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KERALA RAPE CASE

Court denies bail to MLA; Cong. expels him

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Postal dept. moots proxy address framework

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HIGHEST SINCE 2009

'U.S. deported 3,258 Indian citizens in 2025'

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PARLEY

Do we need to change how a city is governed?

Experts discuss ways to make cities responsive

OPINION » PAGE 9



PINK-BALL TEST

Root and Stare shine on the opening day

SPORT » PAGE 17

IN BRIEF



Row over ST tag: Assam Minister, tribal body meet

GUWAHATI

Assam's Tribal Affairs Minister Ranoj Pegu met the leaders of the Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations, Assam on Thursday amid a row over the granting of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities. » Page 4

DoE announces launch of AI drive for 5 lakh students

NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) has announced the launch of an 'innovation movement' to encourage five lakh school and college students to tackle real-world challenges using artificial intelligence (AI). » Page 2

SC tells States to replace distressed BLOs for SIR

Court says States could deploy more staff for work, reported distress of BLOs cannot 'hamper' exercise; it stresses State employees as BLOs have obligation to perform assigned statutory duties

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday put the onus entirely on State governments to substitute employees unable to bear the work pressure of a booth-level officer (BLO), while refusing to let the reported distress of the workforce "hamper" a rightly scoured second phase of the special intensive revision of electoral rolls conducted by the Election Commission across nine States and three Union Territories.

The States could also choose to depute additional employees to strengthen the BLO ranks and reduce their work stress, it said.

A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi emphasised that State employees recruited as BLOs had an obligation to perform the statutory duties assigned to them – in this case distributing enumeration forms to electors as part of the special intensive revision (SIR) process.

The court said it was for the State governments to "obviate the hardships" of BLOs. "Whenever an employee has any individual, specific reasons for seeking exemption from the assigned duties, the competent authority, the State government, may consider such requests on a case to case basis and replace such persons," it directed.

The Bench underscored that States were obliged to provide the Election Commission (EC) with the requisite human resources to complete the SIR within the specified deadline.

The court's unflinching response came on a plea that BLOs were unable to meet the overwhelming targets set by the EC, collapsing under pressure or even choosing to take their own lives.

The EC, represented by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, said claims of BLOs wilting under work pressure were "works of imagination". He submitted that each polling booth was limited to 1,200 electors under the EC's rationalisation scheme. The BLO assigned to a booth had 37 days, from November 4 to December 11, to complete the enumeration work.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 12

> Whenever an employee has any individual, specific reasons for seeking exemption from the assigned duties, the competent authority, the State government, may consider such requests on a case to case basis and replace such persons
>
> SUPREME COURT



6 more bodies found; Bijapur Maoist death count hits 18

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

A day after a gunfight broke out between security forces and Maoists along the Bijapur-Dantewada border in Chhattisgarh, the police on Thursday said that six more bodies have been recovered and a total of 18 Maoists have been killed in the anti-Naxal operation.

On Wednesday, the police had said that 12 Maoists had been killed. Three security personnel also lost their lives in the operation. Three other injured security personnel are receiving treatment.

Of the 18 slain Naxalites, 16 have been identified as senior cadres, including Modiyami Vella, alleged commander of company no. 2 of People's Liberation Guerrilla Army.

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 12

IndiGo cancels 550 flights, airports see continued turmoil

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Chaos persisted at airports across the country as IndiGo's flight delays stretched into Thursday, forcing the cancellation of hundreds of flights. The disruption hit other carriers, which were forced to cancel some flights as IndiGo aircraft occupied parking bays amid lack of available crew.

According to PTI, IndiGo cancelled over 550 domestic and international flights. Major airports affected included Mumbai (85 flights), Bengaluru (73), Hyderabad (68), Chennai (31), and Delhi (30). At Hyderabad airport, passengers raised slogans.

Meanwhile, top IndiGo officials met Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu and Faiz Kidwai, head of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The airline informed them that it would curtail flights from December 8 to minimise flight disruptions, and delays and cancellations will continue for the next two to three days, a DGCA statement said.

IndiGo has sought exemption from implementing the norms on reduced night flying hours until February 10.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 12



Passengers waiting in queue at IndiGo counter at Bengaluru airport on Thursday. PTI

Bilateral bonds



Warm welcome: Russian President Vladimir Putin receiving a traditional welcome in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's presence at Palam Air Force Base in Delhi on Thursday. AFP REPORT ON PAGE 12

India, Russia Ministers reaffirm defence ties

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov co-chaired the 22nd session of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation here on Thursday.

Both sides reiterated that the bilateral partnership is rooted in deep mutual trust, shared principles, and long-standing respect, the Ministry of Defence said. The meeting was held ahead of the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit.

FULL REPORT ON » PAGE 12

DU prof. Hany Babu gets bail in Bhima Koregaon case after 5 yrs. of pretrial jail

Purnima Sah
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday ordered the release of Delhi University professor Hany Babu, accused in the Bhima Koregaon-Elgar Parishad case, on bail after more than five years of pretrial incarceration.

A Division Bench of Justices A.S. Gadkari and Rajnish Rao Bhonsale cited the violation of the right to life under Article 21 and prolonged delay in trial while setting aside the order by a special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court on February 1, 2022 rejecting Mr. Babu's plea for bail.



Prof. Hany Babu being produced in a special NIA court. FILE PHOTO

The court noted that Mr. Babu had been in custody since April 14, 2020, and the trial had not even commenced. "Perusal of the entire record clearly indicates that the appellant was arrested on 14th April 2020 and as of today, is in more than 5 years and 7 months," it observed.

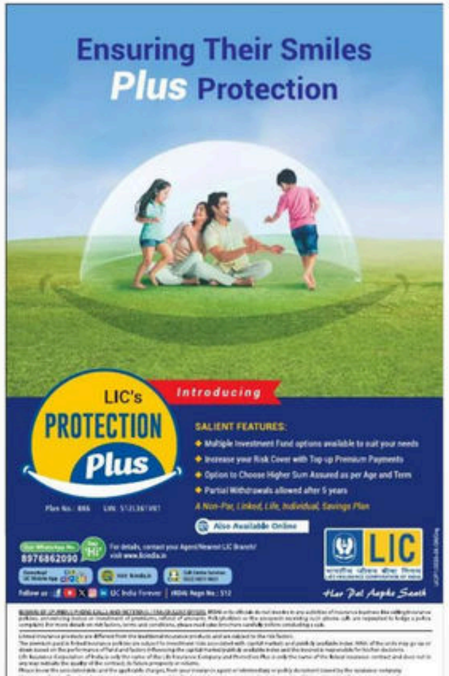
Right to life

The Bench added, "It is by now a well-settled and recognised principle of law that prolonged incarceration without trial amounts to the infringement of the right of an accused enshrined under Article 21. The prolonged incarceration and the unlikelihood of the trial being completed in reasonable time or near future necessitate a consequential release of the undertrial on bail."

It directed that Mr. Babu be released on bail upon executing a personal bond of ₹1,00,000 with one or two sureties. The court asked him to surrender his passport, inform the NIA and the trial court of his residence before release, provide his contact details, and report to the NIA office in Mumbai on the first Monday of every month. The Bench rejected the probe agency's plea to stay the order to allow it to approach the Supreme Court.

The case stems from "inflammatory" speeches delivered at the Elgar Parishad event in Pune on December 31, 2017, which authorities claim triggered caste violence the next day.

Mr. Babu was arrested on July 28, 2020 and accused of links with the



Mist sprayers will be installed at nine major pollution hotspots: CM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday inspected the newly installed mist sprayers at ITO and said the government is preparing to instal 305 such units across nine major pollution hotspots in the Capital.

"Mist technology is being seen as an effective solution against pollution. Trials in some New Delhi Municipal Council areas have shown positive results," Ms. Gupta said, asserting that an extensive plan is being drawn up to cover all major roads with mist sprayers.

'War against pollution'

In a post on X, the CM said the mist sprayers at ITO would help control dust particles in a high-intensity traffic zone. "From infrastructure to monitoring mechanisms and strict enforcement to technological expansion, we are working on mission mode. The war against pollution in Delhi continues," she said.

Delhi's average air quality index at 4 p.m. on Thursday improved to 304, compared with the 342 recorded the previous day.

Yet, it remains in the "very poor" category. Air quality has largely remained in the "very poor" to "severe" range since Deepavali.

Meanwhile, over 80 Padma awardee doctors have issued a joint national advisory stating that PM2.5 levels in north India often rise 20 to 40 times above the World Health Organization limits, leaving nearly 70% of the population breathing unsafe air.

Anti-pollution stir: 4 accused remanded in 7-day custody

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Two magisterial courts on Thursday remanded four protesters to seven days of judicial custody in a case related to the alleged use of pepper spray on police personnel during a protest at India Gate against pollution in the city last month.

The four accused are Ravjot Kaur, Gurkirat Kaur, Kranti, and Ayisha Wahya. Earlier on Monday, three of the accused were sent to three-day police custody.

DoE launches AI innovation drive targeting 5 lakh students

Initiative to be implemented across all education districts from Dec. to March in run-up to India-AI Impact Summit 2026; govt. schools directed to ensure 50% participation; Delhi AI Grind will end in contest featuring student-designed projects

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Directorate of Education (DoE) has announced the launch of Delhi AI Grind, a citywide "innovation movement" to encourage five lakh school and college students to tackle real-world challenges using artificial intelligence (AI).

It is being organised by the Delhi government's Education, Higher Education, and Technical Education departments in the run-up to the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 scheduled to be held in the city on February 19 and 20.

The notification, dated December 3, stated that the initiative will be implemented across all education districts in the Capital from December to March, "with follow-up activities thereafter, as required".

It also outlined plans and a presentation for schools with the aim of positioning Delhi as the "natural launchpad for India's AI decade" by leveraging its numerous schools and young, skilled workforce.

The programme targets students in the 10-25 age group, with mandatory participation of those in Classes 6 to 12. It will culminate in a competition, with school-level mini-grinds and orientation sessions scheduled between December 15-24, followed by district and State-level selections from January 1-20.

By January-end, shortlisted teams will be announced, leading to a Delhi-level showcase. A coffee-table book featuring the top projects will be unveiled. From March, the drive will focus on continuous engagement, establishing youth networks, and setting up innovation labs. Further details on master-classes, industry visits, and round-table sessions will be announced soon.

According to the DoE notification, government schools and institutes must ensure 50% participation in the initiative. The competition will involve students designing AI solutions in sectors such as education and future skills, awarded maximum points for distance, sibling/parent alumni status, and being a single girl child.

"Most parents prefer to fill up forms online. But some want to visit the school and see how far it is from their homes. So, offline forms are available too," said Sudha Acharya, principal of ITL Public School in Dwarka.

"More parents prefer to fill up forms online. But some want to visit the school and see how far it is from their homes. So, offline forms are available too," said Sudha Acharya, principal of ITL Public School in Dwarka.



Designing solutions: Delhi AI Grind, a citywide "innovation movement," is aimed at encouraging school and college students to tackle real-world challenges using artificial intelligence. FILE PHOTO

Nursery admissions: application window opens; Dec. 27 last date

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The application window for nursery admissions opened on Thursday with private unaided recognised schools in Delhi uploading the forms on their websites and making them available on their premises. Parents can submit applications until December 27.

According to the admission schedule notified by the Directorate of Education, the first list will be put out on January 23 and the second list on February 9. The process will conclude on March 31.

Admissions will be based on a point system, with the criteria set by schools. Most schools have

'New learning culture'

According to the notification, the drive envisions AI-integrated classrooms and aims to foster a "new learning culture" that imparts age-appropriate exposure to technology, shapes futures, and creates long-term "future readiness" for the "AI decade".

It stated that the drive aims to build "permanent innovation infrastructure" that connects students, start-ups, mentors, and government departments.

The objective is to further "establish Delhi as the national benchmark for city-led innovation, showcasing outcomes at the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 and shaping a model replicable across India and the Global South".

HC hits out at lawyer for appearing in court with red tape on lips

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court recently recorded its "strong displeasure" over the conduct of a lawyer who appeared for a petitioner with a strip of red tape on his lips. The lawyer claimed that it was a symbolic protest against being "stopped midway from arguing in earlier hearings".

A Bench of Justices Nitin Wasudeo Sambre and Ashish Dayal, while refraining from taking action against the lawyer, termed the act "unbecoming and unbefitting conduct".

The incident unfolded on December 1 during the hearing of a contempt petition concerning the allotment of a plot sanctioned in 1987 under the Centre's 20-Point Programme. The petitioner alleged that he was not allotted the plot originally promised to him.

Advocate R.K. Saini then entered the courtroom "leisurely with red sticklat tape pasted on his lips".

Questioned by the Bench over the move, Mr. Saini replied that during the last two hearings, he was "stopped midway" in his arguments and the red tape symbolised that he had been "silenced".

The Bench clarified that on previous occasions, Mr. Saini's submissions had become "too lengthy and repetitive". It noted that the conduct could have warranted action, but in view of the lawyer's standing at the Bar, it would not proceed against him.

The matter will be heard next on January 21, 2026.

NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA SAMITI
An Autonomous Organization under Ministry of Education (Deptt of School Education & Literacy)
B-15, Sector-62, NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh 201309

Notification

Application(s) are invited for empanelment of Advocates in Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti on purely contract basis. Interested candidates may visit Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti website www.navodaya.gov.in for qualifications, application form & other details. The last date for submission of applications is 15.12.2025 up to 17:30 hrs.

Issued by Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti

Office of
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER TAUNI DEVI DIVISION
H.P. Public Works Department, TAUNI DEVI 177023
Telephone: 01973-279422, e-mail: ee-tnv-hp@nic.in

Tender Notice

The Executive Engineer, Division, HP PWD, Tauni Devi on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the item rate bids in e-procurement system from the eligible class of contractor register with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table:-

Sr. No.	Name of work	Construction Cost (RS)	Starting date for downloading bid	EMD (4-7%)	Deadline for submission of Bid	Time limit	Cost of bidding document
1.	Repair and maintenance of Govt Degree College Sugnour Fibre Tehsil Sugnour Distt. Hamirpur (Dilk- Construction of Elevated parking Roof Dasnal work.	14,78,343.00	11.12.2025	1,18,000.00	15.12.2025	Twelve Months.	1000.00

The bidder are advised to refer other details of tender from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in date of opening of tender 16.12.2025 at 11.00PM.

Executive Engineer
Tauni Devi Division
HPPWD Tauni Devi, Pin No. 177023
Tel.No. 01973-279422, e-mail: ee-tnv-hp@nic.in
on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh

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Tender Notice No: TT/TNPCB/F 10722/TNSHORE-FTB/2025 Dated: 30.10.2025

E-tender (2-cover system) through TN etenders' website are invited for "Supply, Installation, Commencement and maintenance of Floating Trash Boom Barrier on the Adyar River, Chennai, Tamil Nadu"

E-tender is called for an agency to "Supply, Install, Commence and maintain of the Floating Trash Boom Barrier on the Adyar River, Chennai, Tamil Nadu" as per the specified terms and conditions.

The tender documents can be downloaded from https://tntenders.gov.in and www.tnpcb.gov.in on or after 05.12.2025. The last date for the receipt of the tender is 04.01.2026.

Chairperson,
Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board,
Chennai - 32.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR
(At/Po. – Ambapua, Near Income Tax Office, Berhampur-760011, Ganjam, Odisha)
E-Mail: serwbpr2004@yahoo.com, Tel No.: 0680-2943671

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/13 2025-26/EPS

Identification No.	Name of work	No. of Works	Approx. Estimated Cost (In lakh)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion
Online Tender / ID 2025-26/ EPS	Bridge Work under MITC BHANDARA YOJANA (MIP)	01 No.	Rs. 498.01 Lakhs	'A' Class as applicable	Period of Completion as provided as per Clause-3 of Annexure of NIT

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding From	To
Chief Construction Engineer, R.W. Circle, Berhampur.	Online Tender/ 13-2025-26/EPS	06.12.2025 at 10.00 A.M.	26.12.2025 upto 5.30 P.M.

(1) EMD / Bid Security, Cost of this document is to be transferred through Online as per the procedure mentioned in the DTCN.
(2) Non-submission of the information/documents through online by the bidder as per the items mentioned in the eligible criteria of the DTCN will also liable for rejection of his tender.
Further details & Corrigendum if any can be seen from the website. – www.tenderwizard.com.in

Chief Construction Engineer, R.W.Circle, Berhampur

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BERHAMPUR
(At/Po. – Ambapua, Near Income Tax Office, Berhampur-760011, Ganjam, Odisha)
E-Mail: serwbpr2004@yahoo.com, Tel No.: 0680-2943671

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. Online Tender/12 2025-26/EPS

Identification No.	Name of work	No. of Works	Approx. Estimated Cost (In lakh)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion
Online Tender / ID 2025-26/ EPS	Road Works under MMGY (MIP)	01 No.	Rs.242.21 Lakhs	'B' Class & 'A' Class as applicable	Period of Completion as provided as per Clause-3 of Annexure of NIT

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding From	To
Chief Construction Engineer, R.W. Circle, Berhampur.	Online Tender / 12-2025-26/EPS	06.12.2025 at 10.00 A.M.	26.12.2025 upto 5.30 P.M.

(1) EMD / Bid Security, Cost of this document is to be transferred through Online as per the procedure mentioned in the DTCN.
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Chief Construction Engineer, R.W.Circle, Berhampur

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice

My Client Mr. Sharma Ravi S/o Late Shri Shankar Dayal Sharma Ravi, and Mrs. Sharma Ravi W/o Late Shri Shankar Dayal Sharma Ravi, both residents of Shop No. 1, Ground Floor, Gali No. 1, Ram Nagar, Delhi-110092 have lost the original sale deeds of their aforesaid property bearing no. G-01, Sonia Apartment, Ram Nagar, Delhi-110092 and have got lodged a complaint report to that effect in PS Rajendernagar, Delhi. Hence on 05.11.2025, if any one finds the said deeds of aforesaid property of my client, please handover the same to the undersigned. It is public declaration on behalf of my aforesaid client that any loss/matter said not created and change in respect of her aforesaid property, if any, shall be her responsibility or otherwise. In case, anyone have any claims, right, title or interest in the said property of my client by any means, please contact this undersigned, within Three (3) days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, it shall be presumed that no such claim exists. KUNAL KALRA ADVOCATE 7, GANDHI MARKET, MOTIA ROAD NEW DELHI-110092

Public Notice

It is known to all that my client Mrs. Alli Sinha, w/o Mr. Vinay Kumar Sinha, owner of the Entire Basement measuring 445.81 sq. square yards, bearing No. C-27, situated at Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delh-, has/have/replaced the original sale deeds of her aforesaid property bearing no. C-27, Sonia Apartment, Ram Nagar, Delhi-110092 and have got lodged a complaint report to that effect in PS Rajendernagar, Delhi. Hence on 05.11.2025, if any one finds the said deeds of aforesaid property of my client, please handover the same to the undersigned. It is public declaration on behalf of my aforesaid client that any loss/matter said not created and change in respect of her aforesaid property, if any, shall be her responsibility or otherwise. In case, anyone have any claims, right, title or interest in the said property of my client by any means, please contact this undersigned, within Three (3) days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, it shall be presumed that no such claim exists. KUNAL KALRA ADVOCATE 7, GANDHI MARKET, MOTIA ROAD NEW DELHI-110092

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DEATH

OBITUARY



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Conspiracy cannot erase truth: Soren on HC order on job test

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Over hundreds of candidates gathered at the Jharkhand Chief Minister's residential office in Ranchi to express their gratitude on Thursday, a day after the High Court vacated the stay on the publication of results and appointments of the Jharkhand State Selection Commission Combined Graduate Level (JSSC CGL) examination. They thanked Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his wife Kalpana Soren, MLA from Gandey constituency.

A Division Bench of the High Court had on Wednesday dismissed a petition seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation probe into the alleged leak of question papers of the JSSC CGL exam conducted last year in September.

"The joy on your face bears witness to your struggles, your dedication. A conspiracy can indeed blur the truth for a short while, but it can never erase it," Mr. Soren said, sharing on X photos of the candidates celebrating the court order. He added that his government stands firmly with the youth at every step. "Our vision is that the State will prosper only when the youth are happy," Mr. Soren said.

Omar govt. sends report on revised quota policy to L-G

Hope Sinha approves it, says J&K CM on report meant to increase open-category share to 50%; Opposition parties, including PDP, BJP, JKPC, condemn 'attempts' to reduce RBA, EWS quotas

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR


J&K CM Omar Abdullah inspecting a passing-out parade at an Army base on the outskirts of Srinagar on Thursday. PRAVEEN KUMAR

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said his government has submitted a proposal to Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha to rationalise the existing reservation policy.

After a revision of quotas in the Union Territory under Central rule in 2024, the share of seats for 'Open Merit' applicants in government educational institutes and vacancies in government departments was reduced to 30%.

"The file was signed yesterday (Wednesday) and sent to the L-G for vetting. We hope he will approve it and the order will be issued thereafter," the CM said. Mr. Abdullah, however, did not divulge the details of the proposal.

After assuming power in October 2024, the Omar government set up a three-member subcommittee to study the reservation policy and suggest measures to increase the open-category share to 50%. Earlier in March 2024, the L-G had approved an additional 10% reservation for newly included tribes, including Paharis, in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category and added 15 new communities in the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) category, reducing the proportion of 'Open Merit' seats and prompting a major street campaign by general category applicants.

Opposition apprehension

Opposition parties in the UT, including the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), expressed apprehension about the government planning to reduce Reserved Backward Areas (RBA) and Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quotas. RBA category aspirants recently wrote to the CM, stating: "The share was reduced from 20% to 10% in 2020, even as the community constitutes approximately 25% of the total population." The J&K Students Association said they had submitted a report to the CM0 advising against reducing EWS or RBA quotas.

J&K Peoples Conference (JKPC) general secretary Imran Reza Ansari said the changes would be an "assault on vulnerable Kashmiri-speaking communities masquerading as reform". BJP spokesperson Altaf Thakur said, "The NC has struck at the rights of the poorest sections of society."

Biren flags 'existential crisis' amid poppy cultivation in Manipur

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Former Manipur Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh has flagged the State's "existential crisis" caused by the destruction of forests for poppy plantations.

His warning preceded a petition on Thursday by the Joint Tribes Council Manipur (JTCM) to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his attention to the impact of unchecked illegal migration from Myanmar on the State's indigenous population.

Sharing a video from a Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district on Wednesday, Mr Singh wrote on X: "This video, recorded on December 3, shows why recurrent floods have taken place in the State. The footage shows a poppy plantation at Kolnoi and Selsi hill ranges of IT Road under T. Waichong Sub-division in Kangpokpi district. All our forest(s) have been destroyed... None of our leaders has spoken out against such wide-scale devastation."

"It is suspected that armed militants are involved in these illicit activities. Unless we take concrete action, the State will face an existential crisis," he said.

Meanwhile, the JTCM claimed that the "alarming" rate of migration has had far-reaching consequences on the indigenous population, social security, and the demographic balance of Manipur. "In recent years, Manipur has witnessed a growing influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar and from Indian States," it said in the letter to Mr. Modi with a copy to Home Minister Amit Shah.

Timings
DELHI

FRIDAY, DEC. 05
SUNRISE 06:53 SET 17:24
MOONRISE 17:57 SET 07:23

SATURDAY, DEC. 06
SUNRISE 07:00 SET 17:24
MOONRISE 18:44 SET 08:20

SUNDAY, DEC. 07
SUNRISE 07:01 SET 17:25
MOONRISE 19:34 SET 09:02

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	23	06
Safdarjung	23	06
Palam	23	07

Delhi Palam Today
23°C The weather will be dry. Day will be pleasant with light breeze. Night will be very cool and hazy. Pollution level will be severe.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
23°C Morning will be very cool with shallow fog and mist. Day will be pleasant but with severe pollution level. Night also will be cool and hazy.

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CSIR-CENTRAL MECHANICAL ENGINEERING RESEARCH INSTITUTE
(Council of Scientific & Industrial Research)
Mahatma Gandhi Avenue, Durgapur-713209 (West Bengal)

Recruitment Notice (Advt. No.10/2025)

CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute, Durgapur, a premier Institute under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ministry of S & T, Govt. of India, invites online applications from the citizens of India for filling up of one (UR) post for **Security Officer** in pay level-7 of the 7th CPC pay matrix at CSIR-CMERI, Durgapur. For detailed advertisement & submission of the online application, etc., the interested eligible candidates may log on to the Institute website, **www.cmeri.res.in → career → vacancies →Advt. No.10/2025.**

Controller of Administration

UJVN LIMITED
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763909, Fax: 0135-2764566
CIN No.U40101UR2001SGC025865, Website:www.ujvn.com

Tender Cancellation Notice

Due to unavoidable circumstances,the following online Bid identification Numbers are hereby cancelled:
(1) 1-01/EE(Dobar)/2025-26
(2) 1-02/EE(Dobar)/2025-26
(3) 1-03/ET(Dobar)/2025-26
Further updates or re-tender notices will be made available on the website and on the e procurement portal http://ultenders.gov.in

AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY — Executive Engineer (Solar)

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer,
Chamarajpet Division, 2nd Main, T.R. Mill Road,
Chamarajpet, Bengaluru - 560018.

No: EE/CMP/TENDER-PROC/15/2025-26 Date: 04-12-2025

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT) - (SHORT TERM)
(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal Only)

Executive Engineer, Chamarajpet Division, BCCC, Zone-2, Bengaluru, invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in BCCC / KPWD / CPWD / Railways / MES / National Highway or any State Government Organizations for the work as detailed below.

(Standard Tender Document - KW-4)

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1	Repair and Improvements to K.R. Market. **Estimated Amount (Rs. in Lakhs): 145.00, EMD Amount (Rs. in Lakhs): 2.10 (Rs. 1.00 Lakh Online plus remaining balance BG/FDR).**

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 06-12-2025.** 2) Pre Bid Meeting will be held on **11-12-2025 at 11.00 AM in the Office of the Chief Engineer (Central, Zone-2), Annexure-3, GBA Head Office, Bengaluru - 560001.** 3) Tenders must be Submitted online through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **on or before 4.00 PM on 17-12-2025.** 4) Technical Bids will be Opened on the Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in at the Office of the Executive Engineer, Chamarajpet Division on 18-12-2025 at 4.30 PM.** Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Chamarajpet Division, BCCC.

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• GURUGRAM 306, City Center, Sector 29 (Near Hotel Pitaziio)
• WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
• NOIDA, Niruta's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
• LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDERS (Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites tenders in Two Stage Tender System from eligible Contractors for the following Works.

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount
	Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.	
	IFT No.: BWSSB/EE/CE/CE(W)ACE(W)-1/DCE(W)-2/TA(W)/5065/2025-26	**Date: 04-12-2025**
1	Work of Providing, Laying and Linking of 100 mm Dia DI and 150 mm Dia DI Water Pipeline at Different Locations of Ideal Homes Service Station Limits coming under Ideal Homes S/s of AE/EW-2-1 Sub Division.	**Rs. 154.44 Lakhs**
		Rs. 3.32 Lakhs
	IFT No.: BWSSB/EE/CE/CE(W)ACE(W)-1/DCE(W)-2/TA(W)/5066/2025-26	**Date: 04-12-2025**
2	Work of Providing and Laying of 300 mm Dia RCC NP-3 Class Pipeline at Sunocty Main and Surrounding Areas coming under Kengeri Service Station of AE/EW-2-1 Sub Division.	**Rs. 112.83 Lakhs**
		Rs. 2.00 Lakhs
	IFT No.: BWSSB/EE/CE/CE(W)ACE(W)-1/DCE(W)-2/TA(W)/5068/2025-26	**Date: 04-12-2025**
3	Work of Providing, Laying and Linking of 230 mm Dia GSVI Pipeline in Sez of 150 mm Dia SW Pipeline in Surrounding Areas of BHEL North & South and Patteragere Village with Construction of New Manholes coming under Ideal Homes Service Station of AE/EW-2-1 Sub Division.	**Rs. 117.16 Lakhs**
		Rs. 2.00 Lakhs

For both the above works, Last Date for Receipt of Tenders: **20-12-2025 upto 17.00 Hours.** Tender will be Opened on: **22-12-2025 after 12.30 Hours.**

Sd/- Chief Engineer (West)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-Procurement Process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

TAMILNADU INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD (TIDCO)
No.19-A, Rukmini Lakshmipathi Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008
Phone:+91-044-28554479,28554480
E-mail: ho@tidco.com | Website: https://tidco.com/ https://careers.tidco.com

Recruitment Notification

Notification No.TIDCO/HR/Recruitment/2025-5 **Dated: 05.12.2025**

Applications are invited for the following posts only through online mode from 06.12.2025 at 10.00 am to 20.12.2025 upto 5.00 pm from the eligible candidates who wish to join the services in Tamilnadu Research Parks Foundation, Coimbatore & Madurai, an Initiative of TIDCO

S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of vacancy	Compensation	Location	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Research Advisor	One (1)	Net CTC is Rs.68,500/- to Rs.1,00,900/- per month (Negotiable - Depending on experience and qualification. TDS and other statutory deductions, as applicable)	Madurai	On Contract basis
2.	Admin Accounts Manager	One (1)	Net CTC is Rs.75,000/- to Rs.1,00,900/- per month (Negotiable - DPepending on experience and qualification. TDS and other statutory deductions, as applicable)	Coimbatore	On Contract basis

For the detailed notification, qualification, experience, selection procedure, online application and other details, please visit our official website https://tidco.com / https://careers.tidco.com.

MANAGING DIRECTOR
TIDCO

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on HQSCRailway India Details of the Tender Notices of Divisions/Units can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

e-Auction No. G/Civ/Auction Leasing/2025-26/01, Date 02.12.2025

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Guntakal Division, South Central Railway conducts e-Auction through https://www.ireps.gov.in from the Indian nationals above the age of eighteen years and Companies/Firms registered in India on closed and sealed

Sl. No.	Catalogue No.	Category	Locations in catalogue	Date of Auctions	Auction Start time
1	GTL/UPH/JSDK/24	Leasing of VPH	1 Nos- D/ UPH	16.12.2025	11:00

Interested parties and contractors to take note of this and go through the user manual download through the learning centre (User manuals) link available in the left navigation bar of the home page of IREPS site to understand e-auction procedure and participate. And for further clarifications, bidders may approach office of Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, South Central Railway Guntakal,

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Guntal

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (ROADS), PWRD, ASSAM: GUWAHATI-3.
No. CE/DEVIT/B/116/2025-26/79

Cancellation Notice

This is for general information to all concerned that the following 7 (seven) nos. of works under Dalika, Chirang, Kokrajhar & Tamulpur District under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26 amounting to Rs. 29011.39 Lakhs (approx.) tender invited against Press Notice No. CE/DEVIT/B/116/2025-26/61 dated. 14.11.2025 and DNIT No. CE/DEVIT/B/116/2025-26/62 dated. 14.11.2025 and Press Notice No. CE/DEVIT/B/116/2025-26/64 dated. 07.11.2025 and DNIT No. CE/DEVIT/B/116/2025-26/65 dated. 17.11.2025 is hereby cancelled due administrative reasons.

District	Name of Work	Tender ID	Package No.
Kokrajhar	Improvement and upgradation of Mahamaya Parbat(Hara road start from Ch. 0+000km (Rogribari) to Ch. 11+000km (Tipkai) and Mahamaya Temple Road (Length 5.713 Km) under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26 (Overall Length=15.813Km)	2025_PWD_48850_1	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_52
Tamulpur	Improvement and Upgradation of road from Maharpara to Bogamati from Ch. 0+000.00(Maharpara) to Ch. 15+790.00 (Bangalipara) under Asom Mala 3.0 for the Year 2025-26.	2025_PWD_48853_1	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_55
Tamulpur	Improvement and Upgradation of road from Tamulpur Governer Chowk to Goreswar College from Ch. 3.000 km (Tamulpur Governer Chowk) to Ch. 7.435 km (Goreswar College) under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26.	2025_PWD_48853_2	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_56
Tamulpur	Improvement and Upgradation of road from Rangia-Bhutan road to, NH-52(To) to Bamuntha from Ch. 0.000Km (Rangia-Bhutan Road) to Ch. 6+345 Km (Bamuntha) under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26.	2025_PWD_48852_4	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_57
Chirang	Construction of RCC Bridges and development of the Bridge Approaches (Ch- 1+256.00m to 2+671.00m) connecting road between Dagun & Amguri under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26	2025_PWD_48852_7	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_58
Chirang	Improvement and upgradation of road from Bordobarar to Bhabanipur (Chaogaon Amteka Asom Mala Road) via Lawgaon in Chirang District from Ch. 0.00 Km (Bordobarar) to ch. 12.560 Km Bhabanipur) under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26	2025_PWD_48852_5	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_59
Baksa	Improvement and Upgradation of Road from Attabari Market to Barkhamba Road from Ch. 0.000 km (Attabari Market) to Ch. 12.795 km (Samsakha Road) under Asom Mala 3.0 for the year 2025-26.	2025_PWD_48852_3	ASOM_MALA-3.0_25_26_61

Details can be seen at **www.assamtenders.gov.in** afterwards.

Chief Engineer (Roads), PWRD

GOVT. OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER::PW (HEALTH & EDUCATION) DEPARTMENT:
CHANDMARI: GUWAHATI-3
No. Tech-(H&E)/95/2025/44

PRESS NOTICE (RETENDER)

The Chief Engineer (Health & Education), PW(Health & Education) Deptt, Chandmari, Guwahati-3 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites fresh Bids online EPC Mode-1 e-tenders in two bid system (Technical and Financial) on **Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode-1** basis from eligible firms / contractors of repute having experience in similar nature of work, for the following works.

Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement website i.e. **www.assamtenders.gov.in.**

The bidders must be enrolled with e-tendering web-portal **www.assamtenders.gov.in.**

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

Sl. No.	Package No.	Name of work	Bid Value (Rs. in Lakh)	Completion Period	Bid Security	Cost of Bid
1	Package-9	Construction of 100 Secondary Schools in 35 Districts of Assam under RIDF-XXXIII (2025-26) for Chaigaon HS School under Chaiga (DTBO)	Rs. 407.60824	3+15 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General, 1% of Bid Value for Reserve category	Rs. 8200.00
2	Package-17	Construction of 100 Secondary Schools in 35 Districts of Assam under RIDF-XXXIII (2025-26) for Ramdia HS School under North Kamrup (DTBO)	Rs. 406.07275	3+15 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General, 1% of Bid Value for Reserve category	Rs. 8200.00
3	Package-40	Construction of 100 Secondary Schools in 35 Districts of Assam under RIDF-XXXIII (2025-26) for Kharanisuti Higher Secondary School under Sonitpur (DTBO)	Rs. 408.26514	3+15 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General, 1% of Bid Value for Reserve category	Rs. 8200.00
4	Package-43	Construction of 100 Secondary Schools in 35 Districts of Assam under RIDF-XXXIII (2025-26) for Kakojan High School under Tinsukia (DTBO)	Rs. 408.16805	3+15 (Eighteen) Months	2% of Bid value for General, 1% of Bid Value for Reserve category	Rs. 8200.00

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

The Work will be allotted only after receiving Government approval.

Chief Engineer (Health & Education),
PW(H&E) Deptt.

संस्थान प्लाज्मा अनुसंधान संस्थान
Institute for Plasma Research
Bhat, Near Indira Bridge, Gandhinagar – 382 428 (India)

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना & विवरण /E - Details of Tender Notice
TENDER NOTICE NO: IPR/TN/CIVIL-PH/SE/2025 (Two Bid System)

Online tenders are invited in **Two Parts** THROUGH e-tendering mode from Eligible Bidders for the following work.

Brief description of Work:	Providing Comprehensive Consultancy Services (including Architectural, Civil & Structural, Plumbing, Electrical, HVAC, Fire Detection, Fire Fighting & safety, Interior, ELV Systems, Acoustic, General Development works, & to make facility in use for Construction of Multipurpose Administrative Block and related allied works) at IPR campus Gandhinagar.

Bidding packet (Bid Document) can be downloaded from website https://epsecure.gov.in/epsecure/app to Register their user account with the concern.

Detailed tender notice and Tender Document for the respective work is available on website https://epsecure.gov.in/epsecure/app for free view and downloading.

Any Bidder can fill Bid & Pay online the Bid Fee(Rs) & EMD (if Any).

A copy of this tender notice is also available on the Institute's website for viewing only http://www.ipr.res.in/documents/tenders.html

IN BRIEF



'Gas leak': 1,000 relocated in Dhanbad, probe ordered

Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Dhanbad Aditya Ranjan on Thursday ordered a probe into a reported gas leak from underground mines, which prompted the relocation of around 1,000 residents earlier in the day, said an official. A woman was reported dead while 12 people fell ill after carbon monoxide leaked from various mines in Kenduadih basti in Jharkhand's Dhanbad on Wednesday. The exact cause of the death is yet to be ascertained and will be confirmed only on the basis of the post-mortem report, the official added. "Based on the probe report, action will be taken against those found responsible," said the DC. PTI

BJP councillor's daughter alleges 'forced marriage' bid

The 28-year-old daughter of a BJP councillor accused her family members of attempting to force her into a marriage against her will and keeping her locked in a room without a phone till the wedding, Haryana Police said on Thursday. The police swung into action after the woman sent a complaint via e-mail to the women's commission, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and others. An officer said they have lodged an FIR under charges of "wrongful confinement", among others, against her family members. The woman, who is the daughter of BJP councillor Naresh Kataria, was taken from her house and sent to a safe house. PTI

Assam Minister and tribal body meet amid row over ST tag for 6 communities

State's existing Scheduled Tribes are opposed to the addition of more communities in the Assam ST list unless the government guarantees that their rights and privileges are not encroached upon

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Assam's Tribal Affairs Minister Ranoj Pegu met the leaders of the Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations, Assam (CCTOA), on Thursday amid a row over the granting of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities.

On November 29, the State government tabled an interim report of a Group of Ministers (GoM) in the Assembly with recommendations to grant ST status to the Adivasi or "Tea Tribes", Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi, Matak, Moran, and Tai Ahom communities. The report sparked anger among the 14 tribes currently in the State ST list, primarily the Bodos, the largest plains tribal group in the Northeast.

Mr. Pegu, who heads the three-member GoM, said the focus of his meeting with the CCTOA leaders at the State Secretariat was on the recommendations on granting ST status to the six communities.



Tribals protesting against Assam govt's decision to grant ST status to six more communities, at Sonapur in Kamrup district. FILE PHOTO

"I explained the recommendations given by the GoM and the measures proposed to safeguard the rights of existing Scheduled Tribes," he said in a post on X.

Expert panel

The Minister said that he requested the CCTOA leaders to read chapters 5 and 6 of the report together. "The CCTOA informed (me) that, based on our clarifications, they will form an expert committee and submit their report within a month," Mr. Pegu said. The GoM's interim report recommends a three-tier classification of STs - ST (Plains), ST (Hills), and ST (Valley).

While the ST (Plains) and the ST (Hills) continue to cover the existing tribal communities residing in the plains and the hills, the ST (Valley) will cover the six communities eyeing the tribal tag.

The State's tribes are opposed to adding more communities to Assam's ST list unless the government guarantees that their rights and privileges are not encroached upon.

All Bodo Students' Union president Dipen Boro said Assam's existing 45 lakh tribals would be swamped out if "2 crore advanced people are imposed" on the existing tribes. "We reject the GoM report," he said.

"You cannot differentiate the tribals. The government decision will affect the existing tribals," CCTOA leader Aditya Khaklari said.

The GoM report said, "This arrangement will be in tune with the resolution of the Assam Assembly that the six communities be recognised as STs without affecting the rights and privileges of the present tribal communities."

"ST (Valley) will be the Scheduled Tribe for all purposes except that it will not affect the rights and privileges enjoyed by the present tribal communities," the report added.

SIR: polling stations with 'zero ineligible voters' drops from 2,208 to 7 in Bengal

Mosarie Som
KOLKATA

Polling stations in West Bengal that had triggered scrutiny by the Election Commission for recording 100% digitisation of enumeration forms and zero ineligible electors drastically dropped from 2,208 earlier to seven on Thursday.

According to sources in the Chief Electoral Officer's (CEO) office, revised data on booths with zero uncollectable forms show two booths in Malda, and one each in Purulia, South 24 Parganas, Jalpaiguri, Howrah, and Paschim Medinipur. Earlier, South 24 Parganas had recorded over 700 such booths, Purulia 228, and Malda 286, as per sources.

This development assumes significance as the Bharatiya Janata Party has alleged grave irregularities in the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls and has welcomed the recent appointment of observers by the Election Commission to monitor the exercise.

Additionally, sources said over 30 lakh electors in the State had been identified as dead, duplicate, shifted or untraceable, based on data gathered from the ongoing enumeration and digitisation phase.

30 lakh electors in the State have been identified as dead, duplicate, shifted or untraceable

Around 98.84% enumeration forms have been collected and digitised from among 7.6 crore registered electors as of Thursday.

Extra measures

The CEO on Thursday said a new software called 'Demographic Similar Entries' has been provided to the Electoral Registration Officers to weed out fake and ineligible electors in their respective Assembly constituencies.

As of Thursday, 1.22 lakh ineligible names had been detected through the software, sources said.

Mr. Agarwal on Thursday also issued a notice to all Booth Level Officers tasked with executing the enumeration phase of the SIR, saying "legal action will be taken" if deliberate mistakes are detected.

West Bengal will go to the polls next year.

Lucknow mayor visits slums to identify 'illegal immigrants'; Oppn. questions her authority

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Lucknow mayor Sushma Kharkwal on Thursday visited slums in Phool Bagh Bahadurpur to identify "Bangladeshis and Rohingya" people living illegally in the area and pushed for their ouster, saying several people failed to show legal documents of identity.

"Over 300-400 people are living in the slums but only a few people were able to show their Aadhaar cards, etc. They were not able to tell the address and name of their MLA or local representatives. They have been asked to leave within 15 days. We are conducting a drive under the Lucknow Municipal Corporation to check for illegal immigrants who are likely Rohingya or Bangladeshis," Ms. Kharkwal told reporters.



Mayor Sushma Kharkwal with U.P. Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak at a Chhath Puja event in Lucknow. FILE PHOTO

Describing the visit as an intimidation tactic by the Bharatiya Janata Party government in the State, Opposition parties questioned the mayor's authority to check the identity documents of people.

Congress national secretary Shahnawaz Alam said, "It's an intimidation tactic. On several occasions, Bengali-speaking people from West Bengal or Assam working in Uttar Pradesh were targeted in the garb of a crackdown on Rohingya or Bangladeshis. The government must come out with authentic numbers about illegal immigrants in the State." He added, "Moreover, how is a mayor authorised to conduct a drive to check government identity markers related to nationality? It can only be done by the district administration or the law enforcement agencies."

CM's instructions

On November 22, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had issued instructions to all District Magistrates to identify and take stringent action against alleged illegal immigrants.

Directions were also issued to establish temporary detention centres in each district to house "identified infiltrators".

TMC suspends MLA for call to build Babri Masjid-style mosque

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Thursday suspended party MLA Humayun Kabir, who had called for constructing a Babri Masjid-style mosque in Beldanga in West Bengal's Murshidabad on December 6, which would mark 23 years since the mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, was razed.

Mr. Kabir, an MLA from Bharatpur, was suspended by the party's disciplinary committee for anti-party activities. TMC leader and State Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim said. He said the party will not maintain ties with those who indulge in communal politics. Mr. Kabir had been warned thrice, but he failed to heed the warnings, said the Minister.

The development came on the day of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's visit to Murshidabad.

Mr. Hakim added, "He [Mr. Kabir] stays in Rejinagar and is an MLA from Bharatpur. Why does he want to build a mosque at Beldanga? This is because Beldanga is communally sensitive, and if there are riots, it will result in polarisation and help the BJP."

'Will float own party'

Responding to his suspension, Mr. Kabir said he will resign as from the Assembly and announce his own party in Murshidabad on December 22. "I will contest against the BJP and the Trinamool," the MLA said, adding that his plan to construct 'Babri Masjid' remains unchanged.

Governor C.V. Ananda Bose also sought action against the MLA over his "communal" statements.

Will remain PMK president till Aug. 2026: Anbumani; party founder's supporters stage stir

The Hindu Bureau
VILLUPURAM/CHENNAI

Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadoss's estranged son Anbumani on Thursday asserted that he will continue to remain party president till August 2026, citing a ruling of the Delhi High Court.

"As per the rules of the Election Commission (EC), my tenure as president of the PMK continues until August 2026. Now, the Delhi High Court has also held that I will remain and continue as president until August next year," Dr. Anbumani said at a press conference in Villupuram.

On November 29, Dr. Ramadoss had moved the High Court challenging the EC's declaration that the term of office-bearers of the party is valid until August 1, 2026 and that Dr. Anbumani is the party's president till then.

The PMK president contended that the court, after hearing both sides on Thursday, ruled that the EC's permission and recognition granted to him could not be cancelled.

Dr. Anbumani also claimed that the party symbol 'Mango' belonged to his faction.

Meanwhile, supporters of Dr. Ramadoss staged a protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Thursday condemning the EC's decision to recognise Dr. Anbumani as the party president.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, PMK leader G.K. Mani claimed that the High Court held that the documents submitted by Dr. Anbumani to the EC, claiming to be the party president, are invalid.



Venting ire: Supporters of PMK founder S. Ramadoss staging a protest at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kolkata's less-revered blue-and-yellow buses to finally get their due at heritage festival

Bishwanath Ghosh
KOLKATA

While the trams and the yellow taxis often find mention in reels and writings depicting quintessential Kolkata, not much thought is spared for the blue and yellow buses that effectively form the backbone of public transport system in the city.

An annual event that sees the confluence of art and heritage, called 'The City as a Museum', which is into its fifth edition this year, will celebrate the humble mode of transport by converting the buses into mobile art installations and parking them at different sites that will be part of this festival, organised by DAG, an art company, to be held from December 6-15.

"Unlike private cars that signify privilege, the bus embodies shared motion, connecting diverse bodies and neighbourhoods within a single, continuous movement across the city - it collapses distinctions between elite and subaltern spaces. Artists, conductors, workers, and passengers all contribute to its visual and social identity. The 'vehicular art' painted across its body is not just decoration but a mode of popular communication and resistance, where marginalised voices make themselves visible within the bourgeois urban order," Maitrayee Paul, one of the DAG volunteers associated with the bus event titled 'Dekho Magar Pyaar Se' (love, but with affection), said.



'The City as a Museum', which is into its fifth edition, will celebrate the blue-and-yellow buses of Kolkata by converting them into mobile art installations and parking them at different sites. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

According to Sumona Chakravarty, vice-president (museums) of DAG, the interior of the bus will be transformed into a travelling biscope by artist Pavel Paul and his collaborators.

Satirical images

Instead of focusing on monumental views of landmarks, the multichannel video installation will engage with the complex and sometimes forgotten histories of eight sites that the event will move to, including Kalighat, Victoria Memorial, and Sealdah Station.

The exterior, she said, will bear satirical images and handbills created by Sumantra Mukherjee and his fellow artists.

Pipeline pirates: 2 Delhi kingpins arrested for oil theft via tunnels across north India

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

Stolen oil was sent in hired vehicles at night and sold to unauthorised buyers at discounted rates

Two Delhi-based masterminds behind a long-running oil pilferage network operating across north India have been arrested, the police said on Thursday.

The accused, Swaran Singh, 55, and his 50-year-old brother-in-law, Dharmender, alias Rinku, have been involved in organised fuel theft for over three decades, repeatedly adapting their methods after each stint in jail. Both carried a reward of ₹25,000 announced by the Rajasthan police. The duo was arrested in West Delhi's Vikaspuri Nagar Nala on Wednesday in connection with a case registered in Jaipur.

On June 10, the Rajasthan police detected diesel theft from a Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) pipeline near Vasundhara Colony in Dubrai Kalan village. At the site, officers found Rajesh Utang, 47, a resident of Assam living there as a tenant.

Inside his rented house, the police discovered digging tools and a tunnel carved out from one of the rooms. An iron pipe fitted with three valves had been connected to the HPCL multipurpose pipeline via this tunnel, with a transparent pipe channelling diesel into a plastic storage tank.

Mr. Rajesh was arrested on the spot. During questioning, he disclosed that Mr. Singh and his associates had set up the tapping mechanism. Acting on specific inputs and technical surveillance, the anti-gangster squad of the Delhi Police Crime Branch tracked down and arrested both men.

Criminal history

Officials said the two had been declared proclaimed offenders in cases registered in Haryana and Punjab. Mr. Singh's criminal history dates back to 1992, when he worked as a Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) tanker driver supplying fuel to Delhi airport. He began pilfering fuel and selling it illegally, was arrested, and returned to crime after release.

The police said the stolen diesel was transported at night using hired vehicles and sold to unauthorised buyers at discounted rates. By 2011-12, similar set-ups had been installed in Gurugram and Jaipur. In 2014, the accused replicated the method in Paschim Vihar, Delhi, and expanded into Punjab the following year.

"In recent visits to Jaipur, he was selling fuel directly from the tapped pipeline, not even using pumps. Both were deeply involved in planning and executing pipeline tapping," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Harsh Indora.

IN BRIEF



Don't want 'bulldozer raj' in Bihar, says Deputy CM

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who also holds the Home portfolio, denied that the government intended to establish "bulldozer raj" in Bihar as alleged by the Opposition. "My name is Samrat Choudhary and I do not stand for bulldozer," he told the Assembly on Thursday. On Wednesday, the Opposition Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) had staged a statewide protest accusing the BJP of replicating Uttar Pradesh's "bulldozer action" in Bihar.

Medina-Hyderabad flight diverted due to bomb hoax

An IndiGo flight from Medina in Saudi Arabia to Hyderabad was diverted to Ahmedabad on Thursday after the airline received a bomb threat. The aircraft, scheduled to land at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, was redirected mid-flight as a precaution. According to police, an email warning of an explosive device was sent to the airline, prompting the diversion. Police said that checks were carried out upon landing and the threat was later confirmed to be a hoax.

Policeman steals ₹1lL from accused's car in Bengaluru

A head constable of a Cyber Crime police station has been accused of stealing ₹11 lakh belonging to a suspect, from inside the Bengaluru City Police Headquarters. Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said that an inquiry was under way. The incident reportedly happened on November 30. An accused in a cybercrime case, was brought to the city headquarters for questioning. He had allegedly kept around ₹11 lakh in his vehicle, which was missing when he returned.

Cong. expels Palakkad MLA after court rejects bail plea

KPCC president Sunny Joseph terms Rahul Mamkootathil's continuation in the party as ethically untenable; court dismisses MLA's primary plea that he was the victim of a political conspiracy

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) on Thursday expelled Palakkad MLA Rahul Mamkootathil from the party, portraying the move as a definitive attempt to draw a line under a serial sexual predation scandal that has haunted the United Democratic Front (UDF) since August.

The decision came after a district court rejected the MLA's anticipatory bail plea in a rape and coerced termination of pregnancy case registered last Thursday based on a complaint filed by a woman acquaintance of his.

In a press release, KPCC president Sunny Joseph said Mr. Mamkootathil's continuation in the party had become ethically untenable in the wake of the accusations. The onus was on Mr. Mamkootathil to decide whether he should resign as MLA, he added.

The KPCC had suspended Mr. Mamkootathil in August following accusations of sexual misconduct, which the CPI(M) and BJP weaponised against the Congress-led UDF. The scandal prompted Mr. Mamkootathil to withdraw briefly from public life.



Yuva Morcha workers in Palakkad during a protest march last week, against MLA Rahul Mamkootathil. A.A. MUSTAFAH

Bail plea rejected

Meanwhile, Principal Sessions Judge, Thiruvananthapuram, S. Nasreera on Thursday rejected an anticipatory bail plea filed by Mr. Mamkootathil in a rape and coerced termination of pregnancy case.

Ms. Nasreera has yet to promulgate a formal order and reportedly told the closed court that she had dismissed the petition, opening the way for Mr. Mamkootathil's possible arrest. Mr. Mamkootathil's lawyers signalled that they will likely move the High Court seeking interim protection from arrest till the court rules on the MLA's anticipatory bail plea.

The court, which conducted the proceedings in camera, reportedly dismissed Mr. Mamkootathil's primary plea that he was the victim of a political conspiracy and that his relationship with the complainant was consensual.

The prosecution argued that the investigation was at a nascent stage. If enlarged on bail, the accused could jeopardise the investigation.

Karnataka Cabinet approves Bill to prevent hate speech, hate crimes

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State Cabinet on Thursday approved the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025, to effectively curb, prevent dissemination, publication or promotion of hate speech and hate crimes, which cause disharmony and hatred in society.

The Bill would be tabled in the Winter session of the State legislature in Belagavi, which would commence on December 8.

Briefing pressmen on the decisions taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said the Bill aimed to curb and prevent the dissemination, publication or promotion of hate speech and hate crimes, which cause disharmony and hatred in society, against the person or group of persons and organisations and provide punishment for such crimes.

The Bill also envisages adequate compensation to the victims.



(From left) Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and CPI(M) Lok Sabha member T.R. Baalu at a demonstration over air pollution at the Parliament complex in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

Opposition MPs stage protest against 'rising air pollution' in Delhi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Thursday staged a protest at the Parliament complex demanding urgent and concrete action over "Delhi's worsening air pollution".

Carrying placards and wearing masks, Opposition MPs gathered near the Mahatma Gandhi statue to highlight the government's "indifference" to the crisis. Posters bore messages such as 'Make polluters pay, not citizens', 'Air quality - action now', and 'Clean air is a right, not a luxury'. A large banner reading '*Mausam ka mazaa lijiye* (Enjoy the weather)' featured a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alluding to his recent remark at the start of the Winter Session.

"It is the government's responsibility to do something as children are dying. Old people like me are also finding it difficult," senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who was present at the protest, later posted a video on X. Quoting a song from the Hindi film *Gaman*, he wrote: "Our question on polluted air - 'Why does everyone in this city seem troubled?' Modiji's response - 'Enjoy the weather'. Our protest in Parliament is against the BJP's indifference towards poisonous air."

'Not a political issue'

Congress general secretary and Lok Sabha member Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said air pollution "is not a political issue" and urged the Centre to act decisively.

Taking a dig at the Prime Minister's remark, she said, "In Delhi, children and the elderly are unable to breathe. Every year, the situation worsens, but the government takes no concrete steps, only issuing statements. The government should take steps against pollution; we all stand together."

Several MPs, including DMK's P. Wilson and Congress's Ranjeet Ranjan, have raised concerns in Parliament over the air pollution levels in Delhi.

Governor gives names of two V-C picks to SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Kerala Governor Rajendra Arlekar conveyed to the Supreme Court on Thursday his preference for the appointments of Dr. Ciza Thomas and Dr. Priya Chandran as Vice-Chancellors of APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University and the Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology, respectively.

Governor Arlekar said he preferred both the names for the respective posts, though Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had objected to one of them, Ms. Thomas.

The Governor said the Chief Minister's objection to Ms. Thomas was based merely on news reports and not records.

"On an independent assessment of the performance of Dr. Ciza Thomas as the Vice Chancellor of two universities during the past years for short stints, the Chancellor is fully satisfied and convinced of her performance of the duties entrusted to her with true dedication and honesty," an affidavit highlighted.

The Governor, who is the Chancellor of the two State-run universities, said he had based his decision solely on the fact that both names were commonly recommended by the two separate search committees chaired by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia.

The Supreme Court had intervened the August 18 to appoint Justice (retired) Sudhanshu Dhulia to head a committee to recommend names for appointment as Vice-Chancellors

Practical learning



Field trip: Students look at native Punganur cows on the inaugural day of the four-day Vruktha Organic Mela at the AU Engineering College Grounds in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. K.R. DEEPAK

Devaswom officials denied bail in Sabarimala gold case

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court has denied anticipatory bail to S. Sreekumar, former administrative officer of Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) and also to S. Jayasree, former secretary of the board, in the case pertaining to the alleged misappropriation of gold from the Sabarimala temple.

While Mr. Sreekumar had been arraigned as the sixth accused, Ms. Jayasree was the fourth accused in the case registered in this connection by the Crime Branch. The duo had earlier been granted interim protection from arrest.



Kerala High Court

The case is now being probed by a Special Investigation Team.

Stating that it was shocked at the events, the court observed that a perusal of prosecution records showed that the allegations were serious and mindblowing, since the 'misappropriation' happened in a sacred place - the Sabarimala Sannidhanam.

While denying anticipatory bail to Ms. Jayasree, the court said that her role is well-made-out prima facie and that she could not wriggle out from prosecution. Denying the same to Mr. Sreekumar, the court said that as per the Devaswom board manual, it was his duty to check malpractices in the institution and to have custody of the board's valuables. He had signed a mahazar wherein the 12 Dwarapalaka plates were stated as made of copper, although they were gold-cladded.

In a first, Bengaluru airport deploys novel system to aid flyers with reduced mobility

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru has introduced 'Mobility Assist', which is India's first advanced assistive support system designed to enable safe and seamless boarding and disembarking for passengers with reduced mobility, including children and those requiring additional care.

This equipment has been donated by B.S. Ajaikumar, Founder and Executive Chairman of Healthcare Global Enterprises.

The Mobility Assist transforms the transfer experience by mechanically



'Mobility Assist' has been introduced at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru. LUSHAKANI JAIN

sengers with reduced mobility directly from their wheelchair during boarding, deplaning, or intra-terminal movement.

It reduces physical ensures a comfortable experience for both passengers and staff.

This service will be available to passengers upon request through Air-

Karnataka orders Aadhaar biometric update for schoolchildren aged 5 and 15

Jayanth B.
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has ordered Aadhaar Mandatory Biometric Update (Aadhaar MBU) for students aged five and 15 in all schools across the State to effectively implement mid-day meals, scholarships and other schemes of the Union and State governments.

The Centre for e-Governance (CeG) will act as the registrar for the Aadhaar MBU process.

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) will collect and provide information on students who need to update their biometrics on the basis of Unified District Information System for



The Karnataka government has ordered the mandatory Aadhaar update to effectively implement mid-day meals, scholarships and other schemes of the Union and State governments. H.R. BASKAR

school-wise. The State government issued a circular on December 1, setting a deadline of March 1, 2026 for the process to be completed.

"Due to the pending Aadhaar MBU, students for scholarships, various examinations and availing themselves of the benefits of Central/State programmes. In this context, it is necessary to complete the Aadhaar MBU of all students who have reached

the State government's circular.

A child under the age of five enrols for Aadhaar by providing the photograph, name, date of birth, gender, address, and birth certificate. The biometric details such as fingerprints and iris are not captured for Aadhaar enrolment below the age of five.

Therefore, updating fingerprints, iris, and photo in Aadhaar is mandatory when the child reaches the age of five. This is called first Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU).

When the Aadhaar number holder attains the age of 15 years, they should furnish all biometrics (photo, fingerprints and both iris) for update, which is referred to as the second







New frontiers: (Clockwise from above) Books from Maya, a 'transmedia' franchise owned by filmmaker Anand Gandhi and creative partner Zain Memon; Abeer Kapoor and illustrator Ujan Dutta who have published a graphic novel, *Spook-A-Boo*, the game Megha Gupta (bottom left) is self-financing with $200,000; Memon at his Panaji office. ARRANGED FROM; ROOM; SHASHI MADHAVAN; ARUN KUMAR C.

The push to globalise Indian storytelling

The country's video gaming, comics, and storytelling firms are rich in talent but lack capital and ecosystem support; a handful of creators are now trying to overcome these challenges and develop franchises and original intellectual properties with an eye on international markets, reports Aroon Deep

In Bengaluru, Megha Gupta runs a small gaming studio, Wala Interactive, with a workforce of half a dozen people. They are working on *Spook-A-Boo*, a ghost-hunting "couch co-op" game in which multiple players work together to trap an evasive group of ghosts across a series of levels with progressively challenging layouts.

Gupta started the studio in 2017, but this will be its first game for personal computers (PCs) and gaming consoles, and one of just a few of its original titles. Most of the work her team has done over the last few years has been relatively invisible: developing mobile games for "hyper-casual" game publishers who hire firms like Wala Interactive to develop the gaming ideas they come up with.

"We actually developed over 50 games in two and a half years with a team of four," Gupta says over a phone call.



These games involved over 70 different mechanics - a wealth of experience. They earned the studio a small fortune that she chose to invest in *Spook-A-Boo*, a "bootstrapped" game that she is self-financing with $200,000. It appears to be in an advanced stage of development, given that her firm has released its demo on the PC gaming storefront, Steam.

Wala Interactive is part of a growing movement within India's creative industries - animation, video games, comics, and more traditional entertainment industries - to progress from being a supplement to the world's major Hollywood studios and game publishers' low-cost workforce to actually ideating and therefore owning intellectual property (IP) and selling it to audiences around the world.

Occasional hits

India doesn't have a breakout franchise that has resonated worldwide despite having firms that work behind the scenes for many global franchises. There are occasional titles that have had some success such as the Telugu blockbuster *RRR*, which benefitted from a re-release in the United States that carried it to the Oscars, where it made history by winning the Academy Award for Best Original Song for the track Naatu Naatu.

Aamir Khan's films generally do well in China when authorities permit their screening under the annual quota for foreign theatrical titles. However, Indians' creative endeavours are yet to yield a steady stream of cultural production and the financial gains it entails.

One hurdle is finding an audience at home itself. Gupta points out that PC and console gaming are "practically non-existent" in India, while mobile gaming is big enough to garner global attention - *Battlegrounds Mobile India* (earlier known as PUBG Mobile) has been downloaded over 240 million times, eyeing its Korean developer

> We have been on the receiving end of a great monologue for a couple of centuries now... it's time to turn this into an inspiring and enlightening dialogue
>
> **ANAND GANDHI**
> Filmmaker, co-founder Department of Love

For gaming on larger screens, the numbers are far dimmer: industry estimates suggest that India has fewer PlayStation 5 consoles than gram panchayats. Only around 10% of households have a desktop PC or a laptop.

"It will always be that 10% of the audience and we have to fight for that 10% of audience's time," Gupta says, which explains the decision to go global by design. The global video gaming industry is worth hundreds of billions of dollars and much of that value comes from players spending significant sums on PC and console titles. The market for those lucrative segments is thriving abroad, though limited in India.

Govt. initiative

There is a recognised gap between Indian artists' work on games, movies, and other big-ticket content and the scale of globally resonating creations originating in the country.

A major effort by the Union government to bridge this gap was the establishment of the National Centre of Excellence for Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR), targeting the very sectors where Indian expertise is already leveraged.

"This national centre of excellence will also extensively focus on creation of India's intellectual properties for domestic consumption and global outreach, overall leading to creation of content based on India's rich historical and cultural heritage," read a statement issued by the government last year.

At the World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit in Mumbai in May this year, the government brought in speakers from firms such as YouTube and Netflix, as well as an array of Bollywood stars, to drive the aspiration to bridge this gap at home. In the run-up to the event, the government announced a $1-billion fund to support the creative economy. Support like this is crucial for one major reason - content thrives in an ecosystem - and creators shagging it out amid a lack of appetite for risking money on creative endeavours understand this deeply.

Abeer Kapoor has been running Civic Games Lab since 2018 from a converted residential flat in south Delhi. He has created board games like *The Poll* based on Indian elections and just published a graphic novel, *Zoraver and the Lost Gods*, with long time collaborator and illustrator Ujan Dutta.

Kapoor was able to finish many of his projects not because they held promise for investors, but because thriving ecosystems abroad and non-profit creative funds were available to him through supporters such as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Germany's main foreign aid agency, and the Gates Foundation.

"We are a service delivery partner for international development organisations as game builders. And whenever we get an opportunity to build what we want, we do that," he says.

In Germany, where Kapoor has spent some time, he saw an ecosystem where "you're able to let an idea germinate and take it to market" and a "variety of local and state-level funding, from private to public, that invests in the business of

From the university and local government level to the highest reaches of the federal government, he says, Germany has a thriving AVGC-XR ecosystem - winning the country's Spiel des Jahres ('Game of the Year') board game award practically guarantees a boost in sales around the world.

Beyond ecosystems, Kapoor says there is massive potential in existing IPs that he considers "incredibly undertapped".

He points to the deal between game studio Ubisoft and action-adventure novelist Tom Clancy, in which the firm bought the rights to use his name for a series of games - a deal that runs into millions of euros.

> India needs to continuously create and recreate types of Malgudi... India has a static IP. There is no sharing of it as in the West
>
> **ABEER KAPOOR**
> Owner, Civic Games Labs

In India, Kapoor says, there is potential to do that with the fictional town of Malgudi in R.K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days*. "We are deeply obsessed with the idea of Malgudi," he says.

"India needs to continuously create and recreate types of Malgudi... India has a static IP. There is no sharing of it as in the West. Let's take Malgudi and Tom Clancy's novels. Both of them are full of stories. Both of them have a set of characters, right? And fundamentally, both of them are beautifully built worlds."

The world of Malgudi could have been harnessed continuously but it hasn't, he says. The country needs "canonical, referential works" because working with those "again and again and again is how you build a visual culture for a society". Right now, Kapoor says, he is constantly speaking to the estate of Pran, the Hindi comic creator behind *Chacha Chaudhary*, trying to convince it to let him work on the property.

Leaning in to the mic during the interview, he says, "Abeer and Ujan want to be able to work on Indian IPs that are existing and old, including, but not limited to *Chacha Chaudhary*, *Commando*, *Dhruv*, anything that is owned by Indrajal, Diamond Comics, anything. Please reach out."

Funding from abroad

In Goa, at the office of the Department of Love (DoL), set up by filmmaker Anand Gandhi and his long-time creative partner Zain Memon, over a dozen young people are developing an entire IP, Maya, a "transmedia" franchise they hope will resonate around the world. Like Kapoor, the team has relied largely on funding from abroad, raising funds through a campaign on the Kickstarter platform in which the majority of funds have come from U.S.-based contributors.

Memon, whose board game *Shaan* has been a breakout hit around the world, with strategy clubs in Japan and Germany, says there is massive potential in India's rich mythological and folk traditions.

Gandhi, said in an interview at the DoL's office that he and Gandhi had worked on the setting of Maya for four years, developing hundreds of pages of lore and "millions of years" of history.

Seed Tales Root - the first novel (there are plans for multiple formats, including a board game and, if all works out, a movie) - is a David versus Goliath tale of an off-the-grid upstart's early days in Neh, a planet with mystical trees that seven species are required to "connect" to in order to dream, allowing an AI-like simulation that almost always perfectly predicts the future.

Maya has raised over $420,000 from contributors on Kickstarter, surpassing its target of $80,000. Memon and Gandhi exude confidence in the project's international appeal, defying the funding caution that has held back projects like theirs. "For impact at scale, you need distribution at scale," Memon says, explaining the crowdsourcing strategy before the book goes on sale next year. "For distribution at scale, money is not the end goal - money becomes a means to that end. If you stay independent, stay small, you start preaching to the choir." He adds, "We need a cultural monument that gives adequate representation to the billions of people of the Global South on the world stage."

Timing and resources

Why hasn't a franchise like this already captivated global audiences and why might one do so now? Memon says this is due to a combination of timing and resources: "For the first time, our generation has started with a privilege nobody else had - we grew up on the Internet, so we grew up with the best cultural capital of the West while also having access to the best cultural capital of the East. The markets have opened up for everything from venture capital to distribution, and in the post-Internet distribution world, we have truly seen a flattening of the playing field for those who can create a great game or a great film."



Gandhi, who has a reputation in film circles of being "ferociously cerebral", spoke over a Zoom call from New York after attending three fantasy and comic conventions across the U.S. He says storytelling is at the heart of transmitting culture from one generation to another. "We have forgotten how powerful stories are, and we are using a nuclear reactor to make coffee," he adds.

Is it finally time for a franchise to break out of India? Without a doubt, he says. "We have been on the receiving end of a great monologue for a couple of centuries now - and it's been an amazing monologue," he says.

"It's a monologue that's given us [Albert] Einstein and [Charles] Darwin and [J.R.R.] Tolkien and [Joseph] Campbell and [Steven] Spielberg. It has long been overdue to turn this inspiring and enlightening monologue into an inspiring and empowering dialogue."

unacademy



A mile in its shoes



As pollution holds back the city's walking calendar, Delhi prepares for a season of deeper, more diverse trails

Barry Rodgers
barry.rodgers@thehindu.co.in

"Right now, we're waiting for pollution levels to ease," says Gurugram-based numismatist and storyteller Shah Umair (@silkrawala), opening this year's walking season with an honesty Delhiites know too well. Heritage walks, he explains, are pointless when "the air makes it hard to enjoy anything," and organisers can only begin once the city becomes breathable again.

Still, winter remains the moment when Delhi's walking calendar stretches awake. As the smog thins, Shah is preparing several new trails.

Among them is a route to Sultan Ghari Mausoleum in Vasant Vihar, "a site that rarely gets the attention it deserves," and one that reframes the city's earliest architectural imagination. Also on the horizon is a Purana Qila walk, and soon after, one through Lalkot, the first of Delhi's many cities, where fragments of the earliest settlement still cling to the Ridge.

This season, he is also stepping beyond Delhi's familiar routes. Having already opened with Farrukh Nagar in collaboration with the Archaeology Department of Haryana – a walk that turned out to be "surprisingly engaging" for participants – he now plans to extend his calendar to Jhajjar, Narnaul, and locations across western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. It is an expansion that mirrors a rising interest in regional, interconnected histories of the capital.

If mainstream heritage walks are widening their lens, queer-led heritage tours in Delhi are rewriting the very gaze through which its history is read. Delhi Queer Heritage Walk, founded by Batool Ali in 2021, has launched a set of new routes that shift attention from canonical emperors to the people whose contributions often sit unacknowledged.

One of these is the Jorbagh–Safdarjung Qaaver Heritage Walk, which opens with the tumultuous era of the 12th and 13th Mughal emperors. This period is often marked as the beginning of the empire's decline, but Batool uses it to ask deeper questions about gendered power structures of the time – particularly the rise of khwajasaras, trans-feminine figures we know today as *hijras*. The route also explores a Shia mourning space built by Qudsia Begam and how the space continues to be used by Delhi's Shia community. For Batool, who is herself a Shia Muslim trans woman and a third-generation resident of Old Delhi, the walk is both historical and personal, a layering of lived memory on top of archival silence.

At Humayun's Tomb, Batool's team introduces another overlooked narrative: the transgender contribution to Mughal architecture. Participants encounter the arched gateway of a historic bazaar supported by Maham Agha, a khwajsara serving under Emperor Jahangir. The aim, she says, is not sensationalism but reclamation.

Their Red Fort Queer Heritage Walk dives deeper still. Here, Batool recounts the presence of a *hijra* community within the fort complex since the 1640s and charts their gradual rise in the later Mughal period. The group is also expanding its Queer Food Walks, adding Safdarjung, Humayunpur Village, Mustkira and Jungpura to existing routes in Qasabpura, Jama Masjid and Shaheen Bagh. These gatherings bring local queer residents to the forefront, sharing "tender and honest" stories of belonging, memory and survival through food.

Thrills and chills

Its parallel, historian Eric Chopra, founder of Itihāsology, is designing a new set of thematic walks tied to his debut book *Ghosted: Delhi's Haunted Monuments*. Since 2019, his public history work has spanned Mehrauli Archaeological Park, Jamali-Kamali, Humayun's Tomb, the Red Fort, and museum trails on satire, desire, and the history of emotions. But one question keeps recurring: is history haunted? That curiosity led to *Ghosted*, a study of five sites – Jamali-Kamali, Firoz Shah Kotla, Khooni Darwaza, the Mutiny Memorial, and Malcha Mahal – each read through its social and political contexts.

Starting January, Eric will run walks to the book's sites (excluding Malcha Mahal, which remains closed), with additional visits to connected locations such as Sultan Ghari's and Adam Khan's tombs, the Ashoka pillar on the Northern Ridge, and Pir Gaib. The Ridge, he points out, comes with its own lore, including a headless British phantom "who asks for a light for his cigarette, but he is headless so this is perplexing".

Eric is also experimenting with heritage in cultural spaces – intimate buffalo at Lodhi Gardens and Rahim Khan-i-Khanan's tomb, a series of events in Delhi that combines cinema, music, and art, and performances with qawwali group Rehmat-e-Nusrat.

November also marked the debut of Dilli with Debashish, a two-day experience crafted by Debashish Kar and his partner Anubhuti (who also helms Lucknow with Anubhuti). Modelled on their hospitality-led weekends in Lucknow, the Delhi edition unfolded entirely via public transport – metros and rickshaws – linking Qutub, Red Fort, Humayun's Tomb and Nizamuddin with surprising ease. The food walks ranged from Mughalai and Baniya food in the Old City to immigrant cuisines as well as Punjabi and Muslim food. Additional editions are planned for January and mid-February.

The city's culinary maps are shifting too. "Food walks today are closer to a walk through a living museum," says chef and author Sadaf Hussain, whose tours frame taste within memory and urban anthropology. On December 6, as part of The Locavore's Local Food Club, he leads a walk through Shaheen Bagh (₹1,800 per person), exploring dishes and the stories of families who rebuilt their food traditions after displacement.

And for those who turn to Nature as archive, Women and Wilderness – founded by Rama Lakshmi Dhavala and Nidhi Batra – continues its women-only appreciation walks in and around Delhi. Their early-morning weekend trails highlight the city's fragile but resilient ecosystem, with the next planned for the second week of December.

Winter, then, remains Delhi's most generous season – not because the weather softens, but because the city opens.

Old city, new view Walks by Shah Umair and Eric Chopra. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



STEPOUT



Fandom rising

Every year, strangers arrive as fans and leave as part of something larger — a vibrant collision of comics, cosplay, storytelling, and subculture. It isn't loud like a festival, nor formal like an exhibition; it's a space where creators, dreamers, gamers, and artists find their people. The capital welcomes its next chapter from *December 5 to 7 at HSIC Exhibition Grounds, Okhla, with tickets available on District by Zomato.*



Human inquiry

Some exhibitions entertain. This one reflects. Sapiens gathers 17 contemporary artists whose works confront memory, identity, and the shifting architecture of human experience. The sensibility is varied — abstract, figurative, experimental — yet the pulse remains shared: an inquiry into what shapes us. IndiGalleria presents this first major physical show,*ear* inviting viewers to linger, question, and look a little longer. *Until December 14 at Kalamkar, Bikaner House.*



Theatrical laughs

Two tales by Anton Chekhov take the stage at Chekhov Comedies produced by Theatricals and directed by Nupur Khosla. *Proposal* is a farcical comedy where a marriage proposal turns into a comic battlefield and *Seduction* is an insight into the follies of human desire. *@India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, on December 5, 7.30pm. Tickets on bookmyshow.*

Chai, and a hint of smog

The Flying Trunk offers a taste of Delhi's skyline, especially on days when the AQI allows the city to shine through. We start with spiced cocktails

Geetika Sachdev

From The Flying Trunk, I gaze at Jhandewalan – straddling old and New Delhi: the domes and minarets of the old city rise on one side, while the glass towers of Connaught Place glint on the other. Lately, though, the view has been softened by a lingering haze that mutes the usual vibrancy of the streets below.

The 74-cover bar at Novotel New Delhi City Centre attempts to capture the diversity of Asia through playful drinks and food. The cocktail menu highlights elements like tea and spice that define this part of the world, while the food menu draws inspiration from some of the busiest street markets in India, Japan, Thailand, and China.

Its name evokes the elephant, a symbol of strength and majesty, while 'flying' nods to the rooftop's elevated vantage. The décor reflects this philosophy: curling cloud motifs hover overhead indoors, balanced by soft carpets underfoot. The outdoor terrace is all about drinks with a view, though it's best savoured on days when the AQI is kinder.

My first drink is Frozen Spring, a striking experience both visually and on the palate. It arrives encased in a hollowed ice block, topped with an edible bloom. Floral jasmine notes mingle with slight tartness, while the milk clarification lends an indulgent finish. Next comes I Woke Upon Cloud Nine. White rum infused with pandan and condensed milk is dotted with tiny Thai spice popcorn. The drink balances sweet, creamy, and subtly spiced notes without feeling heavy.

Whisky lovers will appreciate the Amber Cask section. I try The Gilded Route, bourbon with turmeric-honey cordial and apricot. It offers a gentle warmth, though I wish the apricot flavour was slightly more pronounced.

Try the tea-infused cocktails from the 'Chai' section. There is a Kashmiri Kahwa Sour, where kahwa-infused gin meets lime and spiced toddy syrup. Ideal for a chilly evening.

If you enjoy a bit of heat, the spice-forward City Centre Picante from the 'Spice' section packs a punch. The food menu, Silk, Spice and the Stories Between, crafted by Chef Umesh Singh, draws inspiration from the markets of Xi'an, China, Amphawa in Thailand, Nishiki in Japan, and Chandni Chowk, India.

From the Indian subcontinent bazaar section, I try the Lahori Seekh Kebab; it is well-marinated with spices but could be more tender. The Nishiki market-inspired offerings show both skill and flair. There is prawn sushi, dotted with sweet chilli sauce, crisp potato garnish, and creamy avocado. The 'meal in a bowl' options are a mixed bag. While the Japanese katsu curry with Koshikari rice is satisfying; with tender chicken and fragrant curry, the Kadhai Gosht with Matar Pulao doesn't quite hit the mark. The meat lacks tenderness, and the flavours do not meld with the rice, leaving it comparatively flat.

All in all, The Flying Trunk delivers several hits, and though there are a few misses, the experience is well worth the climb.

At 1, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road, Jhandewalan. A meal for two is priced at ₹3,000-plus taxes with alcohol. For reservations, call 8269000445/44.



Top of the world The Flying Trunk. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



All in the family

Actor Pankaj Tripathi, who backed a recent comedy-drama series, chats on the need for increased awareness about mental health

Shreyas Pande
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Pankaj Tripathi breaks the mould as he turns producer with the recently released comedy-drama series, *Perfect Family*. With a Zen-like composure in his voice, Pankaj says that he understands what it is like to produce a project. "It is like preparing for a girl's wedding, where you have to do the casting of the girl as well," Pankaj quips.

Perfect Family stars Gulshan Devaiah, Girija Oak Godbole, Neha Dhupia and Manoj Pahwa and tells the story of a dysfunctional family that decides to go to therapy together. It is also the first show released directly on YouTube with a pay model. Two episodes of the series are available to watch for free



are accessible at a one-time payment of ₹59. Pankaj says that the decision was taken as they didn't want another creative involvement on the show.

"We also wanted to explore a new model and see if it works. It will open pathways to independent creators if the trend is set," he says. "It could even reduce piracy as no one would mind paying ₹59 to watch an entire show without taking a monthly subscription."

Pankaj says that he got associated with the series after it was made. Co-producer Ajay Rai, who had backed Pankaj's *Nil Battey Sannata* (2016) and *Gurgaon* (2017), showed him the series and asked him to join as a presenter. Pankaj took no time to say yes as he found resonance with how the show aimed to break the stigma around mental health and therapy.

"There is still some awareness about it in certain pockets of urban areas but not so much in other places," Pankaj says. "Going to

Laughter therapy (Left) A still from *Perfect Family*, and (below) Pankaj Tripathi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

normal as visiting the doctor when you have a cold and flu."

The actor feels that mental health issues have become more prominent with the penetration of mobile phones. "The same feelings of anger and guilt, which one would experience in reality before, have now entered digital spaces. We get affected if someone makes a bad comment on our social media posts," Pankaj says while reflecting on how there is too much information available online which can be overwhelming to witness. "I had health anxiety myself. I used to search about my illness on Google to know more about its reasons and cures. When I went to the doctor and began telling them about my condition, they asked me where I had studied all that. Then I realised everything cannot be searched online," he adds.

Pankaj, who had gone through some rough patches before he shot to fame with *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), says that he does not get as affected by success and failure. "I have lived in Mumbai for 10 years without work and then, in the last 10 years, I have over-worked myself in the same city. It's like I have witnessed rain, endured drought, and lived through floods. All of that has made me a bit relaxed," he says.

The actor has further plans to produce more films and shows, however, his choices will invariably be different than his acting work. Pankaj is particularly averse to action and gore. "The world is already dark, I don't want to show that on-screen too," he says.

Perfect Family is available on the

unacademy

Cyber crackdown

Tackling digital arrest scams also needs global action

The Supreme Court's direction to the CBI to conduct a pan-India investigation into cyber-crimes, and "digital arrest" scams in particular, might seem extraordinary, as such directions normally require State government consent. But by doing so, the Court has acknowledged the severity of the menace that transcends State jurisdictions and boundaries. The Court's prioritisation of the "digital arrest" scam – fraudsters impersonate police or government officials in a video call, falsely accuse victims of crimes, and pressure them to transfer money to avoid arrest – is fully warranted. The government has estimated that this scam, which often targets senior citizens, has resulted in losses exceeding ₹3,000 crore. The Court has asked the CBI to target not just the scammers but also banking officials who facilitate the creation of "mule" accounts. This is necessary as these scams depend on a malleable financial architecture and therefore require the intervention of agencies such as the RBI, which has also been instructed by the Court to employ Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to trace the "layering" of proceeds through multiple accounts. The Court has also asked online intermediaries to cooperate with the CBI, invoking the IT Rules 2021. The Court is also right in asking the CBI to investigate other scams such as investment schemes and part-time job scams, subsequently.

The severity of cyber frauds, as National Crime Records Bureau data indicate, has risen significantly. However, while the judiciary and domestic policing can address these symptoms within India, the problem has another dimension – it is also transnational. The burgeoning of "scam centres" – compounds where trafficked workers, unable to escape due to violence, confiscated documents or debt bondage, are forced to run online fraud operations – in conflict-ridden zones of Southeast Asia suggests that the solution requires robust international diplomacy. The U.S., for instance, has established a Scam Center Strike Force to tackle the issue. Furthermore, Myanmar remains a hotbed for these operations, primarily because the illegally ruling junta benefits from taxing the proceeds of such crimes. Tackling this requires moving beyond bilateral requests. New Delhi must act in cohesion with ASEAN and the UN to sanction the illegal regime and cut off the financial lifelines of these modern-day slavery sweatshops. Domestically, the battle must also be fought on the grounds of digital literacy and capacity. As daily life and governance become increasingly digitised, there remains a glaring deficit in cyber awareness among the population. States, local administrations, and the RBI must launch widespread awareness campaigns. Simultaneously, there is an urgent need to upgrade the digital capabilities of State police.

Freeze and thaw

Parliament should not be reduced to a political stage

The winter session of Parliament, that began on December 1, will have 15 sittings over a period of 19 days, and will conclude on December 19. The government maintains that it is willing to discuss any issue, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned that Parliament should not be used for theatrics. The Opposition has pointed out that this is one of the shortest ever winter sessions, and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has said that the government excludes him from the country's diplomatic engagements with foreign dignitaries, which is a deviation from the convention. Though there is no notable improvement in the hostile relationship between the government and the Opposition, the Vice-President of India, C.P. Radhakrishnan, is expected to ease some tension, in his role as Rajya Sabha Chairman. The government has lined up an ambitious legislative agenda, which has considerable political ramifications, with a number of Bills in total. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025, is one major piece of legislation that, as its Hindi title suggests, seeks to simplify the criminal justice system. The Higher Education Commission of India Bill, 2025, seeks to change the structure of higher education regulators such as the UGC. The Centre's unilateralism in the sector remains a bone of contention with States, and those issues are likely to be raised by the Opposition. The National Highways (Amendment) Bill, the Atomic Energy Bill, and the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill are some of the items on the legislative agenda. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has introduced the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill in the session, which repackages an ongoing cess on tobacco products.

Both Houses are also scheduled to discuss a motion on electoral reforms, in the background of the SIR of electoral rolls and debate the national song Vande Mataram to mark the 150th year of its composition. The SIR debate is expected to see the divergent views of the BJP and the Opposition with regard to electoral reforms. For the ruling party, enforcing a countrywide synchronised election schedule is a priority, while the Opposition is agitated over suspected malpractices in the preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of the polls. The Opposition has also sought debates on the national security situation after the Delhi blasts, farmers' problems in the background of concluded and ongoing trade negotiations, price rise, air pollution and use of federal agencies against political opponents. Both sides should use the session as an opportunity to reduce dis-

New Delhi's relative isolation, India's tryst with terror



M.K. Narayanan is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

The current period might well be viewed, or termed, as India's moment of reckoning. For one, India today – and despite its highly regarded diplomatic skills – increasingly appears more like an 'outlier' than a major player in world affairs. It has been virtually sitting on the sidelines when it comes to issues involving peace and order in different regions of the globe, especially in West Asia and Europe. It is also a virtual onlooker as far as the emerging situation in the Indo-Pacific is concerned. Seldom indeed has India faced a situation of this kind.

If this was not bad enough, the entire South Asian region in which India is situated, appears to be in turmoil at present. Afghanistan and Nepal are among the countries on India's periphery that appear to be most affected, but from the Maldives to Myanmar and further afield, India can hardly count on many friends and allies. This is a frightening scenario given that each day produces a range of new threats, including cyber.

Hostility from west to east

Currently, India has to contend with two openly hostile powers on its western and eastern flanks – Pakistan and Bangladesh, respectively. In the case of Pakistan, the threat level has been going up steadily, with a growing cacophony of voices being heard in that country to teach India a proper lesson. What is aggravating the situation further is the approval of the 27th Constitutional Amendment Bill by Pakistan's Joint Parliamentary Committee of the Senate and National Assembly, which has altered the precarious balance between civil and military authority in that country.

Also, a recent amendment has introduced the concept of a new 'Chief of Defence Forces', elevating Field Marshal Asim Munir as the nation's military supremo, and the commander-in-chief of all three services, having sole control over Pakistan's nuclear assets. The amendment has invested Field Marshal Munir with absolute authority to deal with enemies (such as India), removing the fig leaf of parliamentary restraint and posing a real threat to India on its western flank. Military dictatorships in Pakistan, as elsewhere, have traditionally proved to be extremely hostile to a democratic India, and the rise and rise of Field Marshal Asim Munir, with unfettered authority, represents a significant and direct threat to a democratic India.

That such concerns are well merited, and that military dictators tend to be short sighted, is well known. Concentration of power encourages strategic adventurism. This, in turn, increases the chances of miscalculation in crises. Also, and in keeping with the general trend among military regimes, there is likely to be a tendency to turn local conflicts into spheres of proxy competition and inter-state confrontation. Hence, prospects of a lasting peace with Pakistan are unlikely. On the other hand, the risk of conflict has enhanced significantly. Thus, it would be wise for India not to ignore the possibility of yet another conflict with Pakistan in the near future and be prepared for all eventualities. This may as yet be in the realm of speculation, but the danger must not be ignored.

India's Pakistan problem is compounded by the fact that the interim government in Bangladesh to India's east, is proving unfriendly, if not openly hostile, to it. To add to India's discomfiture, Bangladesh is currently displaying a willingness to establish warmer relations with Pakistan. In a first, a Pakistan navy ship visited Bangladesh after almost a half-a-century and this is expected to help Pakistan re-establish its presence in the Bay of Bengal. This has serious security implications for India.

Hence, a mixture of ideological posturing and military governance on India's western and eastern flanks has raised diplomatic temperatures across the region. It could have serious and adverse consequences, if not properly handled. Extreme vigilance and careful manoeuvring is called for.

The surfacing of 'urban terror'

Compounding India's problems at this time is the return of 'urban terror' after a gap of several years, though in a different mould, and by a whole new set of indigenous actors. It is only fair to think that in the highly disparate world that we live in, and in the circumstances prevailing today, terror is merely a hand's length away from everyday existence. Yet, till recently, urban terrorism on a significant scale had taken a back seat after the 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai sponsored by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed in collusion with elements of the Pakistan military establishment.

During the past two decades, sporadic terror attacks had been reported in certain urban pockets, but the latest module of urban terror – extending from Jammu and Kashmir to Faridabad and Delhi, and involving medical practitioners and doctors (most of whom had connections to the Al-Falah university, Faridabad, Haryana) reveals a new chapter in India's tryst with terrorism.

The latest terror module, comprising almost only medical practitioners, draws inspiration from, and harps back to the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (in 1992). It fundamentally differs from the terror attacks witnessed in Mumbai (and certain other pockets) during 1992-1993 in the wake of the Babri Masjid demolition, which were mainly carried out by 'lumpen' elements.

That more than three decades after the destruction of the Babri Masjid, terror still finds supporters and that too among the educated elite. That is it more so among groups, such as doctors, is highly disturbing. It reveals that religious terrorism is not only alive but still active.

Also, its newest disciples represent some of the best and brightest elements of a community. This is a quantitative and qualitative leap as far as the annals of terror are concerned.

Details of the terror module, which extends from Srinagar to Faridabad to Delhi, have been widely aired. But what should cause more serious and deep concern is that they could accumulate nearly 3,000 kilograms of explosive material and also safely hide it in two houses. Further, it is alarming that a car laden with explosives could escape the police dragnet around India's capital city, Delhi, and trigger an explosion in the vicinity of Red Fort in the heart of Delhi. This reveals either extremely careful planning at one level, or total inepiness on the part of the authorities, on another. Worse still, while the 1993 terror explosions were carried out by 'lumpen elements' and the 2008 Mumbai attacks were directly sponsored by Pakistan, the latest incidents were of an entirely different character.

These were organised by a group of medical professionals, some of whom were perhaps not even born when the destruction of the Babri Masjid took place, revealing a major fault line in India's multi-cultural, multi-religious society. Far more than the details of the terror module that are being revealed through painstaking investigation, it is this aspect, and the aspect of revenge, which has been the catalyst for some of the best and brightest in a community, which should be seen as a blot on India's civilisational journey and progress.

The most point is whether the latest incident represents mere disenchantment and anger against the nation-state, or something more fundamental. It has been India's belief, and as claimed by the Union Home Minister in Parliament, that no local had joined a terrorist group in Jammu and Kashmir in recent times.

This myth has been exploded. Investigations have revealed that this is an entirely local terrorist module, which had been using encrypted channels for indoctrination, coordination, fund movements and logistics. Another aspect is that funds were being raised by professional and academic networks under the guise of social/charitable causes. There are other reports that the groups were in touch with elements in Pakistan. The links of the group also seem to extend beyond Pakistan to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye.

The need for vigil

Given the new perilous external dimension to India's security, a hostile Pakistan and Bangladesh on its western and eastern borders, and the fact that much of West and South Asia are in turmoil, India needs to be careful that the situation does not lead to the fostering of religious fascism on a more extended scale. Given India's tolerance and acceptance of disparate religious beliefs, this may seem unlikely. But eternal vigilance (or diligence) is the price that needs to be paid to ensure that the situation does not deteriorate further, necessitating cause for alarm.

The country is having to deal with being an onlooker in world affairs, and also the fault lines in its multi-cultural, multi-religious society

A day to pause and come down to earth



A.N. Ganeshamurthy is Emeritus Scientist, Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bengaluru, former Dean, College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University, Imphal, Manipur, and former Head, Department of Soil Science, ICAR-IIHR, Bengaluru

Every year on December 5, the world pauses to acknowledge one of the most overlooked foundations of human civilisation: soil. World Soil Day, established by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, is more than an environmental observance. It is a reminder of the silent and living resource that sustains life. For 2025, the theme, "Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities", shifts the focus from the rural farmland to the concrete jungle, highlighting a critical truth – the ground beneath our cities is not mere dirt, but a dynamic ally in building a resilient urban future.

With over 56% of the global population now living in cities, urban environments are confronting unprecedented challenges, from food insecurity and pollution to devastating flooding and extreme heat. At the heart of the solution to these issues lies an often-forgotten ally: urban soil.

An unsung hero

When we think of soil, we picture farms. But our urban soils are silent, unsung heroes. They are living filters, natural sponges and carbon sinks that exist right beneath our parks, street trees and community gardens. Their health is directly linked to the resilience and well-being of our urban populations. A teaspoon of healthy soil contains more organisms than there are people on earth, and this vibrant ecosystem performs extraordinary services. These include: first, combating climate change and extreme heat – urban areas often become "heat islands", several degrees warmer than their surroundings. Healthy soils, especially when covered with vegetation, absorb heat, sequester atmospheric carbon, and act as natural air conditioners in parks, community gardens, and green medians.

Second, preventing floods and managing water – as climate change intensifies rainfall, cities paved with concrete surfacing face frequent flooding. Healthy soil is a city's first line of defence, acting like a sponge to absorb rainfall, filter it, and replenish groundwater supplies, unlike impermeable surfaces.

Third, supporting urban food systems and biodiversity – the rise of urban agriculture, from rooftop farms to backyard plots, relies entirely on fertile soil, shortening food chains and enhancing local resilience. These soil-based habitats also support a web of life, from earthworms and microbes to pollinators, which are essential for decomposition and plant growth.

Fourth, enhancing mental and physical well-being – contact with nature, or "Vitamin N," in urban green spaces has been proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Gardening and time spent in green, soil-rich environments encourage physical activity and improve mental health. Despite its immense value, urban soil is among the most degraded natural resources. The FAO notes that nearly a third of the world's soils are degraded, a problem magnified in cities. Urban soils face contamination from industrial waste, severe compaction from construction, loss of organic matter, and "sealing" by concrete and asphalt, which suffocates soil life. These pressures weaken plant growth, threaten food safety, and cripple the very ecosystems that make cities livable, making the theme of 2025 an urgent call to action.

A blueprint for action

The "Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities" campaign is a blueprint for transforming our urban landscapes. It calls on municipal governments, planners, community groups, and every resident to become stewards of the ground beneath them. Key actions include first, urban soil restoration and protection. Cities must prioritise rehabilitating degraded land through compost addition, soil testing and organic amendments. Limiting further soil sealing from new construction is equally critical to protect this non-renewable resource.

Second, promoting green infrastructure. We must replace concrete with soil-based solutions wherever possible. Soils under parks, rain gardens, and tree belts are not just aesthetic; they are vital infrastructure that reduces flooding and heat stress.

Third, championing urban agriculture. Community and backyard gardens are powerful tools for improving soil health while providing fresh food, recreation and social bonding. The theme encourages everyone to plant, even in containers on a balcony.

Fourth, embracing responsible soil management. This involves adopting eco-friendly practices such as reducing chemical fertilisers, minimising pesticide use, planting native species, and protecting topsoil with mulching.

Fifth, boosting soil literacy and composting. Schools are encouraged to host hands-on soil tests and workshops. Meanwhile, every household can contribute to this by composting kitchen waste, and turning organic residues into nutrient-rich food for urban soil.

The basis of healthy cities

On December 5 this year, the message is clear. The foundation of a resilient city is not just steel and concrete. It is living, breathing soil. By caring for the ground beneath our feet, we directly safeguard our cities, our health, and our shared future. Healthy cities depend on healthy soils, and healthy soils depend on informed, engaged communities.

World Soil Day is a reminder of the need to look after a life-sustaining and silent resource — soil

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Digital trust

The Government's move to walk back from its directions to mobile phone manufacturers, ordering them to install a government app, highlights two issues. The first is citizen anxiety and the second is about the concerns raised by phone manufacturers, who warned could compromise user choice, add technical burdens, and set a troubling precedent. This is a moment that offers India a chance to strengthen its privacy framework. Countries such as Estonia have systems that show what transparent, accountable digital systems can achieve — citizens can and why, with strict penalties for misuse. Ultimately, trust will grow only when policies are consultative, purpose-driven, and backed by strong safeguards. With accountability, digital initiatives can empower citizens without compromising privacy.

Flight chaos

The recent mass cancellations of hundreds of flights by India's largest private airline have highlighted serious flaws in operational planning. Travellers, including those on business and urgent personal trips, faced confusion and financial loss. While the airline has cited weather challenges, repeated disruptions suggest a deeper management issue. Should not a reputed carrier ensure contingency measures to safeguard its passengers? Moreover, why is customer communication still inconsistent, leaving passengers frustrated? The transparency, clear guidelines and compensation policies. In a service-driven industry, airlines must take responsibility rather than leaving travellers to face acute distress.

Mohammad Hasnain, Muzaffarpur, Bihar

Letters emailed to

unacademy

Do we need to change how cities are governed in India?

PARLEY



Anant Maringanti
Director of Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change at the University of Minnesota



T.R. Raghunandan
Former IAS officer and a consultant on decentralisation and planning

The rise of Zohran Mamdani as the Mayor of New York City in the United States has brought focus to the lack of visibility of similarly elected civic officials in Indian cities. Why do citizens in urban areas of India have no elected official to turn to in times of crisis or to help improve civic infrastructure and amenities? The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the governing civic body of Mumbai, is set to have elections in 2026 after several years. In Telangana, 27 municipalities are being merged into the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has been divided into five corporations. Will these measures help improve governance of cities? Do we need to change how cities are governed in India? T.R. Raghunandan and Anant Maringanti discuss this question in a conversation moderated by **Serish Nanisetti**. Edited Excerpts:

Why is there no substantial role for Mayors in major cities in India? Why are they so invisible?

Anant Maringanti: There are structural issues and historical reasons. We have always been a largely rural economy, so the urban is not that visible (to policymakers). But structurally, if you just look at the governance question, who is the most powerful person controlling city affairs in India? It is the Chief Minister. This was not always the case until at least the 1960s. Mayors were a lot more visible during the Independence struggle. We have had a number of politicians who were first city Mayors and then became national-level politicians. The entire political system now is organised around State Assemblies, so decisions about cities are taken in the Chief Minister's *peshi* (office), not in the Mayor's office.

T.R. Raghunandan: Urban local government in India has a longer history than the U.S. itself. The oldest municipality in South Asia was the Madras Municipality, which was created in the 17th century. It was a nominated body. And at that time, the presidency towns had fairly empowered municipalities. However, paradoxically, after the 73rd and 74th Amendments (establishing a framework for local self-governance in rural and urban India, respectively), the situation deteriorated, even though municipalities and corporations were constitutionalised. This happened due to severe political competition, but also because of the apathy of citizens. Democratic decentralisation in India has been a supply-driven reform measure; it has not been demanded by the people. There have been no parliamentary elections or State elections that have been fought on the issue of whether municipal elections are held, or on empowering municipalities.



The Chickpet market in Bengaluru. AFP

Is there a way where we can make the governance of Indian cities more responsive?

TRR: There is no way if the people do not demand it. Today, in Bengaluru, we haven't had (civic body) elections for almost 4-5 years. There is no recognition of the local government as a government. Sadly, I believe that the people of India, and particularly urban people, are fairly ignorant about the nitty-gritties of government. I was once aghast when a respected IT entrepreneur in Bengaluru said that the Prime Minister should take over the governance of the city. Even a 7th standard civics student ought to know that there are three levels of government, and that there are spheres of governance. Politics responds to the demands of the people. If there was a demand from the people that local governments and local corporations be strengthened, then they will be made strong.

AM: We need to keep two things in mind. One is that this is less about making the Mayor more powerful and more about cutting back the power of the Chief Minister's Office. Second, we need to acknowledge that in many States, MLAs and MPs are ex-officio members of the municipalities, and that essentially means that corporators and Mayors become subordinates to their bigger political party bosses. What do municipalities do in India? Their revenue base is very small and their actual functions are also very limited. Most of the work is done by somebody else (such as bureaucrats and state-run agencies). So it is less about fixing the role of the Mayor than about fixing the way in which the city is governed. I think we believed that the 74th Constitution Amendment would have fixed this. It has failed to do so.

> The real issue is that whatever you do, if the Chief Minister's office is controlling what happens in the city and if your IAS officer is the more powerful person, then you will never have the Mayor or the municipal system becoming active at all.
>
> ANANT MARINGANTI

Is having a financially empowered, democratically elected autonomous Mayor a way of improving governance of cities?

AM: We need to figure out how to decentralise financial allocations. For example, even today, ward offices often struggle to secure the funds they need. In the 1980s, in Hyderabad or Bombay, power was devolved to the ward level by transferring monies. If they don't give money, even within the municipal budgets, and if you don't have local-level decision-making structures, it's just not going to happen. As I said, the idea that the 74th Constitution Amendment would fix this, failed. And the reason for that is that the 74th Amendment ignored and bypassed the political reality. It was introduced as if the political reality doesn't exist. So what we need to do to make this better is to start looking at the political reality of our cities and figure out how to redesign things in each city, in each State.

TRR: Political realities can change dramatically. You can see how politicians are able to whip up passions in both India and in the U.S. Certain things that we would never have thought thinkable, and which violate the Constitution, are being now demanded by the public. There are many hate messages, there is communalism, etc... and these are being pushed forward as political agendas. The same kind of passion is not there to push for a local government.

Bengaluru is now being split into five corporations. Hyderabad is merging many civic bodies under one umbrella. So one is trying to unify into a big bloc, another is trying to divide into five managrable blocs. What do you feel about this?

TRR: They are all malafide justifications only meant to create a fait accompli so that elections can be postponed. Every time Bengaluru has come up for an election, the government at that point develops a great idea of either dividing or integrating the municipal corporation. The last municipal elections were postponed partly because of plans to expand the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike into the BBMP. Now, they are being postponed because politicians have discovered that the best way to neutralise courts, which would otherwise be outraged and enforce conduct of elections, is to play some game with delimitation. Delhi is another huge disaster, because you should have had a separate dispensation for Delhi, because there is no point in having a Delhi State-like structure with the Chief Minister, and then in that same space compress a municipal system. Because, essentially, the Delhi Chief Minister could be the Mayor of Delhi, right? So, the political space should have been decluttered, but what happened there was that the government did it with purely malafide intentions to harass the then Chief Minister. And look at what is happening now. It is still a disaster. The Supreme Court passed a confusing order with respect to the division of powers between the Union government and the Delhi government, and when a clarification to that was sought, the Court kept postponing the case. Then the government changed, and the new government has withdrawn the case.

AM: It doesn't matter whether you divide the city into five municipalities or three municipalities or you add 20 more municipalities. The real issue is that whatever you do, if the Chief Minister's office is controlling what happens in the city and if your IAS officer is the more powerful person, then you will never have the Mayor or the municipal system becoming active at all. This is basically territory management by the Chief Minister's office or in a much broader way, by the Assembly. This is not so much about governance and ease of governance. The expansion and contraction and division and subdivision is happening because of other considerations.

You don't have a clear delineation of who is supposed to be doing what. Everything is controlled by larger, complicated mechanisms. That is the thing that we need to get right. Fixing the money problem is one part; fixing the people who are going to be in power for each institution is key. It is important that we do something about our parastatals. They should not become so big and powerful and become autonomous agencies. These are all things that need to be fixed for the Mayor to become viable.

To listen to the full interview **Scan the code or go to the link** www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

Celebrating fisherwomen without hearing their voices

A recent event in Mumbai highlighted how deeply the gender imbalance persists, even in spaces meant to celebrate women

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

On November 5, I travelled to Khardanda, a fishing settlement in the northern part of Bandra in Mumbai, to witness the celebration of the first International Fisherwomen's Day. A post by the World Forum of Fisher People, announcing the celebration of the day, read, "For the first time ever, the world will celebrate International Fisherwomen's Day. Join us for a powerful social media campaign themed 'Every wave carries her labour, every shore her claim', honouring the fisherwomen who have worked in the shadows for far too long. From rivers to seas, from valleys to coasts – fisherwomen are rising to demand the recognition and equal rights they have been denied."

The event had been jointly organised by the World Forum for Fisher Peoples, the National Fishworkers' Forum, the Maharashtra Machhimar Kruti Samiti, and the Daryawardi Mahila Sangh, to highlight fisherwomen's roles, struggles, and rights. The event did not receive as much publicity as other events of fisherfolk. Apart from me, only one woman photojournalist had turned up. Journalists always look for stories. Perhaps some of those who knew of the event but did not attend it assumed that there was not much of a story there.

Though women constitute nearly half of the employed fisheries' workforce globally, fisheries, traditionally, has been a male-dominated sector. Indian fisherwomen account for about 44% of the total fisher population, according to the government. They form a workforce of more than 1.24 crore in fisheries and handle the bulk of pre- and post-catch work. Fisherwomen are mostly involved in various fish-harvesting activities, small-scale near-shore fishing, seaweed cultivation, fish cleaning, drying, salting, and industrial processing of fish. Yet their contributions are not recognised and their incomes are not commensurate.

There were 16 people on the dais to celebrate the first International Fisherwomen's Day event in Mumbai. But only four of them were women and only one of them spoke of the daily struggles of fisherwomen and the humiliations they face. She described her exhausting routine, the abuse she faces at the fish market, the denial of her agency by men who want to sell in the market, and her worry that her children had failed to recognise the hardships their parents endured. "Instead, they serve the very builder lobbies that are trying to seize our lands," she said. The woman was feisty and loud, and her words resonated with the audience. Other women cheered, clapped, nodded vigorously, and supported her.

The remaining three fisherwomen spoke of the lives of fishing communities in general. They said they were being marginalised in a fast-expanding city that viewed the coasts as prime property for infrastructure projects.

None of the fishermen leaders on stage spoke of the struggles of fisherwomen. They talked of all that they had done to mobilise fisher communities. They spoke authoritatively of political struggles and of negotiations with different stakeholders. They gave the impression that they were the ones fighting on the forefront, and called for women's support. Off stage, they felicitated the women.

When the event came to a close, one of the female organisers rued, "In a patriarchal set-up, women's leadership is neither encouraged, nor appreciated." I know the organiser: she has been instrumental in working for the causes of fisherfolk and in mobilising fisherwomen for decades. Yet, she felt marginalised, she said. She went on to blame herself for not being able to bring women's voices to the forefront. The bitterness was evident in her tone, but she feared verbalising it on stage. The event highlighted how deeply the gender imbalance persists, even in spaces meant to celebrate women.

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Taking to the skies



The Indian Navy's MiG-29 multirole fighter aircraft takes off from the INS Vikrant aircraft carrier during a Navy Day operational demonstration off the coast of Shangumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram. ANI/PTI, AVISHKARAN

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 5, 1975

Non-life cover to the poor: GIC scheme

Madras, Dec. 4: The General Insurance Corporation of India was examining a scheme for providing non-life cover to the lower strata of society, Mr. G.V. Kapadia, Chairman, said here to-day.

Inaugurating a three-day Divisional Managers' Conference of the Southern Region at Hotel Chola, Mr. Kapadia said the scheme of schemes to provide cover like personal accident and sickness.

He added that the scope for expansion of non-life business in India was unlimited. The per capita non-life premium was less than Rs. 5. Even a small country like Japan completed last year twice the non-life premium compared to India. The percentage of non-life premium to the Gross National Product in India was less than one per cent and was not commensurate with the progress made in the GNP. Mr. Kapadia said the results achieved by the insurance industry during the 'Clearance Fortnight' (August 1 to 14), were encouraging in terms of claims settled and

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 5, 1925

Broadcasting in India

Westminster, Nov. 12: Within the space of five years India and Ceylon will probably be equipped with ten powerful broadcasting stations, So said Captain John E. Monina of Burndept Wireless in the course of an interview with Press representatives yesterday. "Behind the scheme are four great English wireless companies," remarked the Captain. "We also hope to secure further capital on the spot. Already application for the requisite licences has

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Share of enumeration forms digitised so far in West Bengal

98.84 In per cent. West Bengal occupied the fourth spot among States/Union Territories in terms of digitisation of enumeration forms, trailing behind Lakshadweep, Rajasthan and Goa, which recorded 100, 99.81 and 99.16%, respectively. ➤

Number of filings for unemployment benefits in the U.S.

1.91 In lakh. Applications for unemployment aid are viewed as a proxy for layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market. The four-week average of claims, which evens out some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 9,500 to 2,14,750. ➤

Cashless treatment requests of victims rejected since 2024

20 In per cent. Under the Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025, the victims are entitled to cashless treatment of up to ₹1.5 lakh per victim per accident for a maximum period of seven days from the date of the accident and is applicable to all road accidents. ➤

The value of heroin seized in the Rajasthan trafficking case

15 In ₹ crore. Rajasthan Police arrested two alleged traffickers in Hanumangarh and seized heroin worth around ₹15 crore, along with two China-made pistols and 14 cartridges. The accused, travelling in a Haryana registered SUV, were caught late Wednesday near Rishi Nagarara. ➤

Female primary teachers per 100 male teachers in Delhi

415 Delhi recorded 415 female primary teachers for every 100 male teachers in 2024-25, reflecting a rising inclination among women towards teaching, according to the Delhi government's Women and Men in Delhi-2025 report. ➤

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China's story of rural revitalisation

As China prepares to enter into its 15th five-year plan, considered to be the 'consolidation and full implementation' period of the goal to realise 'socialist modernisation' by 2035, the efforts taken up by the administration for poverty alleviation and rural revitalisation are showing results

WORLD INSIGHT

Yighnesh P. Venkitesh

Chinese President Xi Jinping, while visiting Fuping County of Hebei Province in his first year as general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, had noted that eradication of poverty and improving people's livelihoods are essential requirements of socialism. He had called for close attention to people in 'straitened circumstances', noting that "with confidence, barren clay can be turned into gold". The people of the Xichou county in Yunnan province, which was earlier a deserted rocky area, calls this confidence to turn clay into gold the 'Xichou spirit', taking pride over their accomplishment in regional development, where they broke down rocks with their bare hands, over the years, to bring in greenery and improve living conditions.

A stark divide?

China is a land of dichotomy. The country run by the CPC under principles of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' has embraced market economy and state-led capitalism, which can be seen in the urban landscape of the country with its sprawling skyscrapers and brands, both foreign and local, competing for consumers. While urban China, with its postmodern skyline of Shanghai and vintage eloquence of Beijing, sprints ahead in terms of development and modernisation to make up the core of the country's economy, its countryside is a quiet but strong testament to Chinese socialism. As China prepares to enter into its 15th five-year plan, considered to be the "consolidation and full implementation" period of the goal to realise 'socialist modernisation' by 2035, the efforts taken up by the administration for poverty alleviation and rural revitalisation are showing results.

In China, one can see a regional divide in terms of development and modernisation, with the eastern provinces and cities being on par with global business hubs and tourist attractions alike while central and western provinces lag behind. Provinces like Guangdong (with special economic zones in Shenzhen and Zhuhai which directly benefitted from the reforms in the late 1970s), Guansi, and provincial-level cities like Beijing and Shanghai are popular destinations for businesses and tourists; its facilities and attractions providing opportunities for both. But if one moves into the heart of the country, the landscape begins to change.

The progress of poverty programs

In Sichuan, home of the giant pandas located near the heart of China, and Yunnan bordering Vietnam and Myanmar, one can see long, winding roads leading to scattered towns and counties. These towns are on an entirely different plane of existence when compared to Shenzhen or Shanghai. Adorned with 'lush mountains and lucid waters', which, in the words of Mr. Xi, is the richest asset of a country, the calm and slow-paced life in these towns makes up the heart of China.

While the Chinese government stressed on modernisation and development during the decades following the opening up of its economy under former President Deng Xiaoping, poverty alleviation had also received its fair share of attention.



Scenic view: A windmill on top of a hill in Panzhihua in the Sichuan province, China.

up across the country in 1986 to determine poor counties, and draw up criteria for poverty alleviation measures. A total of 273 counties were initially listed as State-level impoverished counties, which later rose to 328 in 1988. A 'seven-year programme for lifting 80 million people out of poverty' was initiated in 1994. This was followed by the 'outline for development-oriented poverty alleviation for China's rural areas' in 2001. The outline noted that while the number of existing State-level impoverished counties in developed coastal areas in the east had reduced to zero, there was an increase in impoverished counties in the central and western areas. Between 2001 and 2010, poverty headcount ratio dropped to 3.8% from 10.2% while per capita net income of farmers in key counties rose by an average of 7.6%.

For rural towns and counties, like Malipo and Jinping in Yunnan and Panzhihua in Sichuan, which are mountainous areas isolated from the provincial capitals, development has had to take the long road. However, they show results of heavy investments in both accessibility and sustainability. Windmills propped up on high hill-tops which appear to be churning the clouds are a common sight along the roads in these regions. Large investments were made by the central government in these distant, sparsely populated regions with the goal to reach common prosperity, says Miao Xin, vice-governor of Malipo county. While 99% of land in the county is mountainous and remote, the natural resources. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has provided assistance to the county since 1992, undertakings projects in areas such as basic living needs, education, and healthcare. According to Mr. Xin, the central government has also set up enterprises to promote job opportunities. He stated that the county has been free from extreme poverty since 2020 with an annual disposable income of 9,000 RMB per person.

The spirit of the people

While government investments and projects have played a huge role in the upliftment of the regions, the role of the people is equally important. The Jiwaihui village in Ma'andi township of Jinping county in Yunnan tells one such tale of people's cooperation. Located nearly 150 km away from the county centre at an altitude of nearly 1,300 m from sea level, the village is home to ancient tea trees. Local people believe that these trees, with the oldest ones being around for nearly 800 years, bring prosperity to those who touch it and are the main income source for the village.

Here the Yizhuolan ancient tea production and marketing professional cooperative, established in 2014, runs business. Local people work part-time in the collection and processing of the tea leaves. According to Su Yuan Hui, head of the cooperative, the tea leaves are sold in domestic markets and are exported to countries like France, Japan, and Vietnam. The cooperative has five private shareholders along with 2.8 million RMB investments from the provincial

an example of inter-provincial cooperation model where developed regions from eastern China send investments and human resources to aid the western provinces. The annual revenue of the cooperative stands at 1,60,000 to 1,80,000 RMB and the profits are split between the shareholders, with the village committee getting a share which is distributed to the villagers where the average household income is nearly 30,000 RMB per year, says Mr. Su. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also assisted in the setting up of the tea-processing factory with interest-free loans, he says.

With poverty alleviation measures having shown results in improving basic living conditions, China is slowly shifting its focus to accelerating rural revitalisation. In January this year, the central committee of the CPC released the 'Rural comprehensive revitalisation plan' which aims at tackling existing major rural issues by 2027. It focuses on enhancing agricultural output to secure food security while boosting the prosperity of rural communities, closing the urban-rural income gap, and developing infrastructure.

Other than the serene nature and exciting landscape, what makes rural China standout is the spirit of people. Travelling along the slopes through long still passes at a height of more than 200 metres make the villages look tiny – until the realisation strikes that the will of the same people in these tiny villages has played its part in holding up the stilts.

The writer is in China at the invitation of

THE GIST

- While urban China, with its postmodern skyline of Shanghai and vintage eloquence of Beijing, sprints ahead in terms of development and modernisation to make up the core of the country's economy, its countryside is a quiet but strong testament to Chinese socialism.
- While the Chinese government stressed on modernisation and development during the decades following the opening up of its economy under former President Deng Xiaoping, poverty alleviation had also received its fair share of attention.
- In January this year, the central committee of the CPC released the 'Rural comprehensive revitalisation plan' which aims at tackling existing major rural issues by 2027.

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FULL CONTEXT



In remembrance: Followers of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar gather at Chaityabhoomi to pay him homage on his death anniversary, at Shivaji Park, Dadar, on December 6, 2022 in Mumbai. (GETTY IMAGES)

How the Mahad satyagraha(s) shaped constitutional discourse

Mahad marks the birthplace of one of India's first human rights movements initiated by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in 1927, challenging caste discrimination and asserting Dalit rights. It also shaped the idea of India and the ethics of its Constitution

Nikhil Sanjay-Rekha Adsule

The Mahad tehsil, in pre-Independent India, was a part of the Bombay Province and a significant economic centre, providing labour to the industrial sector of the Bombay Presidency. In Mahad, imitation of caste norms led to widespread acceptance of caste discrimination, with high-caste individuals treating Dalits with contempt. Untouchability, a result of casteism, represents systemic social exclusion that reinforces the hierarchical nature of the caste system. In Mahad, the exclusion of Dalits was evident in their denial of access to drinking water from public tanks, such as the Chavadar Tank.

Mahad was a key site for one of India's first rights movements, which paved the way for human rights discourse and its lessons absorbed in constitutional ethics.

Understanding the legacy

The movement for human rights and water democracy started with a resolution, passed in the Bombay Legislative Council in August 1923, initiated by S. K. Bole. It stated, "The council recommends that the untouchable classes be allowed to use all public watering places in dharamshalas, which are built and maintained out of public funds administered by parties appointed by the government or created by statute, as well as public schools, courts, offices, and dispensaries".

This resolution challenged Brahmanical dominance and prompted social change efforts at Goregaon and Dasgaon near Mahad. In 1926, Ramchandra Chandorkar, a leader from the Chambhar caste, jumped into a public reservoir in Goregaon, which sparked attacks on untouchables' – Chambhars and Mahars – properties by villagers. In Dasgaon, the Mahar Samaj Seva Sangh, which aimed to unite the depressed classes for equality, saw Chandorkar, R. B. More, Ramji Pondar, and others drink from a local lake and wells. Communist R. B. More's memoir highlights how the region was eager to support Ambedkar's struggle for equity and equality, seeking to restore the rights of untouchables. Additionally, this region was renowned for being the birthplace of activists like Gopalbaba Walangkar, N. M. Joshi, Sambhaji Gaikwad, and others. Thus, Mahad was selected by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the site of one of India's first human rights movements.

Mahad LO and 2.0

Dr. Ambedkar and his *anuyayis* (followers) conducted a satyagraha on March 19-20, 1927, by asserting the rights of untouchables to drink water as per the Bole Resolution of 1923. The *anuyayis* of Ambedkar thronged to the event with their meagre belongings, empty stomachs, and lathis (traditionally carried by Mahars, except those who came from the then Bombay presidency) to assert their rights. However, the satyagrahis were denied water by the locals; hence, water worth ₹40 had to be purchased specifically for this purpose.

After the Mahad LO satyagraha, purification rituals were performed, because Dr. Ambedkar and his *anuyayis* had touched and consumed the water, which aimed to reinforce the caste system over human rights. Consequently, Dr. Ambedkar planned the Second Mahad conference for December 25 and 26, 1927. Meanwhile, the courts issued a stay restricting water access for outcastes, claiming the Chavadar tank was privately owned.

During this period, Dr. Ambedkar launched his fortnightly publication, *Bahishkrut Bharat*, which discussed democratic truths and ideals while emphasising human rights. He also participated in the Ambabai Temple satyagraha, initiated by Dr. Panjabrao More, Ramji Pondar, and others drink from a violent attacks on Dalits after the Mahad incident, which led to the formation of the Ambedkar Seva Dal for their protection. Since the Chavadar Lake case was still pending, Dr. Ambedkar decided against launching a satyagraha after consulting his followers. However, on December 25, he burned the Manusmriti following a resolution from Gangadhar Sahasrabuddhe, Rajbhoj, and Thorat. In Mahad 2.0, he specifically addressed women, asserting that human rights should include gender equality.

The Mahad revolution

Dr. Ambedkar stated that the Mahad LO and Mahad 2.0 satyagrahas embodied the zeitgeist of the French Revolution.

In Dr. Ambedkar's speeches during the Mahad satyagraha, he promotes an enlightened ethos of dignity and self-respect. In Mahad 2.0, Dr. Ambedkar discusses the French National Assembly of 1789. These two historical events, which defined the two eras, Mahad LO and 2.0, were instrumental in shaping the idea of India and the ethics of its Constitution.

However, the French Revolution, didn't encompass women in its idea of rights. So, neither their National Assembly nor further developments base their substantive egalitarianism by including the living bodies and souls of women. It was Mary Wollstonecraft's intervention via her pamphlet "A Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Citizen" that questioned the exclusion and the place of women in the French Revolution.

Dr. Ambedkar, in his 1916 paper, had proposed a novel gendered understanding of caste(s), questioning the approach of Indian sociologists to understand the making-remaking-unmaking of women to grasp the issue of caste, as well as the non-workability of the silos approach to annihilate it. The end can be achieved through gendered means only. The speeches and actions at Mahad LO have the partnership of women and men, irrespective of their gender, geography, class, and caste(s). They gathered there as the National Assembly to break free from the imposed Brahmanical hegemony and chart their own course, just as the Third Estate did during their Tennis Court Oath after being denied permission by King Louis XVI. In Mahad 2.0, although preliminary, the resolution passed appears to be influenced primarily because it inflicts injustice on Shudras. However, even an initial understanding of dogmas, as well as the period of the Manusmriti, suggests that it treated women as Shudras. Contemporary literary and historical texts provide ample evidence to support this.

Dr. Ambedkar's actions in Mahad 2.0, especially the burning of the Manusmriti and addressing the gathering of women, try to foreground a new discourse on human rights whose liberty, equality, and fraternity principles are derived from non-violent Buddhism.

Dr. Ambedkar introduced a new concept of a gendered nation whose enlightened nationalism was based not on essentialism but on existentialism, rooted in the body of the people and their natural, legal human rights. Thus, December 25 is also celebrated in India as Indian Women's Liberation Day. The only essentialism it strikes to seek is the Manuski, based on Maitri, which is a true democracy lived rather than a mere idea of governmentality. This reflects the foundations of constitutional morality derived from the ethics learned during the Mahad Satyagraha, institutionalised in the Constitution of India.

Nikhil Sanjay-Rekha Adsule is a Senior Research Scholar, IIT-Delhi

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Walter Elias Disney, a pioneer of the animation industry in the U.S., was born on this day in 1901. How well do you know Disney films?

Radhika Santhanam

QUESTION 1
This film, about a robot who is left to clean up garbage on future Earth, was named after Walt Disney. Name the film.

QUESTION 2
This is the oldest Disney film. It was made as a live action recently and was heavily criticised for reasons ranging from casting to political incorrectness. Name it.

QUESTION 3
This Disney character doesn't speak. It has a carousel-style ride in Fantasyland at six Disney theme parks around the world. His name rhymes with a word that means very large. Name him.

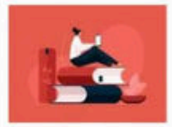
QUESTION 4
This Disney film gave a massive boost to Norwegian tourism. A fictional kingdom in the film was also named after a real Norwegian coastal town. Name the film.

QUESTION 5
She is sometimes considered Disney's "unofficial" mascot and often appears alongside Walt Disney's studio logo. Name her.



Visual question:

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. This man submitted a report in 1946, in which he called to merge curative treatment with preventive care and build medical colleges to train human resources. **Ans: Joseph William Bhore**
2. This physician was a freedom fighter who went on to serve in government as well. **Ans: Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy (B.C.Roy)**
3. Dr. Kadambini was the first practising female doctor in India, and held this historic role as well. **Ans: She was the first woman speaker at a meeting of the Indian National Congress. She addressed the gathering during the 1890 Congress session**
4. This Indian physician and scientist made a monumental contribution by discovering the effective treatment for kala-azar. **Ans: Dr. Upendra Nath Brahmachari**
5. In 1930, the Union government set up a Health Survey and Planning Committee headed by this person. **Ans: Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar**
Visual: This doctor set up a distinguished institution in Madras that puts service before profit while delivering specialised healthcare. **Ans: Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Tito Shiladitya| M. Suresh



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"Nice to see you. Have your cousins left?"
"Yes. They left about 10 days ago. I got their bread-and-butter letter yesterday."
"Bread-and-butter letter?"
"It's the letter you write to your host and hostess thanking them for their wonderful hospitality."
"It's like a thank you note, then?"
"I guess you could say that. As soon as I returned from Mumbai, I wrote a bread-and- butter letter to my cousin."
"I never write bread-and-butter letters to my cousins. Why should I? It's their job to look after me when I visit them."
"Not all people are fond of their cousins, you know."
"Who cares! As far as I'm concerned, it's your job to take care of your relatives. Anyway, you know my cousin Mohan? He's bought a brand new computer!"
"The computer, in my opinion, is the greatest thing since sliced bread."
"The greatest thing since sliced bread! What are you talking about? I don't..."
"...it's an idiomatic expression. When you say that something is the greatest or best thing since sliced bread, it means that you appreciate the thing very much. You think it's wonderful. For example, when cable television came to India, many people thought it was the best thing since sliced bread."
"Many people still think that it's the best thing since sliced bread."
"That's true."
"My cousin thinks that Madonna's CD is the greatest thing since sliced bread."
"To tell you the truth, I hate bread. Sliced or unsliced."
"I am not fond of bread either."
"Tell me, what kind of speech did your Principal give on Children's Day?"
"The usual boring kind. He talked about Pandit Nehru. He got all the dates wrong. But strangely enough none of the teachers bothered to correct him."
"The teachers know which side their bread is buttered."
"Bread and butter again! I thought you said you didn't like bread."
"I don't. When you say someone 'knows which side his bread is buttered', it means that in a given situation the person is smart enough to know what is good for him and what is not. Such a person will not offend a person in power."
"...if he does, he might get into trouble! The teachers didn't want to offend the Principal because he might have created problems for them later on."
"Exactly! Most policemen don't take action against politicians because they know which side their bread is buttered."
"Most cricketers don't speak ill of the committee members because they know which side their bread is buttered."
"Otherwise the 'jokers' might drop them from the team! Now let me..."
"....I have heard commentators on television say that the leg glance is someone's bread and butter shot. What does it mean?"
"When you talk about the 'bread and butter' of an organisation, you are talking about the activity which provides the organisation its main source of income."
"So, when you talk about the bread and butter of a person, you are talking about the activity which provides the person his income."
"Exactly!"

Published in The Hindu on November 17, 1998.

Word of the day

Drowsy: half asleep; showing lack of attention or boredom

Synonyms: sluggish, yawning

Usage: *The cold made her feel drowsy.*

Pronunciation: raʊzi/draʊzi

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈdraʊzi/

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

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From Page One

SC tells States to replace distressed BLOs for SIR

Senior advocate Maninder Singh, also for the EC, submitted that 90% of forms had been distributed in Tamil Nadu and 85% in Uttar Pradesh, where BLO deaths were reported. There were, on average, more than two lakh booth level agents of political parties and nearly 65,000 BLOs deployed in Tamil Nadu alone.

'Genuine concern'

Countering them, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for petitioners from Kerala and West Bengal, urged the court to recognise the cause of BLOs as a "genuine concern".

"Why does the EC want SIR to be completed in just two months? The election in Uttar Pradesh is in 2027. Still, they want it done in two months, when there is a whole year ahead... They claim BLOs have uploaded 90% of the forms. Who is going to cross-check? Everything EC says may not be true... The narrative was there were *ghuspaithiyas* (intruders), none were found," Mr. Sibal submitted.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam, said BLOs, recruited from among anganwadi workers and primary school teachers, were threatened with imprisonment, disciplinary proceedings or even loss of livelihood for not meeting targets.

However, Chief Justice Kant observed: "The work [SIR] cannot be hampered on this ground. Somebody has to do this... They are State employees. There is an obligation on them. There are officers who go from one State to another for conducting elections."

IndiGo cancels 550 flights, chaos at airports

During the meeting, IndiGo also informed officials that the widespread flight disruptions were due to "misjudgement and planning gaps" in implementing the set of norms governing rest and duty for pilots from November 1, primarily those on restricting night flying. The airline accepted that the actual crew requirement exceeded the numbers they had anticipated.

The Minister expressed clear displeasure regarding the manner in which the situation has been handled by IndiGo, and stressed that ample preparatory time was given to ensure a seamless transition to the new rules, the press statement explained. The airline has also been directed to urgently deploy additional staff at airports to ensure adequate passenger support.

IndiGo has requested exemption until February 10 from implementing reduced flying during night hours. The regulator will review this demand before the deadline. The airline has to submit a detailed road map outlining projected crew recruitment in relation to aircraft induction as well as measures for crew training, roster restructuring.

IndiGo's CEO Pieter Elbers also wrote to employees on the crisis and explained that "given the size, scale and complexity of our network, these disruptions grow large immediately and require interventions on multiple levels", which was being done.

Meanwhile, IndiGo's flight disruption spilled over to other airlines. At Pune airport, nine of the 10 parking bays were occupied by IndiGo aircraft overnight, leaving just one parking bay available for use by other airlines. As the airline didn't have pilots available, airport officials struggled to have the bays vacated.

(With PTI inputs)

PM welcomes Putin at airport in warm gesture, hails India-Russia partnership

Putin arrives in Delhi for his first state visit to India since beginning of war in Ukraine, attends private dinner with Modi at the latter's official residence; Rajnath Singh meets Russian Defence Minister on sidelines, says ties rooted in 'mutual trust'

Kallol Bhattacherjee
Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

In a special gesture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin upon his arrival at the Air Force Station, Palam on Thursday evening, ahead of the India-Russia annual summit scheduled for Friday. This is Mr. Putin's first state visit to India since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

"Delighted to welcome my friend, President Putin to India. Looking forward to our interactions later this evening and tomorrow. India-Russia friendship is a time-tested one that has greatly benefited our people," said Prime Minister Modi after greeting Mr. Putin on the tarmac of AFS Palam.

Mr. Putin's first engagement started with a private dinner with Mr. Modi at the latter's official residence at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg. The Russian leader will receive a ceremonial reception at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan at 11 a.m. on Friday, which will be followed by a visit to Rajghat, where he will lay a wreath at the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi.

The 23rd India-Russia annual summit will commence at 11.30 a.m. at Hyderabad House, to be followed by press statements by Mr. Modi and Mr. Putin.

Several members of Mr. Putin's official delegation reached New Delhi hours before his arrival. Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday evening.

Both Ministers reiterated that the bilateral partnership is rooted in deep mutual trust, shared principles, and long-standing respect, the Ministry of Defence said.

Mr. Singh further underscored India's commitment to strengthening its indigenous defence manufacturing ecosystem under the Atmanirbhar Bharat vision, highlighting new avenues for bilateral collaboration in advanced and niche technologies, the Ministry said.

Mr. Singh emphasised that India aims at boosting both domestic capability and defence exports.

The Hindu had earlier reported that the two sides are expected to sign a number of agreements on Friday, including one on mobility that will indicate Russia's greater willingness to open its labour market for Indian blue-collar workers.



Kremlin connect: Narendra Modi and Vladimir Putin as they depart Palam Air Force Base, marking the start of the latter's two-day visit to India on Thursday. (Right) Rajnath Singh welcomes his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov. ANI, and Kremlin Pool/Sputnik

Govt. blocking LoP meetings with foreign leaders: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday alleged that the government discourages visiting foreign dignitaries from meeting the Leader of the Opposition (LoP), calling it a break from democratic tradition and a sign of "insecurity". The remarks by the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha came hours before Russian President Vladimir Putin's two-day visit to India.

"It has been a tradition that foreign leaders meet the LoP. This happened during Vajpayee ji and Manmohan Singh ji's time. But now, when I go abroad or when dignitaries come here, the government tells them not to meet me," Mr. Gandhi told reporters in Parliament. Such meetings, he said, offer visiting leaders "another perspective." Asked why the government was doing so, he said, "It is their insecurity."

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the government is breaking protocol.

Maoist toll rises to 18 in gunfight with forces in Bijapur

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

A day after a gunfight broke out between security forces and Maoists along the Bijapur-Dantewada boundary in Chhattisgarh, the police said six more bodies were recovered and a total of 18 Maoists killed in the anti-Naxal operation.

Earlier on Wednesday, the police had said 12 Maoists had been killed. Three security personnel also lost their lives in the operation. Three other security personnel who suffered injuries are receiving treatment.

Inspector General of Police P. Sundarraj told journalists in Bijapur that the intermittent exchange of fire stopped on Thursday morning, after which six more bodies were found in the area. He said there were nine women among the 18 deaths.

Senior Maoist killed

Of the 18 slain Naxalites, 16 have been identified as senior cadres who collectively carried a reward of ₹1.3 crore on their heads. Among them was Modiyami Vella, who was allegedly active as the commander of Company No. 2 of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA). "Vella was involved in at least 44 Maoist incidents, including the 2013 Jiram attack (Bastar district) in which 32 people including senior Congress leaders were killed...," said Mr. Sundarraj.

A guard of honour was accorded to the three police personnel who were killed in the operation at Shaheed Vatika in Bijapur Police Lines.

Putin's visit a tightrope walk for Modi govt. amid sanction threats

NEWS ANALYSIS

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Russian oil is by far the most contentious issue after a rapid expansion in India's oil purchases

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi walked down the red carpet at Palam airport on Thursday to give Russian President Vladimir Putin his trademark hug as part of a grand welcome, the government signalled that India's ties with Russia are untouched by Western concerns, the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant, and U.S. and European sanctions.

Even so, as the two leaders sit down for bilateral talks on Friday, the government will need to manage a tense tightrope walk, particularly between Russia and Europe, on a number of issues including the optics of the visit, oil imports and trade, defence, nuclear cooperation, and a mobility agreement. The optics of the visit are particularly significant, given the other visitors expected shortly – a U.S. trade delegation is expected this month, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is set to visit India in early January, and the EU's top leadership Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa will be guests for Republic Day and the EU-India summit.

Oil and trade

Russian oil is by far the most contentious piece of the diplomatic puzzle, after a rapid expansion in India's oil purchases from less than 2% of its oil basket before the Ukraine conflict, to 40% last year, driving India-Russia trade from its annual average of $10 billion to $68.7 billion in 2024-25.

With India now expected to cut its oil imports drastically in the wake of U.S. sanctions, India and Russia will on Friday discuss replacing at least some of those oil purchases with other commodities from Russia, as well as boosting Indian exports to Russia of produce and processed foods, apparel, and some machinery, particularly over the newly developed Eastern Maritime Corridor from Chennai to Vladivostok.

Both sides will also push for more progress on the FTA between India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) during the visit, even as Indian exporters hit by the U.S.'s 50% tariffs seek new markets.

The India-Russia labour mobility agreement to be announced as the "centrepiece" of Mr. Putin's visit could be a crucial boost for Indian skilled and semi-skilled workers seeking jobs as other Western markets tighten their immigration controls.

The visit will be watched most closely for any defence deals, given that the U.S. had earlier threatened to impose sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act after India finalised a deal to buy S-400 air defence systems from Moscow. Russian technology transfer is key for India, as no other country thus far has agreed to share its most sensitive technologies. With the Russian Duma clearing the RELOS military logistics pact with India, more military exercises with Russia – which the EU had protested – could be expected.

State must not prosecute citizens without reasonable prospect of conviction: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

With 'half-baked' prosecutions and chargesheets, the top court says citizens do not get a fair process

The Supreme Court has cautioned the State against launching criminal prosecution against citizens on a whim, without a reasonable prospect of conviction.

It said half-baked prosecutions and filing of chargesheets was a violation of citizens' right to fair process, and moreover, adds to the burden of an already weighed-down judicial system.

"State should not prosecute citizens without a reasonable prospect of conviction, as it compromises the right to a fair process," a Bench of Justices N.K. Singh and Manmohan cautioned.

The police, at the stage of filing of chargesheet, and the criminal court, at the stage of framing of charges, must act as initial filters ensuring that only cases in which there is a strong suspicion should proceed to the formal trial stage to maintain the efficiency and integrity of the judicial system.

The judgment was based on a petition filed by a man accused of voyeurism and intimidation.

He, along with his brother, was having criminal charges on a complaint filed by a woman, who accused them of taking photographs and filming her on their mobile camera.

The incident dates back to 2020 when she, her friends and some women tried to enter the brothers' property. She was alleged to be their tenant. The brothers had restrained her, not letting her violating her privacy. The Supreme Court discharged the brothers of all the charges, including voyeurism.

The court noted that "voyeurism' was defined as "an act of a man watching or capturing the image of a woman engaging in a 'private act' in circumstances where she would usually have the expectation of not being observed".

"There is no allegation in the FIR and chargesheet that the complainant was watched or captured by the appellant-accused while she was engaging in a 'private act'," Justice Manmohan, who authored the judgment, observed.

The Supreme Court concluded the woman was actually a "prospective tenant" and had no right to be in the property without the brothers' consent. The verdict found no ground for the charge of criminal

CJI says courts should show no sympathy to acid attackers

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI



CJI Surya Kant

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday said acid attackers must be shown zero sympathy by courts, and the "entire system" must respond against them.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, agreed, saying perpetrators of acid attacks who leave victims, mostly women and minors, scarred inside and outside for the rest of their lives "must meet with the same ruthlessness as they showed their victims".

"No court must have any sympathy for them [accused in acid attack cases]. The entire system must respond against them," Chief Justice Kant observed orally.

The court was hearing a plea by an acid attack survivor, Shaheen Malik, to formally recognise acid attack survivors as persons with specified disabilities sons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

The Chief Justice asked the Centre to consider bringing an ordinance. Mr. Mehta said "no respondent can oppose the cause of the petitioners. They have the appellant-accused behind bars. They will have to be covered under the Act".

The court was shocked to learn that the trial in Ms. Malik's case had been pending even after 16 years. Ms. Malik, who was then 26 and pursuing an MBA, was attacked outside her workplace. She had reportedly undergone 25 reconstructive surgeries. She Souls in 2021, which has grown into a pan-India movement offering medical and legal support to acid attack survivors.

The Chief Justice proposed directing the setting up of special courts to exclusively conduct acid attack cases on a day-to-day basis. The court ordered the Registrar-General of the High Courts to provide the number and details of pending trials in acid attack cases.

The petitioner narrated that she was attacked in 2009 in Haryana. "Nothing happened in my case till 2013," she told the Chief Justice-led Bench. "Have the accused been punished?" Chief Justice Kant queried. Ms. Malik replied in the negative, saying "final arguments" were still going on in the trial court.

The Chief Justice advised the petitioner to file a separate application so that the top court could take *suo motu* cognisance and ensure the trial pro-

Power to defer polls not arbitrary for EC: panel

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The proposed power to the Election Commission in a Bill that seeks to lay a legal framework to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is not excessive, the Law Commission is learnt to have told a parliamentary committee on Thursday.

The law panel top brass briefed the Joint Committee of Parliament examining the Bills on simultaneous elections. During the briefing, members said the law panel also noted that the Constitution amendment Bill does not require ratification by at least 50% of the State Assemblies to come into force.

Opposition MPs questioned the law commission officials on the constitutionality and adherence to the federal spirit in the Bill.

The law commission officials briefed the committee members, but were not able to give a satisfactory answer to the questions, an Opposition MP claimed.

Another MP said voters are the basis of democracy and elections at regular intervals strengthen it.


APPEAL

Duplicate voters left on Bihar rolls post SIR: petitioner

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The EC did not disclose the list of voters deleted from rolls till SC order, petitioner tells SC

Advocate Prashant Bhushan submitted in the Supreme Court on Thursday that the Election Commission, during the special intensive revision of voter rolls in Bihar, issued 'cyclostyled' notices to 26 lakh people, asking them to prove their eligibility.

He alleged that there were still lakhs of duplicate voters left on the final Bihar poll rolls prepared post the SIR exercise.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Mr. Bhushan, representing NGO Association for Democratic Reforms along with advocate Neha Rathi, criticised the EC for its "lack of transparency at every stage of the SIR exercise".

"The EC did not disclose the list of voters deleted from 2025 roll until forced to do so by the Supreme Court in an August 14 order," he submitted.

He argued that though the EC's press notices had indicated the number of claims and objections received, these were not made available online in the required 'clickable' format, that is, a format by which the forms could be accessed by clicking on the entry in the list. He said the EC had brought on record neither the 2003 Intensive Revision Guidelines nor evidence of having conducted a prior enquiry to substantiate the need for a "hurried" SIR.

"The EC did not conduct any software-based de-duplication exercise during the Bihar SIR leading to an approximate 15 lakh suspected duplicated voters in Bihar's electoral roll," he submitted with reference to media reports.

A similar fate was bound to follow in the second phase of the SIR if the EC continued to ignore the de-duplication software to weed out duplicate, fake or multiple entries after field verification, he cautioned.

Urbanisation, migration led to voter roll flaws: govt.

Meghwal says some electors obtain registration in one place and then shift their residence and register themselves at another place without getting their names deleted from the electoral rolls

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said on Thursday that rapid urbanisation and frequent migration were the likely causes of irregularities on the voter rolls.

Mr. Meghwal was responding to Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, who asked if the Centre had taken cognisance of allegations of large-scale voter roll irregularities, including duplicate, deleted and fake entries reported in States such as Karnataka, Maharashtra and Bihar. The MP also asked about steps being taken by the Election Commission to verify, update, and audit electoral rolls to ensure accuracy and prevent manipulation before the elections.

Details were also sought about the verification mechanism to enhance transparency in the voter list revision process and measures being implemented to ensure electoral integrity, data security and accountability of officials involved in voter roll management and election preparedness.



Revision process: A special intensive revision camp being conducted in Chennai on November 24. R. SELVAMURUGAN

Additions and deletions

In a written reply, Mr. Meghwal said that according to the EC, significant changes have occurred on the electoral roll over the past 20 years due to additions and deletions on a large scale.

"Rapid urbanisation and frequent migration to pursue education, livelihood, and for other reasons, are now a given. Some electors obtain registration in one place and then shift their residence and register themselves at another place without getting their names deleted from the electoral roll of the initial place of residence. This has led to an increased possibility of repeated entries in the electoral roll," he said.

He added that this warranted an intensive verification drive to verify each person before enrolment as an elector. Therefore, the commission had ordered a special summary revision starting from Bihar, which has now been extended to other States. Mr. Meghwal said parties were being involved in the process, and the electoral roll has been shared at the draft publication and final publication stage.

The EC is also inviting claims and objections from the public, and a system of supervision and checks to maintain the quality of the rolls was in place. The norms mandated the display of claims and objections on the Electoral Registration Officer's notice board and Chief Electoral Officer's website along with a detailed schedule of time notes and advertisements published during the revision process for public awareness.

"The First Appeal against any decision of the ERO is placed before the District Magistrate; and the second appeal before the Chief Electoral Officer," the Minister said.

IN BRIEF



Electronic toll system will ease user experience: Gadkari

A new system of toll collection has been rolled out in 10 places and will be extended across the country, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday. The new electronic system will be rolled out within a year and will ensure a seamless experience for highway users, Mr. Gadkari said in the Lok Sabha during Question Hour. Currently, 4,500 highway projects worth ₹10 lakh crore are ongoing across the country, the Minister said.

NEET has commercialised education, says Congress MP

Seeking a full review of the medical entrance exam National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), Congress MP Manickam Tagore on Thursday said it had not encouraged merit but rather commercialised education by strengthening private-run "educational empires" and weakening schools. The MP said during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha that a committee set up by the Centre had found lapses in the coaching system. Mr. Tagore said the current practice was "flawed" as it focused on only "single stakes exams" that benefited only the rich, the coaching mafia and dummy schools.He demanded a full review of NEET and its impact on equity.

SC extends relief to Rahul Gandhi in defamation case

The Supreme Court on Thursday extended till April 22 its interim order staying proceedings in a criminal defamation case pending before a Lucknow court against the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, for remarks he made to pressperson during the Bharat Jodo Yatra regarding the reported skirmishes between Indian and Chinese soldiers along the border. A Bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Satish Chandra Sharma listed the matter for final hearing in April 2026.

SC orders 30% reservation for women in State Bar Councils

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Bar Council of India to ensure 30% reservation for women in the forthcoming State Bar Council elections to give effect to the "constitutional ethos" that mandates such representation. A Bench was hearing two public interest petitions filed by Supreme Court advocates Yoganaya M.G. and Shehla Chaudhary, who pointed to the stark under-representation of women and other marginalised groups in Bar Council bodies across the country. It said that the quota would extend not only to elected positions but also to the posts of office-bearers in every State Bar Council.

Won't join hands with RJD again, says Nitish

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday declared he will never join hands with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) again and will remain with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The national president of the Janata Dal (United) made the statement in the Bihar Assembly. During his speech, Mr. Kumar also highlighted the NDA's achievements in the State.

"You used to agree with whatever I said, but later you started making mistakes, and I left. Now, I will never leave [the NDA]. This is our place and I will stay here but remember the work done by us," he told the Opposition.

U.S. deported 3,258 Indian nationals in 2025, highest since 2009: Jaishankar in Rajya Sabha

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Union External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday that since January, 3,258 Indian nationals had been deported by the United States, the highest figure for any year since 2009.

A total of 18,822 Indian nationals have been deported since 2009. He was replying to a question raised by Samajwadi Party MP Ramjilal Suman.

Mr. Suman also asked "whether it is a fact that women have also been deported in handcuffs by the U.S. Government". Mr. Jaishankar clarified that 73-year-old Harjit Kaur, whose deportation was widely reported in Indian media, was not handcuffed during her return to India. However, he confirmed that she was maltreated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials during her detention in the U.S. "While Harjit Kaur (deportee) was not handcuffed, she was maltreated in detention before she was put on the flight. We raised the matter of her maltreatment strongly with the American Embassy and asked the American authorities to look into it," he added.



Home bound: Chained Indian migrants allegedly without legal papers being deported to India on a U.S. aircraft. ILLUSTRATION

Ms. Kaur was deported in September after spending three decades in the U.S. She spent 60 to 70 hours in detention without a bed and was forced to sleep on the floor despite double knee replacements. She was reportedly given ice to take medication and denied food she could eat, with guards blaming her for her inability to eat the provided sandwich.

In his written reply, he also noted that of the 3,258 deportees, 2,032 individuals (62.3%) travelled on regular commercial flights, while 1,226 (37.6%) were transported on ICE or U.S. Customs and Border Protection charter flights.

He emphasised that while issuing visas is a sovereign right, India has raised concerns about the ill-treatment of Indian deportees, especially women and children, with U.S. authorities. "The issuance of visas is a sovereign right of a government. So, they reserve the right to take a decision on a visa, which is based on their assessment of the national security implications of a particular individual's position," Mr. Jaishankar said.

The U.S., he added, has asked applicants, particularly student visa seekers, to switch their social media settings from private to public so that authorities can scrutinise their online activity.

Responding to supplementaries on the issue, the Minister said that the problem began in April, when a new policy was announced by the Secretary of State in the U.S.

"As a result of that, even for relatively minor offences, we saw the cancellation of visas of students. In many cases, there was also pressure on them to self-deport," he said.

Parliament approves Bill to levy excise duty on tobacco

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Parliament on Thursday approved a Bill to levy a higher excise duty on tobacco and related products once the GST compensation cess ends, with the Rajya Sabha returning the legislation to the Lok Sabha.

The Lok Sabha passed the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 on Wednesday.

Replying to a discussion on the Bill in the Rajya Sabha, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said this was not an additional tax, and the tax burden, as currently applicable under the GST regime, will continue.



Nirmala Sitharaman

She said that in the last GST Council, it was discussed in detail, and it was agreed earlier, that the compensation cess collection will probably come to a stop at the end of December.

"Let me assure here itself straight away that the tobacco products will still be taxed under the demerit category at 40% in the GST frame of things. They will still be taxed at 40%, but there will not be any compensation," Ms. Sitharaman said.

The provisions of the Bill will come into effect once the GST compensation cess, which is currently levied on tobacco, comes to an end.

DMK questions hybrid title of Health cess Bill

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

DMK MP T. Sumathy on Thursday objected to the title of the Health Security or National Security Cess Bill, 2025 taken up for consideration and passing in the Lok Sabha, claiming it was an attempt to inject a certain "cultural and linguistic" flavour in what should be a neutral statutory title.

Participating in the debate on the Bill, she questioned why the title of the English legislation was framed 'Health Security or National Security'. "Why is this linguistic hybrid sir. Why this attempt to inject a certain cultural and linguistic flavour in what should be a neutral statutory title," she asked.

Earlier, Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Roy while speaking on the Bill said he struggled to follow the Finance Minister's speech in Hindi on the Bill.

Ms. Sitharaman rebuked Mr. Roy for objecting to her speaking in Hindi, pointing out that the translation technology allows members to listen to speeches in any language.

Minister says 4.8 crore cases are pending in lower courts

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal informed the Rajya Sabha on Thursday that the total number of vacant posts of judges in district courts across India was 4,855 and that there were 297 vacancies in various High Courts.

He said around 4.8 crore cases were pending in lower courts across the country. Sharing the number of pending cases in the Supreme Court in the past five years, Mr. Meghwal, in a written reply, said that 90,034 cases were under trial in the court as of December 1. The pendency was 70,239 in 2021.

Responding to a question from Vikramjit Singh Sahney, the Minister said filling of vacant positions of judges in district and subordinate courts was the responsibility of the High Courts and the State governments. For the Supreme Court and High Courts, vacancies were being filled continuously in collaboration of the executive and judiciary.

Uttar Pradesh topped the charts with the most vacancies of judicial officers in district and subordinate courts, according to the data shared by the Minister. Uttar Pradesh has 1,055 vacancies in the lower judiciary followed by 535 vacancies in Gujarat and 384 vacancies in Madhya Pradesh.

Even among the High Courts, the Allahabad High Court has the maximum number of vacant posts – 60 – and has the most pending cases at 11,66,571. The lower courts in Uttar Pradesh have 1,13,05,841 cases pending, once again, the highest in the country.

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IN BRIEF



M.P. CM releases 3 cheetahs into the Kuno National Park

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday released three cheetahs into the wild from their enclosures at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Sheopur district, on International Cheetah Day. According to officials, Mr. Yadav released Veera and her two 10-month-old cubs in the Parond forest region. He said that the pledge of bringing the big cats back to Asia had picked up pace. "Sheopur Kuno region has now become an international-level centre. The tourism here has gone up five times and the way their [cheetahs] family is growing, the displaced people of the region will get new work opportunities in the coming time," he said.

IIM-Indore student faces sexual harassment probe

The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Indore has initiated a formal investigation into a sexual harassment complaint filed by a female student against a male student-member of the business school's Placement Committee. Institute Director Himanshu Rai said on Thursday that IIM-Indore's Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) launched its investigation immediately after receiving the complaint in which the student alleged sexual harassment incident that occurred during an off-campus event. "The ICC asked the student concerned to step down from the Placement Committee," Mr. Rai said. ▫

Postal department considers UPI-like 'labels' for addresses

The system, called DIBUVA, will provide users a convenient way to share their addresses across platforms; users can grant firms limited address access, after which the label needs re-authorisation

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

The Department of Posts this week released a draft amendment to the Post Office Act, 2023, aimed at introducing an interoperable, standardised, and user-centric addressing system called the Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address, or DIBUVA. The framework has been under consultation for a few months, with one key element, DIGIPIN, rolled out in March.

A senior official involved in DIBUVA's implementation said it would be able to replace textual addresses with email or UPI address-like labels such as "name@entity", which would act as a proxy for a physical address.

The government hopes to build this system as part of its digital public infrastructure initiatives and will allow private companies to participate.

The department is hoping to draw interest from e-commerce and gig platforms, where users need to provide addresses across multiple services. On these platforms, individuals would be able to provide a label instead of an address and authorise firms to receive the geographic coordinates and full text of their address instantly, instead of filling out address forms repeatedly.

The draft amendment would allow the postal department to set up a Section 8 not-for-profit entity under government supervision. The body would play a role similar to the National Payments Corporation of India, which is an association of banks administering the UPI payments system.



Consent-based

Users would be able to authorise companies to view their address for a specified period if they wish, after which a given label will require re-authorisation.

There is no compulsion in the draft amendment for private players to join, the official said, and the department hopes the system will be compelling enough for firms and users to sign up.

Labels will be provided by address service providers, and the consent architecture will be managed by address information agents, or AIAs.

DIGIPIN system

The DIGIPIN system is the foundational layer for this service, the official said. DIGIPIN is a 10-character alphanumeric expression of latitude and longitude. The technology was developed to provide more precise locations in rural areas or in cases where the textual expression of a physical address does not offer adequate information.

DIGIPIN was open-sourced by the department, and each DIGIPIN corresponds to a roughly 14 square metre patch of land, with a mathematical function deterministically generating a unique code. This translates to around 228 billion DIGIPINs for Indian territory.

Union govt. evades question on infant malnutrition deaths

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre cited public data to argue that malnutrition indicators for children had improved since 1990-91

The Union government on Thursday evaded questions about the number of infant deaths due to malnutrition in tribal regions in the past five years.

In a four-page response to a direct question by Trinamool Congress member Sougata Ray, the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs spoke of schemes and programmes it was running to deal with malnutrition in all children.

It also provided publically available National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data on stunting, wasting, and underweight children, and mentioned protocols issued to minimise mortality and morbidity due to malnutrition.

No data

However, it did not provide any data on the number of deaths due to malnutrition.

The reply was given by Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Durgadas Uikey in the Lok Sabha.

The Union government cited analyses of publicly available data from National Family Health Surveys to argue that malnutrition indicators for all children had improved since 1990-91.

Significantly, Mr. Uikey's reply noted that the government's population projections placed the number of children under the age of five at over 13.7 crore.

However, only about 6.6 crore of these children are enrolled at anganwadi centres and registered on the government's Poshan Tracker.

Government data showed that 6.44 crore of these children had been examined for malnutrition indicators, according to which at least 52% were stunted, wasted, or underweight as of October 2025.

"The analysis of the above NFHS data and the Poshan Tracker data shows improvement in malnutrition indicators in children across India," the Union government's response said.


Swaraj Kaushal

Ex-Mizoram Governor Swaraj Kaushal dies

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Swaraj Kaushal, former Governor of Mizoram and and a senior advocate, passed away on Thursday afternoon. He was 73.

Kaushal, who was the husband of the late Sushma Swaraj and father of New Delhi MP Bansuri Swaraj, Prime Minister wrote in a post on X, "He distinguished himself as a lawyer and a person who believed in using the legal profession to improve the lives of the underprivileged."

Supreme Court to review clause in 2025 Order that contradicts Assam Accord

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

AGP says it has indirectly legalised illegal immigration into Assam after March 1971 cut-off

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought the Centre's response to a plea challenging the constitutionality of a provision that allows persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh who entered India without a passport or valid documents before December 31, 2024, to stay on in Assam.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant issued formal notice to the Centre on the plea filed by the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), represented by senior advocate Jayant Bhushan and advocate Rahul Pratap, challenging Clause 3(2)(e) of the Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order 2025 as violative of the Assam Accord.

The Accord, meant to halt the influx of people from Bangladesh, required foreigners who had entered Assam on or after March 25, 1971 to be identified and deported. The intent of the Assam Accord was made explicit through the insertion of Section 6A into the Citizenship Act, 1955. Section 6A barred citizenship to immigrants who entered Assam after March 25, 1971.

"The rationale behind the Assam Accord was to preserve the demography and to promote the cultural, social and linguistic identities and heritage of Assamese people by constitutional and legislative safeguard. Any attempt to extend the cut-off date from March 24, 1971 to December 31, 2024 would be violative of the constitutional, legislative and statutory protection accorded to the people of Assam under the Assam Accord," the AGP submitted.

The AGP argued that Clause 3(2)(e) of the 2025 Order has rendered the cut-off date in the Assam Accord otiose. It has indirectly legalised illegal immigration into Assam after March 1971. The clause has also violated Section 6A, which was upheld by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in October last year.

The petition submitted that the clause ignored the point that Section 6A would override "all other provisions of law for the time being in force".

SC declines to halt demolitions in Bareilly, asks residents to move HC

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday declined to stay the demolition of the houses of two Bareilly residents, who alleged that State authorities had embarked on a "targeted" demolition drive in the aftermath of the violent clashes that erupted on September 26 after Islamic cleric and Ittehad-e-Millat Council chief Tauqeer Raza Khan called for a sit-in protest over alleged derogatory remarks against the Prophet in relation to the "I Love Muhammad" posters.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was hearing a writ petition filed under Article 32 by the two residents, who contended that their homes and an adjoining banquet hall were being razed without any notice and in complete disregard of due process.


Residents react as authorities demolish a building linked to arrested cleric Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan's associate on Tuesday. PTI

Appearing for the petitioners, senior advocate Rauf Rahim submitted that the conduct of the authorities was in the teeth of the apex court's November 13, 2024 ruling, which laid down pan-India guidelines mandating a prior show-cause notice and a minimum 15-day response period before any demolition.

"This is contempt in the face of the court's order. One of the petitioners is a 70-year-old man who recently underwent cardiac surgery... the authorities have already demolished a part of his house," he said.

The judges, however, questioned why the petitioners had not approached the Allahabad High Court in the first instance. "The court has already given a detailed judgment. Approach the High Court and take the benefit of that judgment. Why should you come under Article 32 every time?" the Bench said.

Mr. Rahim submitted that securing an urgent listing before the High Court would take at least 10 days, during which the demolition could cause irreversible harm. "The powers of this court are enormous... please protect me in the meantime," he urged the Bench.

Justice Nath reiterated the court's reluctance to stay the demolition, observing that doing so would effectively sidestep the jurisdiction of the High Courts under Article 226.

When Mr. Rahim insisted that the authorities were "standing with bulldozers" and that further demolition was imminent, the Bench agreed to grant limited interim protection.

Accordingly, the court directed that the *status quo* be maintained for a week.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD + 14657

(set by Sasa)

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Across

7 Nothing in list for bird (7)
8 Terribly upset player finally breaks out (6)
9 Hospital almost secure, one admitted (6)
10 Debris of crew at sea close to dock near a vacant garage (8)
11 Old niece perhaps receiving training with right knowledge (10)
13 Twelve months? Mostly long (4)
14 Provokes followers (4)
16 Primarily gliding effortlessly, creature keenly observing lizard (5)
18 Block westbound vessels (4)
19 Sharp blow killing that man in cloak (4)
21 Special treats cop arranged for viewers (10)
23 Bald German without leads to get councillor (8)
25 European rejected English daughter and ran away (6)
26 About crime? Nothing in gambling house (6)
27 Shakes pieces (7)

Down

1 Suggestions confusing son with clues (8)
2 Loading bag with fresh gin outside bar (3)
3 Roast about rank (4)
4 Cancel permit to enter river (6)
5 Jailer wants new flier (6)
6 Motionless deer with insect below tip of nose (8)
7 Rest often briefly at ten (5)
12 City in France checked by husband for vacation (5)
15 Similarly a balloon with a string initially (2,4,2)
17 Broadcast novel "The Iron man" essentially (2,3,3)
18 Course with old information for source of disease (8)
20 Paper article is describing views at last (6)
21 Mark in musical instrument reportedly (6)
22 Sage climbing up around strong ridge (5)
24 Mark counting small group (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Lord Narayana, the owner

We should strive to reach Lord Narayana's feet. He is the goal, but He is also the means. We must understand that every atma is His property, said Akkarakkani Srirndhi in a discourse. The word "swAmi," means owner. The Lord is our swami, that is the owner of all atmas. In Tamil, one of the words for owner is "udaiyavar." This word "udaiyavar" was a title given to Ramanujacharya by Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam. The Lord owns everything in the world. The Sanskrit word "vibhuti" means wealth, and it is common to talk of the Lord's nitya vibhuti and His leela vibhuti. Sri Vaikuntha, the Lord's abode, is His nithya vibhuti. This world that we mortals inhabit is also undoubtedly His wealth, and is known as leela vibhuti. When Lord Ranganatha referred to Ramanujacharya as Udaiyavar, He was saying that all His wealth was Ramanuja's too. Such was the greatness of Ramanuja.

The owner of a property has to safeguard his property. That is why the Lord, as the owner of jivatmas, is also the One who has to ensure that they cross the ocean of samsara. Sita's words to Hanuman show the role of the Lord as the means to liberation. Hanuman is ready to rescue Sita. But Sita refuses to accept his offer of help. She is herself capable of escaping the clutches of Ravana. But isn't Rama the One who should save? That being the case, She must rely on Him to do so. Will it not be a blot on His prowess if He does not accomplish the task of liberating Sita? Here Sita demonstrates that we should place our dependence solely on the Lord for liberation. We are here on this earth, because we did not resort to Saranagati. Had we

INBRIEF



IndusInd Bank denies talks of bringing in strategic partner

IndusInd Bank on Thursday denied a report that it is in discussions to bring in a strategic partner. "There is no discussion of this nature underway with anyone in the bank," the bank said. U.K.-based Hinduja Group, the lender's top shareholder, is looking for a strategic partner with global expertise to take a minority stake, the Economic Times reported earlier in the day, citing Ashok Hinduja, Chairman of Indusind International Holdings. REUTERS

Granules packaging facility completes U.S. FDA inspection

Generic drugmaker Granules India's packaging facility in the U.S. completed a GMP inspection by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) with zero observations. This was the second U.S. FDA inspection of Granules Consumer Health facility and follows the March 2023 audit that resulted in a no action indicated classification by the regulator, Granules said. Granules Consumer Health, a step-down subsidiary, serves as the front-end division for OTC products in the U.S.

Zydus Vadodara unit gets U.S. FDA report with VAI status

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued an establishment inspection report (EIR) with a voluntary action indicated (VAI) classification to an injectable facility of Zydus Lifesciences in Vadodara. The company received the EIR for a GMP follow-up inspection the FDA conducted at the facility from August 25 to September 5, 2025 classifying the unit as VAI. The inspection followed a warning letter issued on August 29, 2024 by the U.S. FDA, Zydus said.

India cuts Russian oil imports by a sharp 38% in October

India imported $3.55 billion worth of crude oil from Russia in Oct. 2025, down from $5.8 billion in October 2024; Russia still accounts for about 32% of India's total oil imports by value and volume

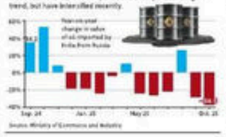
T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

India cut its oil imports from Russia by 38% in value terms and 38% in volume terms in October 2025 as compared with last year, with the cuts driven by a high base effect as well as an overall reduction in India's oil imports.

The latest data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry shows India imported $3.55 billion worth of crude oil from Russia in October 2025, down from a historically high $5.8 billion in October 2024. This is the sharpest single-month drop in the value of oil imports from Russia.

In volume terms, India imported 71.6 lakh tonnes of Russian oil, down from 103.8 lakh tonnes in October 2024, which too was among the highest oil imports India had made from Russia.

This follows up on a 29% reduction in value terms and 17% reduction in volume terms in September 2025. That said, Russia still accounts for about 32% of India's total oil imports by value and volume.



The data shows that this cut in oil imports from Russia comes at a time when India's total oil import bill was also down 15.4% in October 2025. However, it also shows that, during this month, oil imports from the U.S. jumped nearly 40% in volume terms, and 18.3% in value terms as compared with October last year. A previous analysis by *The Hindu* had shown that India's strategy to pull back on its Russian oil imports had been playing out for a longer period, beginning well before the U.S. imposed a 25% tariff penalty on India in August for importing Russian oil.

Over the last 12 months up to the end of October 2025, India had seen a year-on-year fall in Russian oil imports in nine months. Most of these cuts were in double digits, and six were by more than 20% each.

Notably, on a month-on-month basis, India's imports from Russia have actually grown. That is, oil imports from Russia in October 2025 were 7.3% and 7.8% higher than in September 2025, by value and volume, respectively.

A report from Rubix Data Sciences, a data analytics firm, predicts that India's imports of Russian oil would have peaked in November, before falling in December.

"India's crude oil imports from Russia are projected to reach their highest level in five months in November 2025, according to preliminary figures from Kpler, as domestic refiners rushed to lock in cargoes before the U.S. deadline of restricting transactions with sanctioned Russian producers took effect on 21st November," it said.

According to Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative and former Director General of Foreign Trade, India's increased dependence on Russian oil over the last few years has resulted in a "lopsided" bilateral relationship.

India Inc needs 'leap of faith' to fulfil Russian demand for goods: Goyal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Russia has a huge demand for industrial goods and consumer products, which can be fulfilled by Indian businesses if only they take a "leap of faith", Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

Speaking at the India-Russia Business Forum just hours ahead of the arrival of Russian President Vladimir Putin here, Mr. Goyal said that the "sky is the limit" on what I.4 billion Indians can offer Russia.

"I think if we all work together, particularly if our business community takes a leap of faith, I'm very sure this untapped potential can be explored," Mr. Goyal said. "The partnership will flourish, it will address the trade imbalance in the near future, and we'll work to eliminate, reduce, and dilute the trade barriers, if any."

India's goods trade deficit, which was at $6.6 billion in 2020-21, surged to $38.9 billion by 2024-25. It stood at $13 billion in 2025-26 as of October 2025.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

Sensex	85,002	0.13
Nifty 50	26,032	0.08
Gold	1,32,000	0.05
Brent oil	63.04	0.03

NIFTY 50

Adani Enter.	2,317.80	-0.42
Adani Ports	1,535.80	-1.00
Apollo Hosp.	7,551.00	0.40
Asian Paints	2,921.10	1.73
Axis Bank	1,208.00	0.30
Bajaj Auto	9,025.50	0.52
Bajaj Finserv	2,049.20	0.20
Bajaj Finance	1,025.10	1.16
Bharat Elec.	407.10	0.62
Bharti Airtel	2,121.90	0.40
Cipla	1,511.60	0.28
Coal India	379.65	1.48
Dr Reddy's Lab	1,277.60	0.57
Eicher Motors	7,145.00	0.39
Grasim Ind.	2,779.90	0.37
Groww Ltd	2,738.80	0.17
HCL Tech	1,614.60	0.42
HDFC Bank	997.20	1.20
HDFC Life	730.80	0.80
Hindalco	810.80	3.20
Hind Unilever	2,402.20	0.29
ICICI Bank	1,368.70	0.80
Indusind Bank	1,016.10	0.92
Infosys	1,597.80	0.80
ITC	414.65	1.20
JSW Financial Servs	376.20	1.20
JSW Steel	1,126.90	1.30
Kotak Bank	2,128.40	0.70
L&T	3,842.80	0.40
M&M	3,771.60	2.20
Maruti Suzuki	15,994.00	0.60
Max Healthcare	1,102.90	1.12
Nestle India	2,132.30	0.30
NTPC	337.60	0.30
ONGC	241.15	2.15
Power Grid Corp.	287.05	0.50
Reliance Ind.	1,570.90	0.20
SBI Life	2,002.90	0.42
Shriram Fin.	1,146.10	0.30
Sun Pharma.	1,698.50	0.10
Tata Consumer	1,146.40	0.40
Tata Steel	168.77	0.23
TCS	3,230.00	0.42
Tech Mahindra	1,552.20	0.60
Titan	3,804.90	0.40
Trent	4,140.00	0.40
Ultra Tech Cement	12,670.00	0.30
Wipro	249.65	0.39

ASG Eye Hospital to invest ₹2,000 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

ASG Eye Hospital Ltd., a super specialty eye care chain, announced plans to invest about ₹2,000 crore to expand its network to up to 300 centres by 2030. The company, having private equity investors such as General Atlantic and Kedaara Capital, will raise about ₹1,000 crore either through private placement or IPO in 12 to 18 months to partly fund the expansion, MD and CEO Dr. Arun Singhvi said.

The firm has also entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Sharp Sight Eye Hospital in a ₹400-crore deal.

LIC unveils Protection Plus, Bima Kavach

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has introduced two new plans Protection Plus and Bima Kavach.

LIC Protection Plus is a non par, non linked, life, individual, savings plan that offers life insurance cover cum savings throughout the term of the policy.

Bima Kavach is a non par, non linked, life, individual, pure risk plan providing financial protection to the family of the insured in case of his/her death during the policy term. Special premium rates are offered for women and non-smokers under Bima Kavach.

Suzlon to start three new AI-enabled smart blade factories

Kunal Shankar
PUDUCHERRY



J.P. Chalasani

Suzlon Energy, India's largest wind turbine manufacturer, announced on Thursday that it will set up three new AI-enabled smart blade factories, two of which will come up in Gujarat and Karnataka, with the third location to be finalised shortly. The expansion will take Suzlon's nationwide manufacturing footprint to 20 facilities, strengthening its position as India accelerates towards its renewable energy targets.

The new plants mark a major push by the company to speed up execution of its 6.2 GW order book, reduce logistics time, and bring manufacturing closer to wind project hubs. According to the company's press note, the factories will integrate automation, digital workflows, robotics, and advanced monitoring systems to boost productivity, improve quality, and enhance workplace safety. Suzlon will also upgrade all 15 existing factories with similar digital interventions under its new smart-factory programme.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, J.P. Chalasani, Group CEO, said Suzlon had planned an annual capex of around ₹350 crore over the next several years, portions of which will fund the new factories. He declined to specify the unit-wise investment, noting that costs would remain "dynamic" depending on order flows and the technology upgrades demanded by a fast-evolving global wind energy landscape.

Suzlon currently maintains an operational 50 GW wind fleet, giving it a deep servicing footprint across the country.

The CEO said India's wind sector was entering "its most promising growth phase" with less than 4% of India's over 1 TW wind potential utilised so far—a figure echoed in Suzlon's internal industry outlook presentation, which pegs the country's technical wind capacity at 1,164 GW, concentrated across eight states.

Mr. Chalasani said the transition would require rapid scaling of domestic manufacturing.

On competition from global players, including Chinese manufacturer Envision, which recently secured a significant wind turbine supply contract in India, Mr. Chalasani sounded unfazed.

He emphasised that Suzlon's lifetime operation and maintenance (O&M) model — covering upgrades, site-specific adaptations, and localisation — offered "unmatched value" to customers. He added that the Centre's proposed localisation policy, expected to require foreign OEMs to manufacture in India, would "level the playing field."

(The writer was in Puducherry at Suzlon's invite.)

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Concept Design, Detailed Project Report (DPR) Preparation, and Execution Support for Establishing the International State-of-the-Art Sanitation Dojo/Hub at ASCI College Park Campus, Hyderabad	15 days from the date of advertisement

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2526/13 000187	Procurement of Sodium Hydrosulphite for Unit - I.	16.12.2025
2526/13 000158	Procurement of CBFI, Plug Screw Feeder ACV 23 Part No.1-5773838 MOC: CD4MCu	29.12.2025

Corrigendum, if any will be issued in TNPL Website and NIC Portal only. For further details, please visit websites : www.tnpl.com / https://etenders.gov.in/nic/eprapp
ISO/IEC 17025:2017 Accredited ISO 14001:2015 ISO 45001:2018 FSC® - Maker of Organic Based Eco (Friendly) Paper

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BESCOM invites tenders through KPPP platform from eligible Bidders for "System Improvements Works like Replacement of Age Old LT Conductor by Rabbit/AB Cable, Providing additional DTCs/Enhancement of DTCs & Replacement of Deteriorated poles in identified SC/ST colonies in Madhugiri, CSD Sira & RSD Sira Sub Divisions of Madhugiri Division (Lot-1), Pavagada, Koratagere & Kodigenahalli Sub Divisions of Madhugiri Division (Lot-2), Kunigal, Hullyurdurga & Yediyur Sub Divisions of Kunigal Division, Tiptur, Turuvekere & Chikkanayakanahalli Sub Divisions of Tiptur Division, Tumkur RSD-2, Gubbi & Nittur Sub Divisions of Tumkur Division of Tumkur Circle, BESCOM for a period of Four months on fixed price rate contract Partial Turnkey (All Cable & Distribution Transformers supplied by BESCOM)/Percentage quoted Basis".

Sl. No.	Division	Enquiry Nos.
1	Kunigal Division	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT/644
2	Tiptur Division	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT/645
3	Tumkur Division	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT/646
4	Madhugiri Division,Lot 1	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT/647
5	Madhugiri Division,Lot 2	BESCOM/2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT/648

Bid Documents will be available: on or after 05.12.2025.
Last date for Bid Submission: 26.12.2025 at 17:30 Hrs.
The Tenders can be obtained through KPP portal web-site https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. Aspiring Bidders need to register on KPP portal. Further Bidders can take assistance with KPP help desk contact numbers (+91-8046010000, +91-8068948777) or email at support@eprocheldesk.com.
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LONDON

U.K., Norway will mount joint naval patrols to protect undersea cables



REUTERS

Britain and Norway will mount joint naval patrols to protect undersea cables from Russia, the U.K. said on Thursday, as Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Norwegian counterpart Jonas Gahr Støre held talks on defence. The U.K. government says a combined fleet of at least 13 warships will protect critical infrastructure" AP

DHAKA

Critically ill Bangladesh ex-PM Zia to be flown to U.K. for treatment



AFP

Bangladesh's critically ill former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, a key figure in elections slated for next year, is to be flown by air ambulance to Britain, her doctor said on Thursday. Ms. Zia, 80, is in intensive care in the capital Dhaka, after she was admitted to hospital last month with symptoms of a lung infection. AFP

KARACHI

25% increase in terror incidents in 2025 in Pak., says think tank report

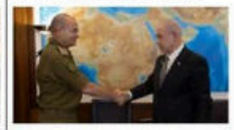


AFP

Pakistan continues to reel under terrorism with a surge of 25% violence-related incidents in 2025 compared to the previous year, a think tank report has said. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan together accounted for over 96% of all 1,107 fatalities, according to the Islamabad-based Centre for Research and Security Studies. PTI

JERUSALEM

Israel's Netanyahu picks military secretary as new Mossad chief



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday appointed Major General Roman Gofman, his military secretary with no intelligence background, as the next Mossad chief. Major General Gofman, a Belarus-born officer wounded in 2023, will replace current Mossad chief David Barnea in June 2026. AFP

Putin says there are points he can't agree to in U.S. plan to end the war

Core issues such as possible Ukrainian territorial concessions, future security guarantees remain unresolved; U.S. to resume talks in Miami with Ukraine's lead negotiator; Trump says his envoys left Moscow convinced Putin would like to reach a deal

Associated Press
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin says that some proposals in a U.S. plan to end the war in Ukraine are unacceptable to the Kremlin, indicating that any deal is still some way off despite intense shuttle diplomacy by American envoys.

U.S. President Donald Trump has set in motion the most intense diplomatic push to stop the fighting since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbour nearly four years ago. But the peace efforts have once again run into demands that are hard to reconcile, especially over whether Ukraine must give up land to Russia and how it can be kept safe from any future Russian aggression.



Diplomatic talks: Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks with prosperians in Moscow, Russia. REUTERS

Mr. Putin said in comments published on Thursday that his five-hour talks with U.S. envoys this week were "necessary" and "useful," but also "difficult work". Some of the proposals were unacceptable to the Kremlin, he said.

Miami talks

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and son-in-law Jared Kushner, are set to meet with Ukraine's lead negotiator, Rustem Umerov, on Thursday in Miami for further talks, according to a senior Trump administration official who was not authorised to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Putin spoke to the India Today TV channel before his visit to New Delhi on Thursday. Before the full interview was broadcast, Russian state news agencies Tass and RIA Novosti quoted some of Mr. Putin's remarks in it.

Tass quoted Mr. Putin as saying in the interview that at the talks in the Kremlin on Tuesday, the sides "had to go through each point" of the U.S. peace proposal, "which is why it took so long".

Mr. Trump said Wednesday that Mr. Witkoff and Mr. Kushner came away from their marathon session confident that he wants to find an end to the war.

"Their impression was very strongly that he'd like to make a deal," Mr. Trump said.

U.K. sanctions Russia's GRU over Salisbury poisoning

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

The U.K. government, on Thursday, sanctioned Russia's military intelligence unit, the GRU, in its entirety and summoned the Russian ambassador as an inquiry into the 2018 Salisbury poisoning published its final report. 'The Dawn Sturgess Inquiry', named after a woman who died in Salisbury after exposure to Novichok, a military-grade nerve agent, concluded that Russian President Vladimir Putin had authorised the attack against targeting Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, both of whom were seriously injured, but survived.

Thursday's announcement also named and sanctioned 11 persons associated with GRU. Sturgess, a 44 year old mother of three, was not an intended target of the attack. The report, authored by former judge Anthony Hughes, concluded that Russian agents had discarded the Novichok-containing perfume bottle after applying it to the handle of the front door at Mr. Skripal's house. Mr. Skripal and his daughter were found unconscious on a park bench on March 4, 2018. The Skripals, along with Sergei's (late) wife, had entered the U.K. in 2010 as part of a prisoner exchange arrangement between London and Moscow. The probe found that Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, later confirmed by the U.K. authorities to be Russian agents, carried out the mission. Both men have denied the charges, as has Russia.



Dawn Sturgess

"I have concluded that the operation to assassinate Sergei Skripal must have been authorised at the highest level, by [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin," said Mr. Hughes, in his report. "Dawn's needless death was a tragedy and will forever be a reminder of Russia's reckless aggression," U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said.

Hegseth's Signal use could have put U.S. troops at risk: report

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

The Pentagon's independent watchdog said U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of commercial messaging app Signal to discuss strikes on Yemen could have put American troops at risk, U.S. media reported Wednesday.

The probe by the inspector general's office concluded that Mr. Hegseth did not, however, violate rules on classification because he has the authority to declassify information, the reports said, citing sources familiar with the results of the investigation.

The watchdog's conclusion is nonetheless likely to rekindle debate over conduct by Mr. Hegseth, who is already under fire over U.S. strikes on alleged drug boats that experts say amount to extrajudicial killings.

Zohran Mamdani, Louvre make the list of most mispronounced words of 2025

Associated Press
DALLAS

From the election of Zohran Mamdani to the intrigue surrounding the jewel heist at the Louvre, keeping up with this year's news also left some Americans struggling with pronunciations. That's put both the name of New York City's incoming mayor and the famed Paris museum on a list of the most mispronounced words in 2025.

The language-learning company Babbel and closed-captioning company The Captioning Group on Thursday released a list of the words that news anchors, politicians and other public figures in the U.S. struggled with the most this year.

As Mr. Mamdani made his political rise, the democratic socialist's name often was mangled. When he takes office in January, the 34-year-old will become the city's first Muslim mayor, first born in Africa and first of South Asian heritage. Babbel said his name – which should be pronounced zoh-RAHN mum-DAH-nee – was most commonly mispronounced when people swapped the "M" and "N" in his last name.

A lot of these words come from different languages and so we have to adapt to them, says an expert

The theft of France's crown jewels from the Louvre in October had many people mispronouncing the name of the world's most-visited museum. Babbel says the correct pronunciation is LOOV-ruh, with a very soft pronunciation on the "ruh," which can be a challenge for English speakers.

"A lot of these words come from different languages and so we have to adapt to a sound that we've never made before," said Shehbaz Sharif's linguistic and cultural expert at Babbel.

Asim Munir appointed as Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday approved the appointment of the army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, as Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces for a period of five years.

President Zardari approved the summary submitted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office, asking him to appoint Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Munir as the first CDF of Pakistan.

Last month, Parliament passed the 27th Constitutional Amendment providing to create the post of CDF with the objective to create unity of command and expedite the decision making in any critical situation.

The CDF replaced the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), the post for which was abolished.

NASHIK MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, NASHIK
E-Tender Cell Department
Notice No. 42 (Year 2025-26)

Nashik Municipal Corporation, Nashik E-Tender Cell (PWD Work Department) vide E-Tender Notice No. 42 (Year 2025-26) invites bids for 29 works which will be displayed on the website www.mahatenders.gov.in. from dt. 06/12/2025 to 15/12/2025 up to 3.00 pm. Last date for acceptance of tender will be dt. 15/12/2025.

Note :- All further necessary notices/clarifications will be published on the online website.

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Executive Engineer
E-Tender Cell
Nashik Municipal Corporation

GREATER VISAKHAPATNAM MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
e-Procurement Tender Notice
No. 04/2025-26/CGM/WC/DE (Tunnels)/EE/PC-2/08/WC/Dt: 01.12.2025
Number of works : 01, Value of work : NIT Tender
Tender Opening Dt: 01.12.2025 @ 5.01 PM; Closing Date: 29.12.2025 @ 4.00 PM
Note: Further details at http://www.tender.approcurement.gov.in
O/o the EE/PD-C Cell No. 9440395824
For Commissioner

Indian Overseas Bank
Head Thoughts to Grow with
Information Technology Department
Central Office, No. 763, ANNA SALAI, CHENNAI-600002
Indian Overseas bank (IOB) invites bids for the following:
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR SELECTION OF CORPORATE BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION ACTIVITIES
RFP REFERENCE NUMBER: RFP/IOB/2025-26 DATED:12.12.2025
The Above RFP tender document is available and can be downloaded from the following websites www.iob.in & https://iobtenders.auctiontiger.net For Tender details and future amendments, if any, keep referring to the following website https://iobtenders.auctiontiger.net

Indian Overseas Bank
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Information Technology Department
Central Office, No. 763, ANNA SALAI, CHENNAI-600002
Indian Overseas bank (IOB) invites bids for the following:
GOVERNMENT E-MARKET PORTAL - PROCUREMENT OF IS REDHAT ENTERPRISE LINUX FOR VIRTUAL DATACENTERS WITH SATELLITE, PREMIUM - UNDER PAC
BID NO: GEM/2025/B/6952910 DATED:01.12.2025
The Above GEM Tender document is also available and can be downloaded from the following websites www.iob.in & www.gem.gov.in For Tender details and future amendments, if any, keep referring to the following website www.gem.gov.in

DELHI TRANSCO LIMITED
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

Delhi Transco Ltd (A Government of NCT of Delhi Undertaking) invites online tenders, for the following work:

Tender No.T25P090045 : Design , Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220kV and 33kV GIS transformer /reactor bays along with associated works at 220kV Sub Station Electric Lane & Trauma Centre (AIIMS) on turnkey basis.

For complete details of the tender please visit following websites :-

https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in (Tender ID No. 2025_DTL_ 282272_1) and www.dtl.gov.in with Unique No. DTL-9798-041225.

Last date for bid submission: **27.01.2025 at 1.30 p.m.**

All Corrigendum/Addendum/ Amendments/Date of Extension/ Clarifications etc. to this e-tender will be hosted on the above website only. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
UDHAGAMANDALAM MUNICIPALITY
TENDER NOTICE

Roc No. 2025/2913/ E2 Dated: 01-12-2025

Bids are invited by the Municipal Commissioner, Udhagamandalam for the work of Construction of Multi level Car Parking at MRC Parking under Urban Infrastructure Development Fund 2025-2026 in Udhagamandalam Municipality.

1.Work Value : Rs. 3000.00 Lakhs
2.Earnest Money Deposit Amount : Rs. 30,00,000/-
3.Bid document can be downloaded from the Website https://tntenders.gov.in from 06-12-2025 at free of cost and the full details of the tenders can be had from the above website.
4.Common dates & Time

1	Date and time of Pre Bid Meeting	17-12-2025 at 11.00 a.m.
2	Last Date and Time for Downloading bid documents	07-01-2026 Upto 3.00 p.m.
3	Last Date and Time for Submission of Bid documents, including online Submission	07-01-2026 Upto 3.00 p.m.
4	Date and Time of Opening of Technical Bid	07-01-2026 at 3.30 p.m.

5.In the event of specified date for Submission of bids is declared as holiday, bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.
6.Any Changes / modification in the tender will be published in the above website only.

Commissioner.

MAHATRANSCO
NOTICE INVITING TENDER CPD/148 -2025-26

Tenders are invited through e-Tendering in SRM Two Bid system from the registered vendors for Supply of following:

Tender No. & Description of Material	Estimated Amount (in Rs.In Lakhs) / Tender Fee (in Rs.)	Due Date & Time (Hrs.) Submission & Opening of Tender
SPIT-66/1225_TKC1 (3rd call) RFx 7000038313 for Up-gradation of existing HVDC Control & Protection of ±500KV, 1500 MW Chandrapur-Padghe HVDC Bi-pole Link to suitable Control & Protection (3rd call).	Rs. 43974.50 Lakhs. 25,000.00 + GST	23.12.2025 11.00 23.12.2025 15.00 (If Possible)

Contact Person: Office of the Executive Engineer (On-TKC-1)
Tel. No.: (022)-66952718/66952714
Email: 1) C.E. (OPA), 2) S.E.(OPA), 3)E.E.(P&C), 4) E.E. (Group-TKC-1) OPA, C.O. MSETCL, 1st Floor, Prakashgad Building, Bandra (E), Mumbai
Email id: ceom@mahatransco.n, ceopa@mahatransco.in, seopa@gmail.com, sepo@mahatransco.in, eetkc1opa@mahatransco.in
For further details visit our website http://www.srmtender.mahatransco.in
Any further amendments will be published on the MSETCL website www.mahatransco.in. So bidders are requested to check the website.

Sd/-

DROUGHT ENDS

Root notches up the elusive three-figure mark Down Under



REUTERS

Joe Root registered his maiden Ashes century in Australia on the opening day of the Brisbane Test on Thursday. Root brought up his hundred in his 30th innings Down Under. The 34-year-old Root is the second English player after Maurice Leyland in 1936-37 to score a century on the first day of a Test at the Gabba.

HIGH PRAISE

Root played a flawless knock and made it look effortless: Crawley



AFP

England opener Zak Crawley praised Joe Root after the 34-year-old broke his Australia century drought on the first day of the second Ashes Test in Brisbane on Thursday. "He's not trying to make too much of a deal of it, but I'm sure inside he's pretty, pretty delighted. He just played a flawless knock. He made it look effortless".

LEADING THE CHARTS

Starc becomes most successful left-arm pacer in Test history



REUTERS

Australia's Mitchell Starc became the most prolific left-arm paceman in Test history on Thursday, surpassing Pakistan great Wasim Akram. The 35-year-old dismissed England's Harry Brook in Brisbane for his 415th wicket. Akram played 104 Tests for his tally of 414 while Starc went past him in his 102nd.

THE BEST

Akram better than me: Starc after going past the Pakistan legend



REUTERS & GETTY IMAGES

Wasim Akram) is still a far better bowler than I am. He's still the pinnacle of left-armers and certainly he's right up there with the best bowlers to ever play the game. It's nice to be spoken of up around that, but I'll just try to keep churning a few out — Mitchell Starc, after becoming the leading left-arm pace bowler in Tests.

Root's maiden hundred on Australian soil lifts England

His unbeaten 135 takes England to 325 for nine at stumps; opener Crawley scores 76 while Archer chips in with a career-best score in an unbroken 61-run last-wicket stand; Starc returns a six-for

THE ASHES

Associated Press
BRISBANE

Joe Root posted a long-awaited first Ashes century in Australia to give England the honours on day one of the second Test despite Mitchell Starc's six wickets.

Starc removed Ben Duckett and Ollie Pope to leave England reeling at five for two in the third over on Thursday.

That's when Root went to the crease and set about restoring the England innings, and confidence, following the series-opening eight-wicket loss in Perth.

His unbeaten 135 took England to 325 for nine at stumps, with No. 11 Jofra Archer at a career-best 32 batting in an unbroken 61-run last-wicket stand.

Starc returned to dismiss Harry Brook in the middle session.

It was a jolt England could have done without. Brook was caught at slip slashing outside off stump and falling for 31 from 33 balls to end a 54-run fourth-wicket partnership with Root just as the sun was going down.

The revival

Root shared a 107-run stand with Zak Crawley (76) to lift England to 122 for three and partnered Brook in another innings-reviving stand that net England on course for a decent total.

Root's highest score in 15 previous Ashes Tests in Australia was 89.

Playing his 160th Test, Root moved into the 90s for the first time in Australia with a boundary off Brendan Doggett. He hit another boundary next ball to go to 96.

The first two sessions – in the afternoon and the evening – had an element of symmetry with England scoring 196 and Australia taking two wickets in each.

So the night session started with England at 196 for four.

Root and Ben Stokes appeared to be coasting before a brilliant run out by Josh Inglis mixed things up again, with one wicket forcing another.

Caught short

Stokes pushed a ball to the cover region and took off for a single, only for Root to send him back.

Inglis raced in and threw down the stumps from side on. He was out for 19 at 280 for five.

Three balls later, Scott Boland bowled Jamie Smith between bat and pad to make it 281 for six.

Root was on 79 when he was joined by Will Jacks.



Standing tall: Root used both the conventional and unconventional shots to end his long wait Down Under. AFP

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: Zak Crawley c Carey b Neser 76, Ben Duckett c Labuschagne b Starc 0, Ollie Pope b Starc 0, Joe Root (batting) 135, Harry Brook c Smith b Starc 31, Ben Stokes run out 19, Jamie Smith b Boland 0, Will Jacks c Steve Smith b Starc 19, Gus Atkinson c Carey b Starc 4, Brydon Carse c Carey b Starc 0, Jofra Archer (batting) 32, Extras (b 4, lb 1, nb 1, w 1): 7; Total (for nine wkts, in 74 overs): 325.

Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-5, 3-122, 4-176, 5-220, 6-253, 7-253, 8-266, 9-266.

Australia bowling: Starc 20-0-73-6, Neser 14-2-43-1, Boland 19-1-87-1, Doggett 14-1-76-0, Green 8-1-45-0.

Toss: England.

The pair put on 40 before Jacks played an unnecessarily expansive shot to Starc and was well caught. Starc then dismissed Gus Atkinson and Brydon Carse in quick time and England, suddenly, was 264 for nine.

Expectations of Australia batting on the opening day deteriorated, though, as Root and Archer went on the attack.

Debatable decision

The most contentious selection of the series so far was Australia's choice to recall Neser in a five-man pace attack at the expense of spinner Nathan Lyon, who missed out for only the second time on home soil since his debut in 2011.

The selection committee later described it as a one off because of the conditions at the Gabba.

Ruturaj grabs the opportunity with both hands at No. 4

SA IN INDIA

Tarun Shastry
RAIPUR

Opportunities don't present themselves every day, especially in sport. But when they do, you have to be ready to seize them with both hands and make them count. India batter Ruturaj Gaikwad, given the chance to bat at No. 4, did precisely that, scoring his maiden ODI century — a knock that ultimately went in vain as South Africa chased down the 359-run target — in the second game of the three-match series here on Wednesday. It was also the joint-highest successful chase against India in the 50-over format.

Speaking to the media after the match, Ruturaj opened up about his innings, the challenge of adapting to a middle-order role and his partnership with Virat Kohli.

"I was told I'd be batting at No. 4 for this series, honestly, it's a privilege to have that kind of confidence from the management — trusting an opener to bat in the middle-order. Even when I opened, my focus was always to bat deep, till around the 45th over, and then capitalise. So I've always had an idea of how to rotate the strike. It was just about getting through the first 10-15 balls. I've been working very hard, and I wanted to make sure that whenever I got set, I converted it into a big one," Ruturaj said.

On sharing the crease with Kohli, the 28-year-old added, "I've been watching him in practice over the last week, and it's unbelievable – the amount of time he seems to have. You dream of moments like these.

"Even during our partnership, the conversations were simple: look for five to 10 runs an over, find the gaps, rotate strike, and score boundaries when possible. I really enjoyed that partnership".



Making it count: Ruturaj was glad that he could convert the start into a big score. A. RAO



Setting the tone: Markram gave South Africa's middle and lower-order batters a solid platform. A. RAO

It was a great collective batting effort: Markram

Tarun Shastry
RAIPUR

It needed something exceptional to chase a mammoth 359-run target, and South Africa's opener Aiden Markram provided exactly that with a stunning hundred in the second ODI here on Wednesday.

Early support from skipper Temba Bavuma, followed by a vital 92-run fourth-wicket stand between Dewald Brevis and Matthew Breetzke, ensured South Africa held its nerve to level the three-match series. Speaking after the win, Markram reflected on his innings, the contributions around him, and the road ahead to the 2027 World Cup.

"Chasing 359 is always tough. You have to take the game on while still being smart and setting things up properly for others. It was a great collective batting effort, and that's how you chase a big number like that," Markram said.

He added that the match had echoes of the first ODI. "Both games felt almost identical – like reliving the first one. We were three down early there, and that changed the result. I felt responsible for that game. So I just wanted to give our big-hitting middle and lower-order a solid platform because they can do real damage. That was my mindset."

Markram was full of praise for Brevis and Breetzke. "They were outstanding. Brevis hits the ball miles and always puts bowlers under pressure. Breetzke has had an incredible start to his career, and the way he handled the situation today was exceptional. That partnership, when the game was on a knife's edge, made a huge difference."

Markram said the win brings confidence but doesn't alter the long-term focus. "Any dressing room is a better place when you're winning. There's still lots to learn heading into Vizag. As much as we want to win, the bigger picture is the 2027 World Cup. We want to keep moving in the right direction. Continuous improvement is the main goal."

Goa and East Bengal enter summit clash

SUPER CUP

Aashin Prasad
MARGAO

FC Goa had an unprecedented start to its AIFF Super Cup semifinal when its skipper Iker Guarrotxena was shown a red card in the tunnel for dissent. But that was the only downside on the night as it overcame Mumbai City FC 2-1 to make the final for a second straight year.

Two quick-fire goals from Brison Fernandes and David Timor roused the home crowd as Goa turned around the early setback.

But it was helped out by some misfortune for Mumbai City as Tiri slipped in the build-up to Brison's opener before goalkeeper Phurba Lachenpa spilled Timor's rasping drive into his own net.

Mumbai City pulled one back through Greg Stewart in the 57th minute but it was denied the equaliser by Hrithik Tiwari, who pulled off excellent saves from Jorge Ortiz and Jorge Pereyra Diaz.

In the second semifinal, East Bengal came out on top in a bruising encounter with Punjab FC, winning 3-1. East Bengal's midfield trio of Saul Crespo, Miguel Ferreira and Mohammed Rashid all had a say in front of goal.

At the stroke of half-time, East Bengal regained the lead when centre-back Kevin Sibille headed in Ferreira's delivery from a corner.

Ferreira then set up Crespo, who unleashed a powerful low strike from outside the area to find the bottom corner and seal the deal.

The results: East Bengal 3 (Mohammed Rashid 12, Kevin Sibille 40+3, Saul Crespo 73) bt Punjab FC 1 (Jairo Ramirez 34); FC Goa 2 (Brison Fernandes 23, David Timor 39) bt Mumbai City FC 1 (Greg Stewart 57)

India will be tested by an attacking Belgium

HOCKEY

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Belgium may have finished second in Pool-D with six points, but its goal-scoring appetite has been anything but modest. Among all group runners-up, Belgium registered the best goal difference (+19), with New Zealand (seven points) being the only other second-placed team to qualify for the quarterfinals of the FIH men's Junior World Cup.

The Young Red Lions hammered Namibia 12-1, routed Egypt 10-0 while losing to Spain 0-2, underlining its status as one of the dangerous attacking sides in the tournament.

History repeats

When Belgium meets two-time champion India here on Friday – a repeat of the 2016 final, which Belgium lost — it will step in with confidence and, significantly, with neither



Practising hard: India will need to get its penalty corners spot on to peg back Belgium. K. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

will shoulder the weight of a billion expectations as the host, yet it also possesses the quality and depth to dictate terms. India dominated its Pool-B campaign with 29 goals.

The frontline has been in exceptional touch, with Arshdeep Singh, Dilraj Singh and Gurjot Singh leading from the front.

The midfield, anchored by high-calibre performers Ankit Pal, has ensured a steady supply line, while captain Rohit has marshalled a defence that remains unbreached.

Keeping a check

Belgians, however, has its own match-winners whom India must keep in check. Captain Lucas Balthazar, Maximilian Langer and penalty-corner specialist Benjamin Thiery are

On taking on Belgium, India's head coach P. R. Sreejesh said: "We are looking forward to a good contest. Belgium is a strong side and our campaign truly starts now. The

We are looking forward to a good contest. Belgium is a strong side and our campaign truly starts now

P.R. SREEJESH
Head Coach

sum's scoring firepower ensures that the last-eight clash will be anything but predictable.

The results: In Madurai (17th-24th classification): Austria 2 (Ramakant Malad 42, Oskar Rathbodi 45 pc) drew with Namibia 2 (John Paul Brits 40 pc & 45 pc); Austria won 2-0 via shootout.

Bangladesh 13 (Amirul Islam 11, 15, 15, 34 & 53 - all pc, Rakibul Hasan 19, 21 & 47, Md Abdullah 33 & 47, Obaid Joy 40, Md Sajo 51 & 60 - both pc) bt Oman 0; South Korea 6 (Minhyeok Lee 18 pc, 32, 50 & 52 - all pc, Joonseob Song 23 pc, Seoneon Park 26 pc) bt Egypt 1 (Yousef Abdelmonem 8 pc & 57 pc, Mohamed Ghanem 60).

China 3 (Yubo Wang 25 & 38 - both pc, Zongyue Ning 55 & 58 - both pc) bt Malaysia 1 (Ahmad Ikhwan Mohd Ali 60 pc); Chinese Taipei 3 (Yu-Hsiang Chen 3, 15 & 60 - all pc) bt Singapore 2 (Ryan Ong 10 pc, Jun Hao Ng 60 pc); Chinese Taipei won 3-2 via shootout.

Kazakhstan 3 (Nurbol Kaliyev 3, 15 & 60 - all pc) bt Thailand 2 (Thanawat Tantiwiwat 10 pc, Thanawat Thanasuwan 60 pc); Kazakhstan won 3-2 via shootout.

Uzbekistan 3 (Ilkhom Ergashev 3, 15 & 60 - all pc) bt Indonesia 2 (Muhammad Rizki Pratama 10 pc, Muhammad Rizki Pratama 60 pc); Uzbekistan won 3-2 via shootout.

Tons by Ravindra, Latham put the Kiwis in command

Agence France-Presse
CHRISTCHURCH

Centuries by Tom Latham and Rachin Ravindra put New Zealand firmly in control of the first Test against West Indies with a lead of 481 at stumps on day three, here on Thursday. The pair put on 279 for the third wicket before Latham was out for 145. Ravindra followed soon after for 176.

At stumps, Will Young was on 28 and Michael Bracewell on six as New Zealand was 417 for four to go with a 64-run first-innings lead. For West Indies, Kemar Roach, who dismissed both Latham and Williamson, returned figures of two for 61.

The scores: New Zealand 233 & 417/4 (D) (Latham 145, Ravindra 176, Williamson 61*, Roach 2/61) vs West Indies 167 & 102 (Blackwood 41, Seales 4/30, Jamieson 3/19, Henry 3/31).

unacademy

IN BRIEF



Narine first to claim 600 wickets in T20 format

Mystery spinner Sunil Narine etched his name in history after becoming the first bowler to claim 600 wickets in T20 cricket. He achieved the milestone during the World ILT20 game for his franchise Abu Dhabi Knight Riders against Sharjah Warriors on Wednesday. Following the match, Knight Riders presented Narine with a special-edition jersey featuring the number 600 to commemorate his feat. The 33-year-old from Trinidad reached the landmark by claiming the wicket of Tom Abell.

Kalikesh begins his first full term as the NRAI president

Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo began his first full four-year term as president of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) after he was elected unopposed during its general body meeting in Mohali on Thursday. Pawan Singh was elected as the new secretary general and Amit Sanghi as the senior vice-president. Kanwar Sultan Singh and Sushma Singh were elected vice-presidents in the 15-member executive committee which has four sportspersons — Gagan Narang, Kunti Malik, Zorawar Singh Sandhu and Elavenil Valarivan.



Lindblad to make debut for Racing Bulls in 2026 season

British driver Arvid Lindblad will debut for Racing Bulls in 2026. The 18-year-old will be the only rookie driver on the F1 grid next year as he takes Isack Hadjar's old Racing Bulls seat along side Liam Lawson. Lindblad moves up to F1 after winning two F2 races this season, continuing a rapid rise since he moved up from karting in 2022. Lindblad, who was born and brought up in England with a Swedish father and an British-Indian mother, tested at Mexico City GP.



Brady, O'Neal to assist in FIFA World Cup draw on Friday

Sports legends from outside of football, including NFL great Tom Brady, NBA legend Shaquille O'Neal, ice hockey's Wayne Gretzky and baseball star Aaron Judge, will assist with the FIFA World Cup 2026 draw on Friday in Washington, D.C. Rio Ferdinand, a former Manchester United captain with 81 England caps, will conduct the draw. The draw will sort the 48 teams into 12 groups of four. The top two from each group and the eight best third-place teams will make the knock-out stage.



Alexander-Arnold suffers injury on his left leg

Trent Alexander-Arnold has injured his left leg days before Real Madrid faces Manchester City in the Champions League next week. The England right-back hurt an upper left leg muscle.

LIVE TELECAST

The Ashes: 2nd Test, day 2, Star Sports 1 & Jiohotstar, 9.30 a.m.

Hockey: Junior World Cup, SS Select 1 & Jiohotstar, 12.30, 3, 5.30 & India vs Belgium, 8 p.m.

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 & Liv, 1 a.m. (Saturday).

Tamil Nadu finally gets its act together with a facile victory against Tripura

An all-round effort from Badoni highlights Delhi's 45-run win over Karnataka; Nagarkoti's unbeaten knock takes Rajasthan past Saurashtra

SMAT

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
AHMEDABAD

Sai Kishore's maiden T20 fifty (67 n.o., 39b, 3x4, 8x6) and captain Jagadeesan's 49-ball 83 (6x4, 4x6) helped Tamil Nadu post 204 for five and secure a 61-run win against Tripura in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Elite Group-D fifth round here on Thursday.

After Tamil Nadu was reduced to 26 for four in the sixth over, the pair added 119 off 67 for the fifth wicket. Sai Kishore hit three sixes off pacer Indrajit Debnath in the final over – over deep backward square (pull), long-on, and deep extra-cover.

Jagadeesan went 6-4-6-4 against off-spinner Viki Saha – down the track over long-on, through cover, slog-swept to deep mid-wicket, and swept to deep backward square-leg.

Powered by Priyansh Arya (62, 33b, 2x4, 6x6), Ayush Badoni (53, 35b, 4x4, 2x6), skipper Nitish Rana (46 n.o., 28b, 2x4, 4x6), and Tejasvi Dahiya (53 n.o., 19b, 3x4, 5x6), Delhi piled on 212 for three and beat Karnataka by 45 runs.

Priyansh hit all his sixes in the 'V' down the ground, four of them coming off leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal.

Despite valiant efforts from Devdutt Padikkal (62, 38b, 8x4, 2x6) and R. Smaran (72, 38b, 3x4, 6x6), the ask was always one step ahead for Karnataka.

Badoni returned a career-best four for 12 with his off-spin.

He picked up three in the 19th over, as Karnataka's batters could do little more than slog. Smaran edged his attempted heave to short third man, while Pravin Dubey and Shreyas Gopal holed out in the deep.

After claiming two for 22, Rajasthan pacer Kamlesh Nagarkoti turned finisher against Saurashtra. Chasing a modest 146, he remained unbeaten on 37 (32b, 1x4, 3x6) as Rajasthan got home by two wickets.

With 17 needed off the last over, he sliced the first ball (after a wide) over deep point for a six off leg-spinner Yuvraj Chudasama, and with six needed off two, he clobbered the winning six just over the deep extra-cover fielder.

Pacer Ashok Sharma was adjudged the Player-of-The-Match for his all-round effort – four for 20, and an unbeaten 15 off seven with two vital sixes.



Stellar contribution: Badoni backed up his half-century with four wickets in Delhi's win. VIJAY SONEJI

Shahrukh dropped from TN squad, sent home along with Pradosh and Andre

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
AHMEDABAD

After a disastrous start, Tamil Nadu – a side considered a powerhouse in white-ball cricket – is theoretically out of the race for a berth in the second phase of the ongoing Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

The Tamil Nadu team, which had won won back-to-back titles in 2020-21 and 2021-22, is facing eliminations in the group stage for the fourth year running.

The State senior selection committee has been forced to make a raft of changes.

Pace-bowling all-rounder Sunny Sandhu and spin-bowling all-rounder Mohamed Ali, fresh off their exploits in Tamil Nadu's BCCI under-23 State-A one-day trophy triumph a day earlier, were drafted into the squad on Tuesday.



Shahrukh Khan. FILE PHOTO H. PERAGAMY

Subsequently, on Thursday, Shahrukh Khan was dropped from the team and sent home following a poor run so far.

Batters Pradosh Ranjan Paul and Andre Siddarth, neither of whom featured in a single match, were also asked to return home.

The decision raises the question of why they were selected in the first place.

It was only a few days before the tournament began that pace-bowling all-rounder R. Rajkumar was added to the squad as an afterthought.

The constant rejigging reflects the turbulence in the Tamil Nadu dugout.

Pace-bowling all-rounder Sunny Sandhu and spin-bowling all-rounder Mohamed Ali were drafted into the squad on Tuesday

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY — THURSDAY'S SCORES

Elite: Group A (Lucknow): Kerala 178/5 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 46, Vishnu Vinod 43 n.o., Mohammed Azharuddeen 32, Shanidukheen 32) bt Mumbai 163 in 19.4 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 32, Sarfaraz Khan 52, Suryakumar Yadav 32, K.H. Asif 3/24); Assam 179/7 in 20 overs (Abdul Aij Nuraniv 57, Nihar Deka 52, Yash Thakur 3/36) bt Vidarbha 127 in 17.5 overs (Dhruv Shorey 36, Mukhtar Hussain 3/36, Akash Sengupta 3/12); Uttarbhand 208/6 in 20 overs (Amandeep Khare 44, Shashank Singh 46) lost to Andhra 210/2 in 19.1 overs (Ashwin Hebbar 90, Shaik Rasheed 59 n.o.); Odisha 169/5 in 20 overs (Aashirwad Swain 48, Soumya Lenka 75 n.o.) lt Railways 168 in 20 overs (Suraj Ahuja 39, Akshat Pandey 30, Soumya Lenka 3/30).

Group B (Kolkata): Uttar Pradesh 212/7 in 20 overs (Madhav Kaushik 67, Sameer Rizvi 70, Sandeep Sharma 4/26) bt Chandigarh 172/8 in 20 overs (Paramvir Vohra 61, Nikhil Thakur 32, Amrit Lal Lukana 30 n.o., Bhuvneshwar Kumar 3/23); Jammu & Kashmir 122 in 19.3 overs (Shubham Khajuria 35, C.V. Milind 3/31, Nitin Sai Yadav 3/17) lost to Hyderabad 125/6 in 15.1 overs (Pragnay Reddy 31 n.o., Tanay Thyagarajan 50); Bihar 180/7 in 20 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 46, Sakibul Gani 40, Akash Raj 40, Deepraj Gaonkar 4/38) lost to Goa 184/5 in 19.5 overs (Kashyap Bakle 64, Supash Prabhudesai 79, Suraj Kashyap 2/24); Madhya Pradesh 153/8 in 20 overs (Mohd. Arshad Khan 30) lt Maharashtra 152/8 in 20 overs (Jiyelen Kulkarni 31, Rahul Tripathi 37, Tripuresh Singh 3/23).

Group C (Hyderabad): Himachal Pradesh 176/8 in 20 overs (Shant Sen 44, Pukhraj Mann 43, Mridul Sumach 31 n.o., Anshul Kamboj 3/44, Anuj Thakur (c.Y.S.) lost to Haryana 177/3 in 18 overs (Anjt Ranga 39, Ankit Kumar 48, Yashvardhan Dalal 76 n.o.); Gujarat 73 in 14.1 overs (Raj Limbani 3/16) lost to Baroda 74/2 in 6.4 overs (Tushnat Rawat 30 n.o.); Services 165 in 19.2 overs (Mohit Ahlawat 36, Vinant Shankar 32, Yakul Sharma 32, Mohammad Shami 4/13, Akash Deep 3/27) lost to Bengal 167/3 in 15.1 (Abishek Porel 56 n.o., Abhimanyu Easwaran 38, Vuvraj Kesvani 36 n.o.); Punjab 192/5 in 20 overs (Abishek Sharma 34, Naman Dhir 37, Samir Singh 38, Salil Arora 44 n.o., Ramandeep Singh 34 n.o.) bt Puducherry 138 in 18.4 overs (Siddak Singh 61, Abhishek Sharma 3/23, Ayush Goyal 3/25).

Group D (Ahmedabad): Saurashtra 145 in 19.2 overs (Vishvarajsinh Jadeja 49, Ashok Sharma 4/20) lost to Rajasthan 146/8 in 19.5 overs (Kamlesh Nagarkoti 37 n.o., Parth Bhut 3/9); Uttarakhand 158/7 in 20 overs (Kunal Chandela 55, Avneesh Sudha 32, Anukul Roy 3/28) lost to Jharkhand 152/3 in 16.1 overs (Utkarsh Singh 41, Kumar Kushagra 31, Virat Singh 43 n.o.); Delhi 212/5 in 20 overs (Priyansh Arya 62, Ayush Badoni 53, Nitish Rana 46 n.o., Tejasvi Dahiya 53 n.o.) lt Karnataka 167 in 19.3 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 62, R. Smaran 72, Ayush Badoni 4/12); Tamil Nadu 204/5 in 20 overs (N. Jagadeesan 83, Sai Kishore 67 n.o.) bt Tripura 140 in 18.3 overs (Vijay Shankar 39, Manisankar Murasingh 53).

Plate (Pune): Nagaland 220/4 in 20 overs (Jinshuo Ozukum 45, Zeqa Nischal 106) bt Manipur 188 in 18.1 overs (Phanindram Jabbi 38, Langlongamba Meitei 39, Kangabam Priyojit 66, Rongpen Jonathan 3/39); Arunachal Pradesh 90/9 in 20 overs (Techi Nani 20) lost to Sikkim 93/1 in 9.2 overs (Rohit Rajora 42 n.o.); Meghalaya 210/8 in 20 overs (T.L. Varlalremruata 3/52, R. Lalmuanthla 4/29) lost to Mizoram 153/3 in 17.5 overs (Lehu Anderson 82 n.o., Joseph Lalthanmuma 39 n.o.).

Arsenal extends lead, Chelsea stumbles; Real Madrid cruises

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Arsenal edged out Brentford 2-0 to restore its five-point lead at the top of the Premier League on Wednesday as Chelsea slumped to a 3-1 defeat at struggling Leeds.

Liverpool needed a late Nordi Mukiele own-goal to avoid another damaging defeat at home in a 1-1 draw with Sunderland, while Aston Villa climbed up to third after a 4-3 victory at Brighton.

Arsenal failed to hit top form at the Emirates Stadium but did enough to take another step towards a first league title in 22 years thanks to goals from Mikel Merino and Bukayo Saka.

Leeds boss Daniel Farke's job was reportedly on the line prior to Chelsea's visit to Elland Road after four consecutive defeats.

But Farke's players produced a huge performance for their boss to clinch only their second win in nine league games.

Kylian Mbappe scored twice and set up another as Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 3-0 to cut Barcelona's lead at the top of La Liga to one point on Wednesday.



Heady stuff: Merino leads home Arsenal's opener. REUTERS

A late equaliser did little to lift the gloom around Anfield as Liverpool sits eighth.

Villa produced a stunning fightback to secure an eighth win in nine league games.

Xabi Alonso's side curtailed a run of three consecutive league draws away from home with one of its best displays of the season at Athletic's San Mames.

The results:

Premier League: Arsenal 2 (Merino 16, Saka 90+2) bt Brentford 0; Burnley 0 lost to Crystal Palace 1 (Munoz 44); Leeds 3 (Bijol 6, Tanaka 43, Calvert-Lewin 72) bt Chelsea 1 (Neto 50); Liverpool 1 (Mukiele 81-og) drew with Sunderland 1 (Talbi 67); Wolves 0 lost to Nottingham Forest 1 (Aktas 72); Aston Villa 4 (Watkins 37, 49+7, Onana 60, Rogers 78) bt Brighton 3 (Mitoma 17, 49+1, Ansu Fati 90+4); Newcastle 1 (Hecke 9, 83, Torres 29-og) lost to Aston Villa 4 (Watkins 37, 49+7, Onana 60, Rogers 78); Burnley 0 lost to Crystal Palace 1 (Munoz 44); Leeds 3 (Bijol 6, Tanaka 43, Calvert-Lewin 72) bt Chelsea 1 (Neto 50); Liverpool 1 (Mukiele 81-og) drew with Sunderland 1 (Talbi 67); Wolves 0 lost to Nottingham Forest 1 (Aktas 72).

La Liga: Athletic Bilbao 0 lost to Real Madrid 3 (Mbappe 27, 66, Rodrygo 90+2); Barcelona 3 (Ferran Torres 45+1, Lewandowski 52, Gavi 90+3) bt Mallorca 0; Real Betis 1 (Ayoze 90+3) bt Cadiz 0; Real Sociedad 1 (Oyarzabal 90+3) bt Getafe 0; Villarreal 1 (Gerard Moreno 90+3) bt Rayo Vallecano 0.



All ears: Arjun listens in rapt attention as Anand makes a point. GOKUL KALAVAI

Arjun beats Anand to win Jerusalem Masters

CHESS

Press Trust of India
JERUSALEM

Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi defeated five-time World champion Viswanathan Anand in an all-Indian final to clinch Jerusalem Masters title on Wednesday.

After the duo drew the opening rapid games, Arjun struck in the first Blitz tie-break match by winning with white pieces. The 22-year-old also held a winning position in the second blitz encounter before settling for a draw, which was enough for him to win the future 2.5-1.5 $55,000 while Anand won $35,000.

"It wasn't easy. There were a lot of challenges. My quality wasn't the best. I'm just glad I managed to make it through," said Arjun. "In the first game against Anand sir we both missed our chances. But in blitz, I think I played quite well," he added.

Arjun had defeated Russian GM Peter Svidler in his last four stage fixture while Anand outplayed reigning World Blitz champion Ian Nepomniachtchi in the semifinal.

The Jerusalem Masters was a closed invitational 12-player round-robin tournament in which the top four

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Kohli – the embodiment of passion, drive and desire

Watching him bat in the last six weeks or so, few would guess that he is retired internationally from two of the three formats. In his last three outings in 50-over cricket, he has made an unbeaten half-century and two blazing hundreds



R. RAGU

R. Kaushik
VISAKHAPATNAM

The dictionary definition of a machine is 'a piece of equipment with moving parts that is designed to do a particular job. It usually needs electricity, gas, steam etc. in order to work.'

Sometimes conveniently, mostly lazily and almost out of compulsion, we have tended to label Virat Kohli as a run-machine. How much further from the truth can we be?

Does Kohli need electricity or gas or steam? Really? Is he a lifeless, inanimate piece of equipment designed to do a particular job?

Virat Kohli is the living embodiment of passion. Of commitment and drive and desire, of the need to keep pushing the boundaries, to be the best version of himself day after day. He is his best judge and his worst critic. Yes, because he is as human as the rest of us, he is also affected by criticism, by censure, by what he and others of his ilk often refer to as 'outside noise'. But in his heart of hearts, he is governed by what he thinks of himself, how he rates himself. 'Outside noise', be it approbation or otherwise, will affect his psyche, but not as much as his own reading of whether he is living up to the lofty standards he has set for himself over the last 17 years as an international cricketer.

Watching Kohli bat in the last six weeks or so, few would guess that he is retired internationally from two of the three formats. That, in a lot of ways, he is a part-time cricketer - no disrespect meant. In his last three outings in 50-over cricket, the only format in which he represents the country these days, he has made an unbeaten half-century and two blazing hundreds. On Wednesday when he brought up a 53rd ton, off a mere 90 deliveries without seemingly hitting a shot in anger, it marked a staggering 11th time he had smashed ODI centuries in successive innings.

When Kohli scored his 53rd ODI century, it marked a staggering 11th time he had smashed centuries in successive innings in the 50-over format

He has been an unstoppable force against the South Africans. In Ranchi and Raipur, he has entertained and enthralled

Kohli is at that stage of his career where every run, forget about every three-figure knock, he conjures is a milestone of sorts, an extension of his own record. Before the three-match series against South Africa, he already boasted the most three-figure knocks in the history of the One-Day game, a massive 51. Kohli had gone past the great Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 centuries during India's stirring charge to the final of the 50-over home World Cup two years back. In Dubai against Pakistan in the Champions Trophy league fixture in February, he drew abreast of Tendulkar for the most international centuries (51) in a single format. Now, after ODI hundred Nos. 52 and 53 on Sunday and Wednesday respectively, he has pulled further away from the rest; with 84 centuries across the three formats, he has only Tendulkar (100) ahead of him in the overall hundred-hitting stakes. It's more than likely, given he only plays one format and 50-over matches don't come along as frequently as the other two versions, that he will end up behind Tendulkar whenever he hangs up his boots, but that's unlikely to occupy his mind space one bit.

A roller-coaster ride

It's been a turbulent, tumultuous last 12 months for the 37-year-old from Delhi. An unbeaten second-innings century in a winning cause in Perth last November hinted at Kohli rekindling his romance with Australia, but his series unravelled spectacularly thereafter as an old failing – his vulnerability to balls in the corridor to which his bat appeared magnetically attracted – came back to haunt him. Kohli was out caught behind the wickets, either by the wicketkeeper or in the slip cordon, rather than 36, he might have knuckled down to iron out that crease, like he had done after the England tour of 2014 when 10 Test innings brought him only 134 runs. But the passage of time and the changing of guard at the top of the Indian management tree, with Gautam Gambhir coming in as head coach to replace Rahul Dravid, potentially drove Kohli to retirement from Tests in May.

No one knew when he was pouched at second slip for six by Steve Smith pushing away from his body off the back foot against Scott Boland at the Sydney Cricket Ground on January 4 that it would be Kohli's last Test innings. Perhaps Kohli himself wasn't sure at the time, and there appeared no indication of what was going through his mind when he played two stunning hands in the Champions Trophy, following up his 100 not out against Pakistan with a pivotal 84 in the successful semifinal chase against old nemesis Australia. His travails Down Under seemed behind him and he seemed to be enjoying being in the middle as much as he always had, which was why it came as a massive surprise when he walked away into the Test sunset a week after his old pal Rohit Sharma had pulled the plug on his five-day career.

Ro-Ko a package deal

Kohli and Rohit's cricketing journeys have run parallel for 17 years now. Rohit was the first to debut, in June 2007 in Ireland on a limited-overs sojourn; it wasn't until 14 months later that Kohli earned his first India cap, in an ODI series in Sri Lanka. Kohli went on to carve a magnificent path in Test cricket, especially during a golden period from the end of 2014 to the end of 2019, while Rohit established himself as arguably the greatest limited-overs batter of all time, backed up by an unmatched three double hundreds in ODIs and five international centurions in the 20-over iteration.

Both of them called it quits from the 20-over game at the highest level – Bridgetown in June last year. There was, therefore, a certain added poignancy to them retiring from Test cricket within a week of each other, leaving them to fly the flag only in the 50-over game where both are behemoths bar none.

In ways unimaginable even a couple of years back, they are now inextricably intertwined, almost one soul in two bodies. They have been made a package deal by their fans; Kohli is a touch ahead in the popularity stakes but Rohit is well-liked and respected, as much for moulding the next generation of superstars as his propensity to lead from the front and set the example that others have striven to emulate.

When they were picked for a three-match series in Australia in October, there was massive interest. Were they in the plans for the 2027 50-over World Cup? Oh, never mind if it is two years away. Are they on notice? On probation? Will they be judged on every failure while every success is taken for granted?

It certainly appeared so, more for Kohli than Rohit, when he failed to trouble the scorers in the first two games in Australia, in Perth and then Adelaide. The whispers were beginning to pick up momentum when he produced a sublime unbeaten 74, playing second fiddle to centurion Rohit in another of their three-figure alliances (20 at the last count).

In the last week, it has looked as if Kohli hasn't been away at all. The two failures in Australia were not due to lack of preparation, but no amount of work in the nets can compensate for actual match-play. The Perth game on October 19 was Kohli's first competitive bit since the final of the IPL 2025 on June 3. Even the most gifted, lissome and unyielding competitor can't buck such odds.

Better off for the time spent in the crease in Sydney, Kohli has been an unstoppable force against the South Africans. In Ranchi and then Raipur, he entertained and enthralled; in the first game, he put on a six-hitting exhibition, smashing seven of them on his way to a 120-ball 135. In Raipur on Wednesday, yet this was no boundary-laden blitzkrieg. Seven fours and two sixes meant nine deliveries brought him 40 runs; the other 60 still came off just 81 balls and were eked out through excellent running between the wickets.

Kohli has always been both a terrific judge of a run and outstanding between the sticks. The tempestuous, excitable version would expect others to keep pace with him which, unless one was Mahendra Singh Dhoni, was well nigh impossible. As he matured, Kohli began to run at his partners' pace. He now finds himself in a team where apart from Rohit, everyone else is younger, several considerably so. Yet, it can be said with complete confidence that Kohli will outpace every single one of them comfortably.

After Saturday's final ODI against Temba Bavuma's side in Visakhapatnam, India will play three 50-over games against New Zealand at home in the middle of January. In that gap, Kohli will play for Delhi in the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy while India and South Africa fine-tune their preparations for the T20 World Cup with a five-match shortest-format showdown.

After the Kiwi ODIs, the focus will shift to 20-over cricket in the form of the World Cup, to be followed by Season 19 of the IPL. Kohli will watch the former on television and hope to help his side, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, mount a successful title defence in the latter. He will, therefore, be game-ready when the team travels to England, where he now resides on a semi-permanent basis, in mid-July for three 50-over outings.

Who knows what after that. You don't need to know Kohli intimately to figure out that he won't overstay his welcome. If he feels the fire is dimming, the intensity is fading and the desire drops even a touch, he will instantly pull the plug on his career. Whether that is in 2026, 2027 or beyond shouldn't really be our concern. All we can do is enjoy the Kohli magic, celebrate a generational genius and not get caught up in the 'outside noise' that we ourselves are generating.

And yes, can we also please stop

THE GIST

- Kohli is at that stage of his career where his three-figure knocks are an extension of his own record. He had already gone past the great Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 centuries in the 50-over format. With ODI hundred Nos. 52 and 53 in the last week, his total adds up to 84 tons across three formats, 16 less than Tendulkar
- The 37-year old, who now plays only one out of the three formats, has had a tumultuous last 12 months — from calling it a day in the longest format and two failures in Australia in October to now hitting back-to-back centuries against South Africa in the One-Dayers
- After Saturday's final ODI against the Proteas, Kohli will feature for Delhi in the Vijay Hazare Trophy before the three 50-over games against the Kiwis in January. Then comes IPL 2026. When Kohli pulls the plug on his glorious career is entirely up to him. But till he is around, it is time to enjoy and celebrate the magic he casts with his batting



Mounting concern: Patients receiving lifesaving dialysis treatment in the nephrology ward. Across Telangana, doctors are battling increasing number of kidney failures.H. Vibhu

What is causing a surge in cases of kidney failure in Telangana?

While a scientific link is yet to be established, doctors are raising concerns about the increasing number of patients who are consuming alternative medicines with no prescriptions, alongside the widespread problem of quackery; they call for clamp down on all illegal and unsafe practices

Siddharth Kumar Singh

Across Telangana, doctors are battling a problem that is becoming increasingly common: kidney failure. These patients are young, many are the breadwinners of their families, and most do not have the usual risk factors of chronic kidney disease (CKD), which are diabetes and hypertension. Then why are their kidneys failing?

Even as researchers continue to examine the drivers of this pattern and nephrologists struggle to save patients, a paper published last year, may perhaps point to one of possible answer: the growing number of patients consuming self-prescribed alternative medicines. While the link has not yet been scientifically established, this is a line of inquiry researchers now want to pursue. It may be noted that certain alternative medicines have been implicated in liver injuries in India.

The study, led by nephrologists from Osmania General Hospital and Apollo Hospitals, examined 75 patients and was published in the *Indian Journal of Nephrology* in August 2024. Conducted between March 2021 and November 2022 at Osmania General Hospital, it was a single-centre, prospective observational study documenting the clinical and epidemiological profile of patients with chronic kidney disease of unknown aetiology in Telangana and assessing their kidney histology.

Among the 75 patients, the mean age was 41.7 years and 68% were men. A majority, amounting to 77.3%, relied on groundwater as their primary drinking water source. 40% reported having used alternative medicine in the past and 46.6% underwent kidney biopsies as part of the evaluation.

> Patients must consult only licensed experts and follow prescriptions that clearly mention the name of the medicine along with the credentials of the practitioner
>
> **G. SRINIVAS**
> Vice-Chairman, Telangana Medical Council

What the study found

Manisha Sahay, professor and head of the nephrology department at Osmania General Hospital and one of the authors of the study, said many patients who report using alternative medicine had taken these substances without medical guidance.

"Patients often rely on suggestions from friends or quacks who do not hold any degree in any recognised system of medicine. In most instances, they do not have a prescription and consume these products in the form of powders, liquids, leaves or tablets, often supplied in unnamed bottles."

Dr. Sahay further added that even when patients mention alternative medicine use, they rarely bring samples for analysis, making it difficult to establish a clear link between the substances consumed and the kidney damage observed. Although 40% of those studied reported past use, the absence of traceable samples meant the cause and effect relationship cannot yet be established, but the team is pursuing this line of research.

The histological analysis in the study revealed that 44% of the patients had global glomerulosclerosis, which indicates that more than half of the kidney's filtering units were scarred and non-functional.

No traditional risk factors

Dr. Sahay said the main finding was that patients with chronic kidney disease who fit the phenotype for chronic kidney disease of unknown aetiology, as defined in known hotspots elsewhere, are not uncommon in Telangana. She said the cases are not confined to people with traditional risk factors such as agricultural work and that this is the first report documenting the presence of such cases in the State.

Most participants were from Hyderabad, accounting for 42.7%, followed by 10% from Rangareddy district. About one-third, or 33%, had hyperuricemia, which refers to elevated uric acid levels in the blood. Of the patients, 40% had already reached stage five chronic kidney disease at the time of diagnosis, and seven patients, representing 9.3%, required renal replacement therapy such as dialysis when they were evaluated.

While more research is needed across the State to establish definitive links, this combined with the deep-rooted menace of quackery in the State has now led to calls by medical professionals to both clamp down on all illegal and unsafe medical practices.

G. Srinivas, Vice-Chairman of the Telangana Medical Council (TGMC), said that unqualified practitioners prescribing unregulated herbal or alternative medicines pose a serious risk to patients' kidney health. "Many of these substances are given without any knowledge of dosage, strength or side effects. We do not know how much of these medicines people are consuming, what the mechanism of action is, how they are metabolised in the liver or kidneys, or what enzymes are involved. We also do not know how these substances interact with the medicines that patients may already be taking for conditions like hypertension or diabetes," he said.

According to him, such interactions can lead either to excessively rapid metabolism, which causes the drug to be cleared too quickly, or to slow metabolism, which results in the accumulation of the substance in the blood. "Slow metabolism causes the drug to build up in the body and this can damage internal organs, including the liver, kidneys and even the brain.

He added that irrational prescribing by quacks is a known contributor to kidney failure in peripheral and rural areas. "In many places, unqualified practitioners give combinations like dexamethasone and diclofenac sodium as injections for quick pain relief. These drugs directly damage the nephrons and can lead to kidney failure," he said.

"Patients must consult only licensed experts and follow prescriptions that clearly mention the name of the medicine along with the credentials of the practitioner," said Dr. Sahay. *(siddharth.kumar@thehindu.co.in)*

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

Vectors are living organisms that can transmit infectious pathogens between humans, or from animals to humans. Can you match the vector with the disease?

Ramya Kannan

QUESTION 1

_____ are the intermediate hosts for the parasitic flatworm that causes schistosomiasis (bilharzia). Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 2

Sandflies carry this parasitic protozoa found in tropical and subtropical areas, which in humans can cause severe skin ulcers or infection of internal organs that can be fatal. Name the parasite, which gives its name to the disease it causes.

QUESTION 3

Trypanosomiasis) by biting a person and defecating near the bite. These bugs have a nickname, based on where they bite people. What is it?

QUESTION 4

_____ is a group of diseases caused by a bacteria called Rickettsia prowazekii, spread through the feces of vectors such as lice, fleas, and mites. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 5

We all know that the anopheles mosquito is the vector that causes lymphatic filariasis and malaria, both of which are parasitic infections. It also causes a viral infection, a neglected disease. name this tongue twisting



This disease is also called 'rabbit fever'. Symptoms may include fever, skin ulcers, and enlarged lymph nodes. It was named after the area in which it was

Answers to previous edition's quiz:

1. What does mm HG stand for? **Ans: Millimeters of mercury** 2. Systolic is the pressure when the heart _____ and diastolic is the pressure when the heart is _____. **Ans: beats or contracts and at rest, between beats** 3. True or False: Your heart beats about 1,00,000 times a day. **Ans: True** 4. What happens to the arteries when you have uncontrolled hypertension? **Ans: They narrow and harden** 5. Approximately how many liters of blood does you heart pump? **Ans: About five litres** 6. What is the condition low bp known as? **Ans: Hypotension** 7. True or False: Veins Carry oxygenated blood from the heart to various parts of the body. **Ans: False** 8. Easiest way to help lower bp is to remove or reduce this ingredient from foods? **Ans: Salt** visual: What is its medical name of the device? **Ans:**

A worrying pattern of HIV transmission in children



Cause for concern: HIV can pass from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, during delivery or through breastfeeding. GETTY IMAGES

Amol Jaybhaye

Mother to child transmission of HIV remains one of the major challenges in the effort to eliminate HIV in children.

HIV can pass from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, during delivery or through breastfeeding. Over the years, early antenatal HIV testing, treatment for pregnant women living with HIV and medicines for newborns have reduced transmission rates across many regions. However, an important concern continues to appear in clinical practice. Some babies are still diagnosed with HIV even though their mothers tested negative during pregnancy. This worrying pattern, often called the silent transmission gap, highlights key gaps in testing, timing and follow-up care.

Many women test negative in early pregnancy, but may acquire HIV later. If a person becomes newly infected during pregnancy, her viral load is often very high, which greatly increases the chance of passing the virus to the baby. A single test at the start of pregnancy may therefore miss new infections that happen later.

After a new infection, there is a also a "window period" – an interval of time during which standard screening tests may not detect HIV even though the virus is present. During this time, the chance of transmitting HIV is high. This means a pregnant woman may test negative despite recently acquiring the infection.

Usually, only one HIV test is recommended during the early stages of pregnancy. Hence, without repeated

Some babies are still diagnosed with HIV even though their mothers tested negative during pregnancy. This worrying pattern is often called the silent transmission gap

testing in the later stages of pregnancy and during breastfeeding, some new infections have a high chance of being undetected. This creates a missed opportunity for early treatment and prevention.

The risk of transmission is especially high if the mother acquires HIV during late pregnancy, delivery or the breastfeeding period. Transmission can happen before birth, during birth or after birth through breast milk.

What can be done?

To close this silent gap, the following steps are important:

For pregnant women: Repeat HIV testing in the later months of pregnancy, testing again at the time of delivery and testing during breastfeeding can help to check for the infection. Additional testing should be carried out for women with recent exposure or symptoms.

For infants: Early virologic testing soon after birth and repeat follow-up testing if needed can go a long way.

Prompt treatment must begin in case of a positive result.

Closing the gap

The occurrence of HIV in babies whose mothers test negative during pregnancy, indicates a significant gap in prevention efforts. This gap is not due to treatment failures in known HIV positive mothers, but mainly due to the occurrence of new maternal infections, the window period and a lack of repeat testing.

A few basic steps such as enforcing repeated testing regulations, improving close follow-ups especially during pregnancy and breastfeeding and ensuring early infant testing will go a long way toward ensuring that essential steps are taken to protect the newborns. Closing this silent transmission gap is crucial as part of the global effort to eliminate HIV in children.

(Dr. Amol Jaybhaye is consultant - paediatric infectious diseases, Narayana Health (RC) Children's Hospital, Mumbai

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Numaligarh Refinery accorded Navaratna status, informs Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri

Numaligarh Refinery becomes the 27th CPSE to be accorded the status.

Published - December 02, 2025 08:14 pm IST

THE HINDU BUREAU

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The Numaligarh refinery in Assam. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) has been accorded 'Navratna' status. Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh informed on Monday (December 1, 2025). It becomes the 27th Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) to be accorded the status.

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•Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) has been accorded 'Navratna' status.

- **It becomes the 27th Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) to be accorded the status.**

petroleum refinery is situated at Numaligarh in Golaghat district of Assam.

It had an annual turnover of ₹25,147 crores, housing net profits of ₹1,608 crores for FY 2024-25.

India's central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) are classified into three major categories – Miniratna, Navratna and Maharatna CPSEs.

The main aim of assigning the "ratna" statuses was to give operational freedom and decision-making power to the state-run entities.

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List of 14 Maharatna Companies in India

Here is the list of 14 Central Public Sector Enterprises that are classified as Maharatna Companies:

Sl.No	Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE – Maharatna Company)
1	NTPC Limited (NTPC)
2	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC)
3	Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)
4	Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)
5	Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)
6	Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL)
7	Coal India Limited (CIL)

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8	GAIL India Limited (GAIL)
9	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)
10	Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID)
11	Power Finance Corporation
12	Rural Electrification Corporation Limited
13	Oil India Ltd
14	Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)


PUNJAB
Chandigarh
Bathinda
Panipat
HARYANA
DELHI
UTTARAKHAND
NEPAL
Mathura
RAJASTHAN
UTTAR PRADESH
Barmer
BIHAR
Barauni
SIKKIM
BHUTAN
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
Digboi
Numligarh
Bongaigaon
Guwahati
ASSAM
NAGALAND
MEGHALAYA
BANGLADESH
MANIPUR
TRIPURA
MIZORAM
MYANMAR
Bina
JHARKHAND
WEST BENGAL
Haldia
GUJARAT
Vadinar
Jamnagar
Koyali
MADHYA PRADESH
CHHATTISGARH
ORISSA
Paradip
DAMAN & DIU
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI
MAHARASHTRA
Mumbai
BAY OF BENGAL
ARABIAN SEA
TELANGANA
Vishakhapatnam
Tatipaka
GOA
KARNATAKA
ANDHRA PRADESH
Mangaluru
Manali, Chennai
Puducherry
LAKSHADWEEP (INDIA)
TAMIL NADU
Nagapattinam
KERALA
Kochi
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR (INDIA)
Refineries
Refineries Under Construction

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- **Gujarat** → Jamnagar, Vadinar, Koyali
- **Maharashtra** → Mumbai BPCL + Trombay HPCL
- **Assam** → Digboi, Guwahati, Bongaigaon, Numaligarh
- **Tamil Nadu** → Manali (Chennai) + Nagapattinam
- **Kerala** → Kochi
- **Karnataka** → Mangalore (MRPL)
- **Andhra Pradesh** → Vizag + Tatipaka
- **Madhya Pradesh** → Bina
- **Odisha** → Paradip
- **West Bengal** → Haldia
- **Bihar** → Barauni
- **Haryana** → Panipat
- **Uttar Pradesh** → Mathura

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- **Largest refinery in India & the world → Jamnagar (Reliance, Gujarat)**
- **Largest PSU refinery in India → Panipat Refinery (IOCL, Haryana)**
- **India's oldest refinery → Digboi (Assam, 1901)**
- **Most refineries in a single state → Assam (4)**

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Explained: The Indian Statistical Institute Bill 2025, and why it had led to protests

On Friday, students, faculty members, and staff at the Kolkata campus of the Indian Statistical Institute held protests against the draft Bill's changes to the institute's governance structure. Here's a breakdown of the row.

Written by Abhinaya Hariqovind Follow
New Delhi | Updated: November 28, 2025 04:59 PM IST
5 min read

Prefer



The Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata was set up by eminent statistician PC Mahalanobis in 1931. (Wikimedia commons)

The Centre's draft Indian Statistical Institute Bill 2025, made public in September for feedback, has drawn criticism from academics and students for the changes it

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EXPRESS Shorts



Mumbai bullion operator could be crucial link in Andhra liquor 'scam'

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•**Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)** is a **premier national institution** devoted to **research, teaching, and application of statistics, mathematics, computer science and related disciplines**.

•Founded by **Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis** in **1931 (Kolkata)**.

•Recognized as an **Institute of National Importance** under the **ISI Act, 195**

•**Headquarter -** Kolkata (West Bengal)

•Government proposed a new "ISI Bill" to replace the ISI Act, 1959.

•Aim of Government:
•restructure ISI,
•convert from a *registered society* to a *statutory corporate body*,
•introduce a **new Board of Governance**,
•increase operational efficiency & accountability.

•Concerns / Opposition:
•fear of **loss of academic autonomy** and **increased central control**,
•possible **reduction of Kolkata's primacy**,
•**academics may lose representation** in governance,
•risk of shifting from **research focus → commercial priorities**.
•Protests in Kolkata and other centres by **students, faculty, alumni**.

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Navy Day: President Murmu salutes bravery of Navy personnel

December 4 is observed as Navy Day as an acknowledgement of the Navy's seminal role in the country's defence, and to commemorate its valour against Pakistan during the 1971 war

Published - December 04, 2025 01:01 pm IST - New Delhi

PTI

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Indian Navy performing Coastguard Drill during Navy Day operational demonstration at Shanmughapuram in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. |

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•Navy Day is celebrated on the 4th of December every year to recognise the achievements and role of the Indian Navy.

About

•It was on this day in 1971, during Operation Trident, that the Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels, including PNS Khaibar.

•This year, the Navy Day is being celebrated with a spectacular Operational Demonstration at Shangumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

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President of India pays floral tributes to Dr Rajendra Prasad on his birth anniversary

प्रविष्टि तिथि: 03 DEC 2025 1:12PM by PIB Delhi

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, paid floral tributes to Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, on his birth anniversary at Rashtrapati Bhavan today (December 3, 2025).



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Dr Rajendra Prasad, birth anniversary on 3rd December 2025.

About: Rajendra Prasad was born on 3rd December 1884 in Zeradei, Siwan, Bihar, and passed away on 28th February 1963 in Patna, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire millions.

Role in the Freedom Struggle: Prasad gave up his legal career to join the independence movement in 1920 and was imprisoned during the Salt Satyagraha in 1931 and the Quit India Movement in 1942.

He presided over the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in 1934 and became Congress President after Subhash Chandra Bose's resignation in 1939.

Role in Constitutional Making: He was appointed President of the Constituent Assembly in 1946. He led committees on the National Flag, Rules of Procedure, and Finance and Staff.

Literary Works: *Satyagraha at Champaran (1922), India Divided (1946), Atmakatha (1946), and Bapu ke Kadmon Mein (1954).*

Award: He was awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1962.

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•**Presidency: Elected as India's first President in 1950, he served for over 12 years(the longest tenure by any President) and remains the only President to be unanimously re-elected, in both 1952 and 1957.**

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Twin of Milky Way galaxy discovered. Indian team names it Alaknanda

The galaxy, named Alaknanda, was discovered by Indian researchers Rashi Jain and Yogesh Wadadekar using the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST).

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The Drang Drung glacier of Ladak seen with the Milky Way galaxy above. (Photo: Dorje Angchuk)

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The galaxy, named Alaknanda, was discovered by Indian researchers Rashi Jain and Yogesh Wadadekar using the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) resemblance to the Milky Way.

- **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)** is the **largest and most powerful space telescope ever built**.

- Joint project of:
- **NASA** (USA)
- **CSA** (Canadian Space Agency
- Consider**ESA** (European Space Agency

Closest major galaxy to the Milky Way – Andromeda

Which galaxy does the Solar System belong to – Milky Way

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India's missile woman Dr Tessy Thomas honoured with eighth Paulos Mar Gregorios Award

Dr Thomas had held the position of Director General (Aeronautical Systems), Defence Research & Develop Organisation (DRDO), and Vice-Chancellor of Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education.

By: Express News Service
New Delhi | December 2, 2025 05:34 AM IST
2 min read

Prefer



Dr Tessy Thomas

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Tessy Thomas, widely known as India's 'Missile Woman', has been recognised with the Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios Award 2025 for her pioneering contributions to defence science.

Instituted by: Sophia Society of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church

Purpose: The purpose of the award is to acknowledge service that uplifts society and demonstrates a union of intellectual rigour with humane, ethical responsibility.

Frequency: The award is presented every alternate year.

Named after: It is established in memory of Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios, who served as the first Metropolitan of the Delhi Diocese and was also a scholar, linguist, theologian, ecumenical leader and socio-political thinker.

- **He also served as President of the World Council of Churches, adding to the global significance of his legacy.**

Award is given to: The award honours individuals whose contributions reflect the blend of scholarship, moral clarity, social commitment and spiritual depth associated with Paulos Mar Gregorios.

- **It recognises people whose work upholds human dignity and empowers disadvantaged or overlooked communities.**

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AWARDS 2025

Anora	97th Academy Awards
Chinese architect Liu Jiakun	Pritzker Architecture Prize
Jayshree Venkatesan	Ramsar Award for 'Wetland Wise Use'.
'Laapataa Ladies'	Best Picture Award(IIFA)
Prime Minister Narendra Modi	Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean
Andrew Barto and Richard Sutton	ACM A.M. Turing Award
Gayatri Spivak	Holberg Prize
Chiranjeevi	Lifetime Achievement(UK House of commons)
Vinod Shukla	Jnanpith Award

Masaki Kashiwara	Abel Prize

Easterine Kire, Spirit Nights (Novel)	Sahitya Akademi Awards (English Language)
Gagan Gill, Main Jab Tak Aai Bahar (Poetry)	Sahitya Akademi Awards (Hindi Language)
Shubhajit Roy	Ramnath Goenka Journalism Awards 2025(Israel Conflict)
Chandrika Tandon	First Grammy award for Album "Triveni"
Manu Bhaker (Shooter), D Gukesh (Chess Champion), Harmanpreet Singh (Men's Hockey Captain), Praveen Kumar (Para-Athlete)	Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award
Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services	Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar-2025

Dr. Syed Anwar Khursheed received the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award 2025

→34th Saraswati Samman for 2024 was awarded to Mahamahopadhyaya Sadhu Bhadreshdas for his Sanskrit book, Swaminarayana Siddhanta Sudha.

→Sudarsan Pattnaik Becomes First Indian to Win Fred Darrington Sand Art Award

→Rajesh Unni Honored With National Maritime Varuna Award

→PM Modi was conferred the prestigious 'Mithra Vibhushana' medal by the Government of Sri Lanka, highest civilian honour of the island nation

→Dr. D. Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman of AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad, has been conferred with the prestigious 'Legends of Endoscopy' award by a community of Japanese gastroenterologists, in recognition of his groundbreaking work in Gastrointestinal (GI) Endoscopy

→Union Minister Ram Mohan Naidu named World Economic Forum Young Global Leader 2025

→Child rights activist and lawyer **Bhuwan Ribhu** has become the first Indian lawyer to be conferred with the 'Medal of Honour' by the World Jurist Association (WJA)

→ Brazilian scientist Mariangela Hungria was awarded the World Food Prize 2024 for her groundbreaking work in sustainable agriculture and biological nitrogen fixation.

→**Banu Mushtaq** has etched her name in history by securing the 2025 International Booker Prize for her Kannada short story collection Heart Lamp. The book, translated into English by **Deepa Bhasthi**, is a powerful portrayal of the challenges faced by Muslim women in S. India

→Brazilian scientist **Mariangela Hungria** recently won the 2025 World Food Prize for her pioneering work in reducing the use of chemical fertilisers and developing biological seed and soil treatments to boost crop yields and nutrition.

→ Opal Suchata, Miss Thailand, was crowned Miss World 2025 at a glittering finale of the 72nd Miss World 2025 held at the Hitex Exhibition Centre, Hyderabad, Telangana, on 31 May 2025. She is the first female from Thailand to be crowned Miss World.

→ Sonu Sood was honored with the Miss World Humanitarian Award at the 72nd Miss World Festival in Hyderabad, Telangana. He received the award in recognition of his philanthropic work, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The award was presented during the Grand Finale of the festival on May 31, 2025.

→ Humanitarian leader Madhusudan Sai was conferred Fiji's highest honour, the 'Companion of the Order of Fiji', by the President of Fiji Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu at the State House of Fiji

→ Aditya Birla Group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla honoured with Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Award 2025.

→**President Droupadi Murmu presented the Kalinga Ratna Award-2024** to **Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan** at an event in Cuttack, Odisha.

→ **Suhani Shah from Rajasthan has become the first Indian to win the 'Best Magic Creator 2025' award at the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés Magiques (FISM)—popularly known as the Oscars for magicians**

→ **An Indian non-profit organisation 'Foundation to Educate Girls Globally', dedicated to mobilise community and government resources for girls' education in rural and educationally disadvantaged areas of India, has been named a 2025 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee**

Foundation, widely known as Educate Girls, is the first Indian organisation to receive the prestigious award, which is considered Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. The Foundation, started in Rajasthan, was founded in 2007 by Safeena Husain.

Other 2025 winners include Shaahina Ali from the Maldives for her environmental work and Flaviano Antonio L. Villanueva from the Philippines.

→ Union Minister Nitin Gadkari received the 43rd Lokmanya Tilak National Award .

→ Prime Minister Narendra Modi instituted a global award in memory of Professor M. S. Swaminathan, father of India's Green Revolution, to honour scientists from developing nations working for "Food and Peace." The first M. S. Swaminathan Award for Food and Peace was conferred to Nigerian scientist Prof. Ademola A. Adenle for combating hunger in Nigeria.

→ The Bibi Fatima Women's Self-Help Group (SHG) from Teertha village in Karnataka's Dharwad district won the prestigious Equator Initiative Award 2025. This United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) prize honours community-led nature-based solutions for sustainable development and climate resilience.

→ Sculptor Premchandra Pukhrambam won the Lalit Kala Akademi Award 2025 at the 64th National Exhibition of Art (NEA) for his wooden sculpture

→ Leila Aboulela, a Sudanese-Scottish writer, has been named the winner of the 2025 PEN Pinter Prize. The award was announced in London on July 10, 2025, by English PEN, in recognition of her powerful writing that explores faith, migration, and the lives of Muslim women

→ **On July 6, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the 'Key to the City' of Buenos Aires during his official visit to Argentina.**

→ **Dr. Sonali Ghosh, Field Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, became the first Indian to win the IUCN WCPA Kenton Miller Award 2025, announced at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.**

→ **Vigyan Ratna**

Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar – Awarded posthumously for his outstanding contribution to Physics.

→ France has conferred one of its highest civilian honours, the Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mérite (Knight of the National Order of Merit), on Sunil Kant Munjal, chairman of Hero Enterprise and founder of the Serendipity Arts Foundation

→ ***Hungarian-British author David Szalay wins the 2025 Booker Prize for his profound and haunting novel Flesh.***

→ **The Golden Peacock for the Best Feature Film at IFFI 2025 was bagged by Ashleigh Mayfair's 'Skin of Youth'.**

→ **Tessy Thomas, widely known as India's 'Missile Woman', has been recognised with the Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios Award 2025 for her pioneering contributions to defence science.**

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At just 3 years old, Sarvagya Kushwaha becomes world's youngest FIDE-rated chess player

TOI Sports Desk / TIMESOFINDIA.COM / Dec 03, 2025, 10:59 IST

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Three-year-old Sarvagya Singh Kushwaha from Madhya Pradesh has become the youngest player to earn an official FIDE rating at 1572. He achieved this by defeating three internationally rated opponents, showcasing exceptional talent and discipline. His parents introduced him to chess to limit screen time, leading to his rapid



Sarvagya Singh Kushwaha (Pic credit: X/Rakesh Kulkarni)

NEW DELHI: In a remarkable milestone for Indian chess, three-year-old Sarvagya Singh Kushwaha from Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district has created history by becoming the youngest player ever to earn an official FIDE rating. At 3 years, 7 months and 20 days, Sarvagya has shattered the previous record held by West Bengal's Anish Sarkar and entered the global chess rankings with an impressive 1572 rating, instantly marking himself as a prodigy to watch.

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Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha, who hails from Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district, became the youngest player in chess history to be rated by FIDE, smashing the record that was previously held by compatriot Anish Sarkar of West Bengal.

India's Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha made chess history on Tuesday, becoming the youngest player in the world to be ranked by FIDE, the International Chess Federation, at the age of 3 years, 7 months and 20 days.

broke the record that was previously held by West Bengal's Anish Sarkar, who had achieved the feat at the age of 3 years and 8 months.

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Five products from Tamil Nadu — Woraiyur cotton sari, Kavindapadi *nattu sakkarai* (jaggery powder), Namakkal *makkal pathirangal* (soapstone cookware), the traditional Thooyamalli rice variety and Ambasamudram *choppu saman* (wooden toys) — have secured the Geographical Indications (GI) tag, spotlighting the State's diverse craftsmanship and agricultural heritage.

The additions bring Tamil Nadu's total number of GI-tagged items to 74.

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RUSSIA


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80° E
Chukchi Sea
Wrangel Island
Arctic Ocean
East Siberian Sea
Franz Josef Land
60° N
80° N
New Siberian Islands
Severnaya Zemlya
Anadyr
UK
North Sea
Norway
Sweden
Barents Sea
Novaya Zemlya
Laptev Sea
Kara Sea
KOLYMA MTS.
Kamchatka Peninsula
Germany
Murmansk
White Sea
Byrranga Mts.
Oymyakon
CHERSKIY RANGE
Finland
Baltic Sea
Estonia
Poland
Lena River
Kaliningrad
Lithuania
Saint Petersburg
Arkhangelsk
Central Siberian Plateau
Magadan
Petropavlovsk Kamchatskiy
20° E
Latvia
Belarus
Dvina
Ob River
European Plain
Noril'sk
ARCTIC CIRCLE
160° E
Sea of Okhotsk
EUROPE
Nizhniy Novgorod
Moscow
Yenisey River
Yakutsk
Sakhalin Island
N
URAL MTS.
350 mi
Kazan
350 km
Ukraine
Perm
West Siberian Plain
Russia
Amur River
Yuzhno Sakhalinsk
Kuril Islands
Volga River
Yekaterinburg
STANOVOY MTS.
Black Sea
Rostov
Samara
Irtysh
Lena River
Sochi
Volgograd
Chelyabinsk
Ob' River
Krasnoyarsk
Khabarovsk
Pacific Ocean
Turkey
40° E
Astrakhan
Omsk
SAYAN MTS.
KABONOVYY RANGE
Amur River
China
Caucasus Mts.
Georgia
ASIA
Novosibirsk
Irkutsk
Ulan Ude
Vladivostok
Japan
Armenia
Kazakhstan
Caspian Sea
TANNA-OLA MTS.
Sea of Japan (East Sea)
MIDDLE EAST
Aral Sea
RUSSIA
LOW / HILLS / MOUNTAINS
Lake Baikal
Mongolia
120° E
North Korea
Azerbaijan
China

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- **President: Vladimir Putin — He continues to hold the office as President of Russia.**
- **Prime Minister: Mikhail Mishustin**
- **Currency – Rubel**

- **Defence - Sukhoi Fighter Jet ; S400 Defence system**

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- **Continent:** Europe + Asia (Eurasia)
- **Largest country in the world** (Area: ~17 million sq. km).
- **Capital:** Moscow
- **Bordering Countries (14)**

Ural Mountains
Runs **north–south**, forms **natural boundary between Europe & Asia**.

Caucasus Mountains
Between Black Sea & Caspian Sea.
Mount **Elbrus**, highest peak in Europe.

- **Volga** – longest in Europe, major inland waterway.
- Empties into Caspian Sea

Lake Baikal
World's deepest freshwater lake.

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Kaliningrad

- **Russian exclave between Poland & Lithuania.**
- **High military significance.**

Lake Baikal – Deepest Lake

- Located in Siberia, Russia.
- The **deepest lake in the world** [1,637 metres deep]
- It is the world's largest lake by volume.
- It is the second longest.

Lake Tanganyika – Longest Lake

- The **longest lake in the world**. [660 kilometres long]
- It is also the second largest by volume.
- It is the second deepest lake in the world, after lake Baikal.

- The **world's highest commercially navigable lake** is **Lake Titicaca** in Peru and Bolivia border at 3,812 m. It is also the **largest lake in South America**.

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The **Mahad Satyagraha** was a movement led by **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on 20 March 1927** in **Mahad (Raigad district, Maharashtra)** to assert the **right of untouchables (Dalits) to access public water sources**.

It is considered the **first mass movement against caste discrimination led by Ambedkar**.

In 1924, the **Mahad Municipality passed a resolution** allowing all communities (including untouchables) to use the **Chavdar (Chawdar) Lake**.
Upper caste groups **refused to implement the decision**, fearing loss of caste authority.
This led to Ambedkar organising a peaceful movement for equality.

- Ambedkar led a **second satyagraha in December 1927**.
- **The book Manusmriti was symbolically burned** for sanctioning caste discrimination and untouchability

Every year **4th December** is marked as **International Cheetah Day** since **2010**. The day is dedicated to **emphasizing global efforts to prevent the cheetah's extinction** and **promote its conservation.**

•American zoologist, **Dr. Laurie Marker,** founder of the ***Cheetah Conservation Fund*** in 1991, designated this day in honor of ***Khayam***, a cheetah she raised.

•**Namibia** has the **world's largest population** of cheetahs

About Cheetah

- It is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the **Miocene era.**
- **Namibia has the world's largest population of cheetahs.**
- The **fastest land animal in the world,** a cheetah can reach **112km/h**in just three seconds.
- In 1952, the **Indian government officially declared the Cheetah extinct** in the country. The cheetah is the **only large carnivore to have gone extinct in India,** primarily due to hunting and habitat loss.

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