISTIAN NADAR, 34 Yrs, Remarriage, B.Tech, IT Professional at Chennai, Income 20 Lakhs. Ct 8138900470

CHRISTIAN NADAR, Doctor, Divorcee 38yrs/178cm, MBBS, Dip in Cardiology better earning lives in Nagercoil seeks qualified/ Divorced Bride.9003983230

RC CHRISTIAN, 42yrs/170, B.E. Software Engineer, never married, works for mnc, Chennai, CT- 9500188067

CHRISTIAN, CASTE no bar, 25 yrs, MS, Software developer at California. Affluent with a good net worth. Ct 8138900575.

✓ **HINDU KULALAR(UDAYAR)** 44Y/ 169cm, M.Tech, Seeks Suitable Bride and caste no bar, Ph: 9384276066

TAMIL

ARCOT MUDALIAR MBA IIM 170/Sep'88 Thiruvathirai (Clean Horoscope) Unmarried Handsome Fair TeeTotaler, 52 Lakhs, 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:9894979911

B.Tech BITS Pilani Mudaliar Height 183 cm born Nov 91 MNC Bangalore Sal 65 lacs seeks Bride Tamil, Telugu. Contact: 7382620365

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

VELLORE AGAMUDAYA Mudaliyar, Rishabam,38/165,BE SWE,MNC Chicago USA,1L USDA,Seeks working SWE. mpragathies@gmail.com

MUDALIAR 30/180 BE, Handsome Sr.SWE,Walmart 6000000.PA, Affluenet Family, CNB. 9043991629, 9043987029

MUDALIAR:29/ 178CM, Handsome, B.Tech,Business, Having own Manufacturing Industry, Hotels, Com. Complex, Chennai, Only son, Elite Family- seeks bride any degree - 9840566993, 8939912419

BRIDE WANTED Hindu Nadar,28yrs, B.Tech, MBA,2laks pm, Elite Business Family Cont 9380791999 / 9841329471

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

AUDITOR/ 45 Chennai/ 30 L p.a Seeks Any Vegetarian Hindu Girl. Contact : 9884398109

HINDU, CASTE no bar, 25 yrs, MBA, Production Manager at Bangalore. Rich and affluent family. Ct 8138901383

HINDU, MUDALIYAR, 25 Yrs, B.E, Production Manager at Chennai, Upper middle class family.Ct 8138900523

HINDU, BRAHMIN, 29 Yrs, MBA, Business at Madurai, Business class family. Ct 9072777801.

HINDU, CASTE no bar, 28 yrs, MSW, Production manager at Coimbatore. Ct 8138900305

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

TAMIL

SIRKAZHI THENGALAI lyengar Parents, seeking alliance for their Divorced son Vasishtha.Anusham, Viruchigam Born 05.10.1989 working as Bank Manager. Sub sect No bar. Divorcee without issues or aged girls are accepted. Contact:9962737404/ 9442933688

TAMIL

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



Police and villagers organising an awareness rally against rooster fights and other banned games in Eluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A.P. police destroy rooster fight arenas

Rajulapudi Srinivas
ELURU

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 ad-

ressing system not to conduct rooster fights and other banned games. “We will take severe action if anybody indulges in banned games,” the police said. 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

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, 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-



T. Veena

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 ven-

dors 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.

Girls asked to remove shirts as punishment in Jharkhand school

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

In a shocking incident, the principal of a private school in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district was accused of ordering more than 100 girls in the tenth grade to remove their shirts after their friends wrote messages on them. The parents of the students have demanded strict action against the principal. The incident occurred on Thursday, which was the students' last day of school before board exams. The tenth grade students wrote good wishes on each other's shirts. However, the act did not go down well with the school principal, who instructed them to remove their shirts and go home in their blazers. As per the sources, the students requested the school administration to not take such a step but it was to no avail.

Dhanbad's Deputy Commissioner has formed a committee to investigate the incident

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 under mental pressure. This has increased their tension.”

Resignation demanded The parents have demanded for the resignation and 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.

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 years. 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 neigh-

Over 60 persons 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 indi-

viduals by verifying phone records and from the information in a note in her possession. Her parents were completely unaware of the abuse. Since the incidents occurred when she was a minor, sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) 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.

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 communal charged remarks about Muslims during a discussion on a news channel.

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 Magistrate 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
BENGALURU

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar has disfavoured extensions given to those in government services, saying 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 positions. 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 of the Constitution.” He expressed concern over question paper leaks and said: “This is a me-

nace. Your fairness of selection will have no meaning if paper leakages are there, and it has become an industry, a commerce.”

Patent contribution

Talking at the Bharat Electronics Ltd. R&D award ceremony, 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.”

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 Chikmagalur 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. **Next CM** Asked about the demand of some party workers that



D.K. Shivakumar

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 run”. Mr. Shivakumar was in Sringeri to participate in the Suvarna Bharati programme.

Kadamattam church gets a makeover



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

K.A. Martin
KOCHI

The popular Kadamattam St. 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 9th century by Mar Abo, a Persian bishop. “There is also a Persian

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 Nelli-mala, 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 devo-

tees from Pampa to Nilackal. To manage the anticipated influx, the area has been divided into 13 zones. The Pathanamthitta District Medical Office has established a control room operating from Monday for

the next 72 hours. Devotees 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 Sanmihanam. To bolster security, the Travancore Devaswom Board Vigilance has installed 245 advanced surveillance cameras from Marakkootam to the Sanmihanam. 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.

INBRIEF



BPSC sends legal notice to JSP founder Prashant Kishor

The Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) has sent a legal notice to Jan Suraj 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 BJP 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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		6	5				
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	9						5

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. has advised civilian 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 in 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 years.

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 take-off 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-graded material.

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*.

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 livelihood, education, 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.

The new museum,

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 Rijiju 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 for 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. “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 him.

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 Haj 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,



Rush hour: Bengaluru is notorious for its traffic jams that can leave drivers waiting on roads for hours. FILE PHOTO

taking the 18th spot.

Barranquilla City (36 minutes, 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

their average travel time and congestion level. The study used Floating Car Data (FCD) to calculate travel times.

Chennai was 31st in the list, with drivers spending 30 minutes and 20 seconds to cover 10 km while Mumbai (29 minutes, 26 seconds) was 39th.

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

INBRIEF



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.

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



Problem of plenty: Akasa Air operates a fleet of 26 aircraft, but 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).

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

The 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 SEBI-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 after 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 SEBI 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 Zweigintzow, 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



Kristalina Georgieva

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.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT
e - Procurement Notice (Amendment)
1) 'e'-Procurement Notice No. 01/SEIC/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), Karimnagar Dist. 2) Mid Manair Dam at Manwada(V), Boinpalli(M), Rajanna Sircilla 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.
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DIPR R.O.No.9044-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2024-25 Dt. 11.01.2025

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-:: संशोधित ई-निविदा सूचना संख्या 01-02/2024-25 ::-

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NIT No.	UBN No.	Name of Work
01/ 2024-25	PHE2425 WSOB07236	Water Supply Scheme for Augmentation of UWSS Kushalgarh, District Banswara including 05 years O&M after 01 year of Defect Liability Period under AMRUT 2.0
02/ 2024-25	PHE2425 WLOB07257	Water Supply Scheme for Augmentation of UWSS Pratapgah, Chhoti Sadri and Dhariawad, District Pratapgah including 05 years O&M after 01 year of Defect 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
1	Last Date for Submission of Bid Document	07.01.2025 06:00 PM	16.01.2025 06:00 PM	https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in and https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in
2	Last Date for physical Submission of Bid Security and other mandatory Documents	08.01.2025 01:00 PM	17.01.2025 01:00 PM	https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in and https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in
3	Date of Online Opening of Technical Bids	08.01.2025 03:00 PM	17.01.2025 03:00 PM	https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in and https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in

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SCIENCE

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 cardiovascular disease 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 beverage-attributable 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 Sub-

Saharan 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 sugar-sweetened 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 one-third 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 say. 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

Besides 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 carbon-dioxide 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 into bacteria, the enzymes remain 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 enzyme degrades the 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 isolated another soil bacteria *Comamonas testosteroni* that breaks down the phthalates produced by DEHP degradation into carbon-dioxide and water. In the lab, the researchers used the enzymes in sequence to first break 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 inter-

mediate compound produced after this step is converted into 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 into 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 to 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 to directly convert the DEHP plasticizer into water and 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.

SNAPSHOTS



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 *Ahivaytum bahnadooiveche*, 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



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

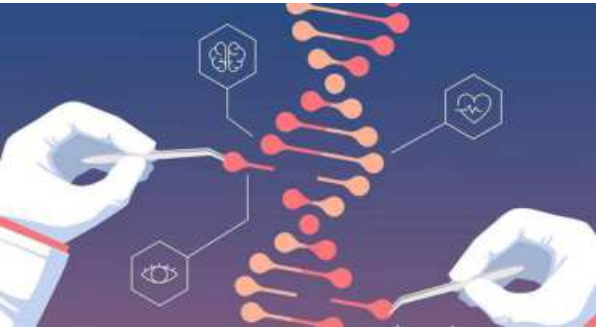
D. Balasubramanian

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 encoded 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 CRISPR-Cas9. This is a mechanism that can edit the genomes of humans, pathogens, and 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 patented 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 ‘knock-out’ 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 report 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 patient-specific stem cells (*Nature Communications*, June 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 / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

PROFILES

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

More 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 deja vu.

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 results.

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 – 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

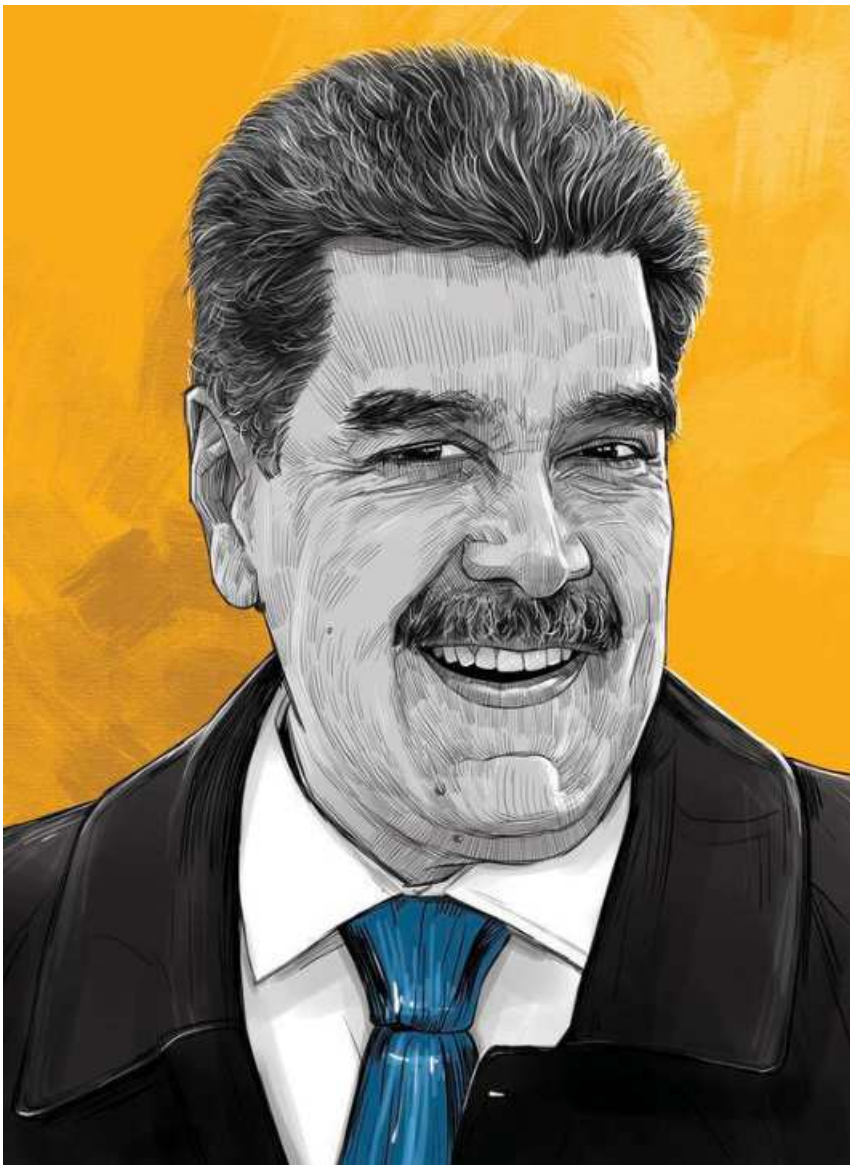


ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

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 \$65-million 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 Rajvi

The 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 oth-



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

er, 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 missions.

As LPSC Director, Mr. Narayanan was leading the development of propulsion systems for the Gaganyaan programme when he was named the next Se-

cretary, Department of Space, and Chairman, Space Commission, for a period of two years.

Success story

In many ways, his is the quintessential hard-won-success 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 subsequently obtained 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 2001.

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 Geosyn-

chronous 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-and-tested 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, multispecialty nature of present-day space-tech.

Many of the past chairpersons have headed multiple ISRO facilities such as 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, ISRO 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 times.

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

On 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,



GRAPHICNEWS

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 the "shackles of 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 large.

Last November, both countries developed a sub-committee 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.

[illegible]

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

HIL

Y.B. Sarangi
ROURKELA

Young 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 quarter.

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 put-

ting 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 scripted its third victory.

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).

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 five-match T20I series against England, starting January 22.

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-



Shami. 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 pace-bowling 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

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 eye 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, Tanuja 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 Dev
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 hockey.

With the inclusion of two more franchises deferred until next season, only 96 players could be slotted into Delhi SG Pipers, JSW Soorma Hockey Club, Shrachhi Rahr Bengal Tigers, and Odisha Warriors.

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 Slam.

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 the tournament. REUTERS

Top Picks

Men: 2-Zverev vs Pouille; 6-Ruud vs Munar; 20-Fils vs Virtanen; 26-Machac vs Nagal
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.

Djokovic may be 37 but the Serb can never be written 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 denies.

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 Singh Sekhon 16, Palpreet Singh 14, Tushal Singh 14). Tamil Nadu 78 (Anantharaj 17, Aravind Kumar Muthukrishnan 16, Muin Bek Hafeez 12) bt Karnataka 51 (Samanth Sathyanarayan 13, Abhishek Gowda 11). **Quarterfinals:** 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

ISL

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 superb 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.

Mohammedan didn't 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 Guwahati

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 arch-rival, 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.

INBRIEF



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, 8.15 p.m.

Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Monday)

Pacific Heights may score an encore in feature event

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.

1. 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) Gaurav 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

2. COMMON LAND PLATE (Div. II) (1,200m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) – 12. 55: 1. Dyanosh (2) Shivansh 60, 2. Malibu (6) Saqlain 60, 3. Golden Gazelle (1) H.M. Akshay 57.5, 4. Blissful (4) R.S. Jodha 57, 5. Rival (7) P. Sai K 55.5, 6. Shadow Fax (9) Kuldeep Sr. 55, 7. Mr. Perfect (3) Mohit 54, 8. Deccan Spirit (8) B. Nikhil 53.5, 9. Happy Soul (10) Kuldeep Jr. 52.5 and 10. Hurricane Wave (5) Afroz K 50.5.

1. DECCAN SPIRIT, 2. SHADOW FAX, 3. RIVAL

3. CHALLURI SUSHEELA & NARASIMHA REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (1,400m), (Terms) Maiden, 3-y-o only – 1.25: 1. La Quinta (II) 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. Infinita (2) Ashad Asbar 54.5, 6. Konaseema (9) Abhay Singh 54.5, 7. Miss Smiley Angel (4) 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

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. Normul (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) B. Nikhil 53, 8. Politics (4) Md. Ismail 53, 9. Politics (4) Gaurav 52.5 and 10. Most Beautiful (3) Ajay K 52.

1. SARGENT, 2. FIRST LADY, 3. STAR CRUISE

5. B. VIJAY REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (1,600m) Maiden, 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 2. 30: 1. See My Attitude (8) Afroz K 61, 2. Bellingham (1) B.R. Kumar 58, 3. Always Special (12) Mukesh 55, 4. Golden Unicorn (9) Kuldeep Sr. 54, 5. Hoping High (2) Mohit 54, 6.

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

Devdutt 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 133-run second-wicket partnership.

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 PUSHAKAR

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,

Gritty Maaya rallies to beat Tupitsyna

TENNIS

Sports Bureau
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.

In front of the packed 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.

In the boys final, Dong-



Champions Donghyun Hwang and Maaya Rajeshwaran. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

hyun Hwang of Korea proved a hard nut to crack for Roshan Santhosh as he dropped only two games.

The seasoned coaches, Balram Singh and Nar Singh, presented the trophies.

The results: Finals: U-18: Boys: Donghyun Hwang (Kor) bt Roshan Santhosh (USA) 6-1, 6-1; **Girls:** Maaya Rajeshwaran bt Ekaterina Tupitsyna 3-6, 7-5, 6-2.

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RED SATIN PLATE (Div. I) (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 (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 CHAMPION, 3. THAT'S MY MISSION

Day's Best: UCHCHAIHSHRAVAS
Jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5. (ii) 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9.

Mini Jackpot: (i) 2, 3, 4 & 5, (ii) 6, 7, 8 & 9.

Treble: (i) 1, 2 & 3, (ii) 4, 5 & 6, (iii) 7, 8 & 9.

Tanala: All races.



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



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The 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.

