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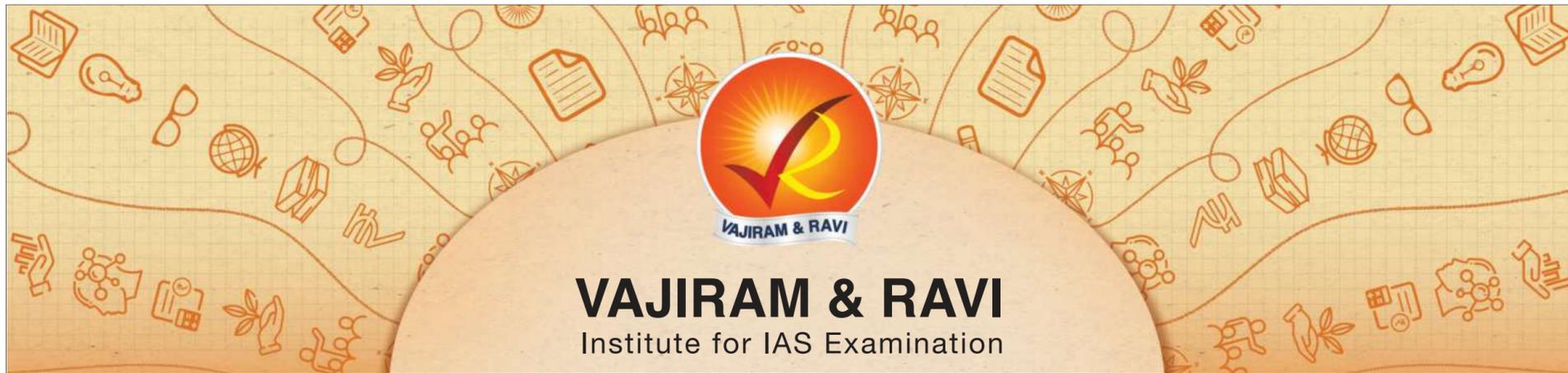


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## CBI arrests two in Patna in NEET paper leak case

Accused allegedly rented a playschool where leaked papers were given to candidates on exam eve; CBI quizzes Hazaribagh school principal, finds possible link between NEET, UGC-NET leaks

**Amit Bhalari**  
PATNA

In its first arrests from Patna in the NEET-UG paper leak case, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took two persons into custody on Thursday.

According to the agency, the accused – Manish Prakash and Ashutosh Kumar – played a crucial role in arranging to rent the Learn Boys Hostel and Play School in Patna's Khemnichak locality, where the leaked question papers were allegedly distributed to candidates on the eve of the examination.

The CBI continued its interrogation of the principal of a Hazaribagh school, with sources saying that a key focus is on the strong connections between the



**Raising questions:** Youth Congress members protesting at Jantar Mantar over the NEET-UG issue on Thursday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

NEET and UGC-NET paper leaks at the school, which was a centre for both examinations, both conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

Questions are being raised as to how the school, already under suspicion with regard to NEET, was allowed to remain a venue for UGC-NET,

which was conducted over a month later.

The CBI also gained custody on Thursday of Baldev Kumar, alias Chintu, and Mukesh Kumar, two accused who had been arrested by the Bihar Police's Economic Affairs Unit which had been previously investigating the case. The Central agency brought

## SC, Delhi HC seek NTA response on NEET petitions

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court on Thursday sought the National Testing Agency's (NTA) response on separate petitions about raising grievances on Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) sheets and out-of-syllabus questions in NEET-UG 2024. » PAGE 14

them to its office in Patna for questioning after a medical check-up. On Wednesday, a special CBI court granted custody of them to the CBI till July 4.

**Continued on**  
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**STUDENTS PROTEST**  
» PAGE 14

## President flags NEET, mentions Emergency in Parliament speech

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

In her first address to Parliament since the Lok Sabha election results were announced, President Droupadi Murmu asked MPs to rise above "partisan politics" with regard to the row over "paper leaks" in examinations for medical college admissions and government recruitment.

The Union government is "fully committed" to investigating the issues and punishing the guilty, she said.

"The recent irregularities and paper leaks are being dealt with strongly (and) the government's focus is on improving the exam process," the President said, as Opposition MPs raised an uproar at the mention of NEET, the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for undergraduate medical programmes.

The President's custom-



Droupadi Murmu

ary address to a joint sitting of both Houses is usually about the agenda of the government of the day and in anticipation of the Union Budget. However, Ms. Murmu raised several other issues which she said were of concern, including the Emergency imposed by the Congress-led government in 1975, terming it "the biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on the Constitution".

**Continued on**  
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**MORE REPORTS**  
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### IN BRIEF



#### RS revokes suspension of Sanjay Singh

**NEW DELHI**  
Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Thakur on Thursday announced the revocation of suspension of AAP member Sanjay Singh, who was suspended from July 24, 2023 till the Committee of Privileges submitted its findings. » Page 13

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### Cloud of uncertainty



**Breaching the defence:** High waves lash over geotextile bags laid along a section of the Kerala coast to resist sea incursion, leading to flooding at Kannamaly in Kochi on Thursday. THULASI KAKKAT

## AAP MPs boycott President's address over Kejriwal's arrest; 'nationwide stir tomorrow'

**Satvika Mahajan**  
NEW DELHI

All Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MPs on Thursday boycotted President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to protest against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the CBI in a corruption case linked to the now-scrapped excise policy.

The party has 13 MPs in both Houses of Parliament – three in the Lok Sabha and 10 in the Rajya Sabha.

**Notice submitted**  
The party said in a statement that its Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh submitted a notice of special mention to the Rajya Sab-



AAP MPs hold placards as they stage a protest against the arrest of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal at the Parliament House on Thursday. ANI

ha Secretariat on the "misuse" of probe agencies.

The party also decided to hold a nationwide protest on June 29 over the issue even as its MPs protested on Parliament premises against the Centre.

All party MPs were seen holding placards that read

the Prime Minister to stop the misuse of investigative agencies and release Kejriwal," Mr. Singh said.

**'Will join discussions'**  
The Rajya Sabha member said though the party's lawmakers had boycotted the President's address, they will be taking part in parliamentary discussions "to do the job of waking up the government".

He said the ED and the CBI are being used to "harass Opposition leaders and parties" and that former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, and former Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain were put in jail by these agencies.

## Vokkaliga seer publicly asks Siddaramaiah to hand over Karnataka CM post to his deputy Shivakumar

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Bringing the power tussle in the ruling Congress in Karnataka back in focus, Vishwa Vokkaligara Mahasamsthana Mutt seer Chandrashekhara Swami on Thursday publicly asked Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to give up his post to make way for his deputy D.K. Shivakumar.

This comes close on the heels of demands by many Ministers, believed to be close to Mr. Siddaramaiah, to create more posts of Deputy Chief Minister, seen as an attempt to undercut the influence of Mr. Shivakumar, who is now the only one occupying the post.

The seer made the plea in the presence of both the



Siddaramaiah and D.K. Shivakumar attend the birth anniversary of Bengaluru founder Kempe Gowda on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister while participating in the 515th birth anniversary celebrations of Bengaluru founder Kempe Gowda, who is also seen as a Vokkaliga icon.

**'Bless DKS'**  
"Various leaders have occupied the Chief Minister's position and experienced power. Only Mr. Shivaku-

mar has not got this post yet. Hence, I request Mr. Siddaramaiah, who has already held this post, to give up the position for Mr. Shivakumar and bless him. This can happen only if Mr. Siddaramaiah makes up his mind," the seer said.

The seer also claimed that he was not making the demand because Mr. Shivakumar belonged to the

Vokkaliga community, but only considering the Deputy Chief Minister's role in bringing the party to power in Karnataka. "If Mr. Siddaramaiah is a *dharma-vantha* (one who abides by dharma), he should give up his post now," he said.

**'Up to high command'**  
Both Mr. Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar desisted from responding to the remarks. However, later, talking to mediapersons, Mr. Siddaramaiah evaded a direct reply and only stated that the Congress high command would take the final call on such issues.

In his reaction, Mr. Shivakumar said, "We are committed to what the high command decides on the change of Chief Minis-

ter.... Some people speak in enthusiasm. Such statements made out of love and respect are quite common in politics. Not much importance should be attached to his statements. Party's decision is final."

**Demand resurfaces**  
The demand for creation of multiple Deputy Chief Minister posts on the basis of communities had resurfaced soon after the 2024 Lok Sabha election results were announced.

This is being viewed in political circles as an attempt to scuttle the chances of Mr. Shivakumar, who is seen as a potential successor to Mr. Siddaramaiah in his capacity as president of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee.

## Amid dispute with Governor over swearing-in of MLAs, Mamata says women don't feel safe in Raj Bhavan

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

Amid the row over the venue for the swearing-in of two Trinamool Congress MLAs-elect, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said women "are not feeling safe" in Raj Bhavan and Governor C.V. Ananda Bose has no right to delay the oath-taking of her party's legislators.

"Why must everyone go to Raj Bhavan? The Governor can authorise the Speaker or Deputy Speaker, or attend the Assembly himself. Women have informed me that they are not feeling safe to visit Raj Bhavan due to recent inci-

dents there," she said. The Chief Minister was alluding to the case of harassment levelled against the Governor by a woman staff at Raj Bhavan in May.

Sayantika Bandyopadhyay and Rayat Hossain Sarkar, elected from Baranagar and Bhagwanga Assembly seats, respectively, in the recently concluded byelections, have been demanding that the Governor administer oaths to them in the Assembly. Earlier, Raj Bhavan had invited the MLAs to the Governor's house for the oath-taking, but they did not show up.

On Thursday, the MLAs held protests in the Assembly for the second consecutive day. On Wednes-

day, the Governor had refused to hold the swearing-in ceremony in the Assembly and left for New Delhi in the afternoon.

**'Cannot deny right'**  
Breaking her silence on the issue that has been festering for the past several weeks, the Chief Minister said, "Nearly a month has passed but my MLAs are unable to take oath. The Governor is obstructing them from doing so. It is the people who have elected them, not the Governor. He cannot deny them the right to take oath."

The Chief Minister and the Ministers of the State government have not visited Raj Bhavan since May 2.





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## IN BRIEF



## Arvind Kejriwal won't bow down, says Punjab CM Mann

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said that AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal will not bow down no matter how much atrocities are committed on him. Mr. Mann's statement came a day after the Delhi Chief Minister was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in a corruption case linked to the alleged excise scam. The Punjab Chief Minister also shared Mr. Kejriwal's picture in a post on X. "This picture represents the struggle against dictatorship. The CBI's arrest after the ED's bail is a blatant misuse of the CBI at the behest of the BJP," Mr. Mann posted in Hindi. PTI

## SAD to support BSP nominee for Jalandhar Assembly bypoll

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) will support the BSP nominee in the bypoll for the Jalandhar West Assembly seat instead of the candidate it had officially fielded, as she was picked by a panel, two of whose members have now rebelled against party chief Sukhbir Singh Badal. The party is unable to change its "authorised candidate" now as the last day for it has already past. The SAD now does not have its own authorised candidate for the July 10 bypoll, senior party leader Daljit Singh Cheema told reporters on Thursday. Mr. Cheema said the party has conveyed to its workers to support BSP nominee Binder Kumar in the bypoll. PTI

## Woman tourist washed away in Parvati river, body found

A tourist from Haryana was washed away after she slipped into the gushing waters of Parvati river while taking photographs near the riverbed near Manikaran in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district, police on Thursday said. The incident occurred on Wednesday evening when the couple - Ajay and his wife Kavita - from Jhajjar in Haryana were taking photographs along the river around 6:30 pm, an eyewitness said. The body of Kavita (31) was recovered during the rescue operation near Suma Ropa, about four kilometres from the spot where she fell, police said. The deceased's husband identified her body, they said. PTI

## Two women Naxalites with ₹16-lakh bounty surrender

Two women Naxalites carrying a cumulative reward of ₹16 lakh on their heads surrendered in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district on Thursday. A release from the office of the Superintendent of Police identified them as Bali alias Rambatti alias Zarina Narote (28) and Shashikala alias Chandrakala alias Manisha Uike (29), both platoon party committee members of the proscribed Communist Party of India (Maoist) company number 10. The surrender of the two women, with rewards of ₹8 lakh each on their heads, comes within a week of DKSZCM (Dandkaranya Special Zonal Committee Member) Giridhar, who was the district's top Naxalite, and his wife Sangeeta Usendi laying down arms. PTI

## Uddhav mounts attack on Centre, Mahayuti govt. over NEET, Ram Temple leakage

On first day of final session of Assembly before Maharashtra goes to polls, Sena (UBT) chief demands farm loan waiver, raises issue of unemployment; govt. is against farmers, youth, and daily wagers'

Abhinav Deshpande  
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday criticised the Mahayuti government, calling it a "Mahagalti sarkar" and a "leakage sarkar", referring to alleged irregularities in NEET and water seepage at Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Addressing a press conference, he termed the monsoon session of the State legislature, the final session before Maharashtra goes to polls later this year, which began on Thursday, the "send-off" session for the government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. The former Chief Minister also demanded a complete waiver of farm loans before the Assembly election.

"The Centre and the State are 'leakage sarkar', not 'double-engine sarkar' because exam papers (NEET) were leaked and also because there is leakage in the Ram Temple's sanctum sanctorum. They have no shame. They can't build



Stepping up the heat: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray with party leaders on the first day of the monsoon session of the Maharashtra Assembly, in Mumbai on Thursday. EMMANUAL YOGINI

a temple properly and run the administration. Why should we vote for them?" he said.

Earlier, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) legislators, including those from the Sena (UBT), the Congress, and the NCP (SP), had protested against the government over the NEET exam and demanded loan waivers for farmers on the premises of the Assembly. As Mr. Shinde and his deputy Devendra Fadnavis passed

by, they raised slogans such as "commission sarkar down down".

Stating that 6,250 farmers died by suicide in the State in the last two years, with 1,046 such deaths since January this year alone, the Sena (UBT) leader demanded a complete waiver of farm loans. "This government is against farmers, youth, and daily wagers. There should be a complete waiver of farm loans and this should be

implemented before the State election. Moreover, this government had announced an assistance of ₹10,020 crore for the farmers which is yet to be released," Mr. Thackeray said, accusing the Central government of insensitivity over water issues in the country.

He predicted a "rain of assurances" in the budget to be presented by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday and called for a White Paper on promises fulfilled over the past two years.

On reports that the State will launch a scheme for women on the lines of Madhya Pradesh's Ladli Behna Scheme, Mr. Thackeray suggested a similar initiative for men, citing rising unemployment.

## Elevator encounter

Regarding his chance meeting with Mr. Fadnavis in a lift at the State Assembly, which gained attention on social media, Mr. Thackeray called it a "mere coincidence" and an "informal meeting".

## NHRC notice to U.P. DGP over brothers' death by suicide

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday said it has issued a notice to the police chief of Uttar Pradesh over the reported deaths of two brothers by suicide due to alleged atrocity by Hathras police personnel.

The police are supposed to protect the people from any atrocity, but in this case, it appears that they became the "perpetrators" which is a matter of concern, the panel observed. The NHRC has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report carried that two brothers in Agra died by suicide "within three days due to alleged harassment by police personnel... in Hathras", it said in a statement.

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

## ED gets custody of kingpin in 2022 J&amp;K S-I paper leak case

The Hindu Bureau  
SRINAGAR

A kingpin involved in the paper leak of sub-inspectors (S-I) posts in Jammu and Kashmir has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Jammu.

An ED spokesperson identified the kingpin as Yatin Yadav. He was arrested on June 24 in the J&K Service Selection Board paper leak case and produced before the Special PMLA Court, Jammu, on June 25.

The court has granted the Central agency Mr. Yadav's custody for seven days.

"The ED investigation revealed that the accused, Yatin Yadav, is the kingpin of the paper leak gang, who had arranged for the smuggling out of the paper of the S-I exam. He conspired with the other ac-

cusped persons to arrange for candidates willing to access the leaked paper against monetary payments ranging from ₹15 lakh to ₹30 lakh. Post examination, the payments were collected mainly via cash and via bank account transfers from the aspirants routed to accused Yatin Yadav," the ED said.

## 'Chain of transactions'

The probe agency said the scrutiny of the suspected bank accounts showed that the chain of transactions had been used to route cash deposits, and other funds into the bank accounts related to Mr. Yadav.

"The funds were also routed into his proprietorship firm, M/s New Global Fumigation Corporation and were dissipated vide transactions of smaller amounts," the ED said.

## JJP offers support to Cong. for Rajya Sabha poll in Haryana, dismisses alliance with BJP

The Hindu Bureau  
CHANDIGARH

Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) co-founder Dushyant Chautala, the former ally of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on Thursday asked the Congress to take the lead in fielding a common candidate for the Rajya Sabha election in Haryana to which the JJP will extend support.

Mr. Chautala, former Haryana Deputy Chief Minister, also dismissed the possibility of an alliance with the ruling BJP in Haryana before or after the next Assembly poll, which is due later this year.

After the Congress's Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Singh Hooda won the Rohatak Lok Sabha seat in the recently concluded poll, the seat in the Upper House of Parliament has become vacant.

## T.N. hooch deaths: AIADMK leaders stage hunger strike

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

AIADMK legislators led by the party's general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Thursday staged a hunger strike here against the alleged failure of the DMK government in taking appropriate action against those responsible for the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy.

They demanded an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the deaths. Wearing black shirts at the protest venue, near the Rajarathinam stadium, they held placards demanding the resignation of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.

Senior party functionaries K.P. Munusamy, Dindigul C. Sreenivasan, S.P. Velumani, K.A. Sengottaiyan, R.B. Udhayakumar, Pollachi V. Jayaraman, Agri S.S. Krishnamoorthy, and S. Ravi, among others, protested. DMDK general secretary Premalatha Vijayakant, too, joined the strike.

Later, addressing the gathering, Mr. Palaniswami blamed the DMK government for the deaths. "It was because of the pressure exerted by the State government that the Col-



AIADMK leader Edappadi K. Palaniswami at the hunger strike in Chennai on Thursday.

lector [initially] gave a false information on the issue," he said.

The Opposition was denied a chance to raise the issue in the Assembly, and it shows that the government is "autocratic," he added.

Later in the day, the AIADMK's presidium chairman A. Tamilagan Husain offered justice to Mr. Palaniswami to end the fast.

Earlier, on June 24, Mr. Palaniswami had led a protest at Kallakurichi, highlighting the DMK government's "laxity" over the tragedy.

The next day, he led a delegation of party members to the Raj Bhavan and submitted a representation to Governor R.N. Ravi urging him to report the alleged "failure of the constitutional machinery" in Tamil Nadu to President Droupadi Murmu.

## Reel life peps up Kashmir as top directors put spotlight on film-making

Peerzada Ashiq  
SRINAGAR

Bollywood's star movie directors on Thursday held no-holds-barred deliberations with locals about the magical reel life and sought to further strengthen the decades-old relation between scenic Kashmir and the silver screen by prodding locals to enter into film-making.

In a rare bid to share the knowledge of cinema at a place where movie-making almost halted in the past three decades, Bollywood directors Vishal Bhardwaj, Imtiaz Ali, Kabir Khan, and actor Sanjay Suri made it easy for the local audience to understand what it requires to leave a mark in cinema.

They were speaking at the 'Film Tourism and its potential in promoting J&K

Tourism' session of the two-day tourism conclave held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre.

## 'Dispel resistance'

With many in the audience identifying the real and imagined hurdles to arrive at cinematic skills, Mr. Ali, who put a fresh spotlight on Kashmir through movies like *Rockstar* and *Highway*, asked locals "to work hard to leave a mark". "People of Kashmir will have to dispel the persisting resistance regarding opening of cinema halls and people choosing films as career," Mr. Ali said. He said Bollywood always awaits a good script with a Kashmir theme.

Around a dozen cinema halls closed in Kashmir with the onset of militancy in the 1990s. In the past



Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha with film director Imtiaz Ali at the J&K Tourism Development Conclave in Srinagar. PTI

five years, the Lieutenant-Governor's administration has been reviving cinema by reopening cinema halls in every district across the Valley.

Director Khan, whose blockbuster movie *Bajranghi Bhaijaan* put the spotlight on Kashmir's Sona-

marg, dispelled the myth of the existence of a bloc in Bollywood. "None of our relatives were in Bollywood. We flew from different States and today came to represent Bollywood, which yearns for new talent. It requires a lot of hard work though. The key

## Directors Imtiaz Ali, Kabir Khan, Vishal Bhardwaj make rare endeavour for cinema's revival in Kashmir valley

is the passion to do something different," Mr. Khan said.

He praised the locals for their cooperation and understanding of the making of cinema. "Besides the fact it's reasonably easy to get permission for shooting and provides scenery, it's the people who genuinely help in film-making. Shooting in Delhi is far harder than Kashmir. It's much easier to have an audience of three thousand to stay silent in Kashmir while shooting at a location. They understand what is required when dia-

logues are recorded. This one element makes all the difference," Mr. Khan said.

In a bid to attract local film-makers, Mr. Bhardwaj, whose film *Haider* brought to the fore multiple layers of Kashmir's violent past, asked locals to avail of the new film policy.

## 'Double subsidy'

"Local language film-makers can avail of double subsidy, which amounts to ₹3 crore. I made my first movie with ₹40 lakh. A Bengali film costs no more than ₹3-4 crore. They produce good cinema," Mr. Bhardwaj said.

The introduction of the J&K Film Policy by Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha has resulted in permission for shooting being given to 350 films in the past four years in Kashmir.

## 13 illegal bars razed in Maharashtra as crackdown continues

Press Trust of India  
THANE

The Thane civic body and Mira-Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) on Thursday razed 13 illegal bars and over 30 paan shops, a day after Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde directed action against joints selling intoxicating substances in the wake of the Pune bar case, officials said.

Earlier this week, the Pune Municipal Corporation started cracking down on unauthorised structures at pubs and bars in the city following a viral video clip from a bar - Liquid Leisure Lounge or 'L3' - on Pune's Fergusson College Road.

The police have arrested eight persons, including an event organiser, and suspended four police personnel after the L3 pub was found operating beyond the permissible time. Besides, the Excise Department has arrested six waiters of L3 for allegedly flouting norms related to serving of liquor.

In Thane, eight unauthorised bars and pubs and 31 paan shops were pulled down for operating without permission, the civic corporation said in a release. The drive will continue unabated, it said. Civic body chief Rajesh Katkar said five illegal bars were demolished and more will face action on Friday.

## CBI files chargesheet against 5 former police officials in ISRO case

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a chargesheet against two former DGPs, Siby Mathews of Kerala and R.B. Sreekumar of Gujarat, and three other retired police officials in connection with the alleged framing of space scientist Nambi Narayanan in the 1994 ISRO espionage case, officials said.

Three years after registering a case in 2021 following the Supreme Court's directions, the CBI has filed its chargesheet against then Deputy Inspector General of Police Mr. Mathews, who headed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that probed the case, Mr. Sreekumar, who was the Deputy Director in the Intelligence Bureau, P.S. Jayaprakash, then posted in the SIB-Kerala, then Deputy Superintendent of Police K.K. Joshua and inspector S. Vijayan.

The CBI has charged them under Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 342 (wrongful confinement), 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extract a confession), 167 (creating false documents), 193 (fabricating evidence), 354 (criminal assault on women) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the officials said.

The agency had lodged the case on the Supreme Court's orders on April 15, 2021.

The top court had ordered the probe on the basis of the report of a high-level committee, which



Nambi Narayanan

had said the investigation into the role of erring police officials in the 1994 case involving Mr. Narayanan be given to the CBI.

The Kerala Police had registered two cases in October 1994 after Maldivian national Rasheeda was arrested in Thiruvananthapuram for allegedly obtaining secret drawings of ISRO rocket engines for selling to Pakistan.

Mr. Narayanan, then director of the cryogenic project at the ISRO, was arrested, along with the then ISRO deputy director D. Sasikumar and Fousiya Hassan, a Maldivian friend of Rasheeda.

### False allegations

The CBI probe had found the allegations to be false.

Terming the police action against the former ISRO scientist "psychopathological treatment", the top court had, in September 2018, said his "liberty and dignity", basic to his human rights, were jeopardised as he was taken into custody and, despite all the glory of the past, was eventually compelled to face "cynical abhorrence".

## CID files chargesheet against Yediyurappa in POCSO case

The former Karnataka Chief Minister is accused of sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl, who had gone to meet him on February 2, 2024, seeking his help to speed up probe into a past rape case

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) filed a chargesheet against BJP leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, charging him under Section 8 (sexual assault) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 and Section 354A (sexual harassment) and 214 (offering gift or restoration of property in consideration of screening offender) of the Indian Penal Code, on Thursday.

The victim in the case is a 17-year-old girl, who had gone to meet the former Chief Minister along with her mother at his residence on February 2,



B.S. Yediyurappa

2024, seeking help to speed up probe into a past rape case.

The victim was raped by one of her relatives when she was seven years old.

The former Chief Minister is accused of sexually assaulting the girl in a room at his house. The FIR was registered at Sadashivanagar police station here on March 14 and the case

was handed over to the CID.

The High Court of Karnataka had halted the arrest of Mr. Yediyurappa in the case on June 14, following an arrest warrant issued by the trial court.

The CID filed the 750-page chargesheet against four accused: Mr. Yediyurappa for sexual assault and three of his aides for destruction of evidence and trying to cover up the case on his behalf, at the Fast Track Court 1 for POCSO Act cases in the city on Thursday.

The other three accused are Arun Y.M., an advocate, M. Rudresh, a close associate of Mr. Yediyurappa, and G. Mariswamy, a close relative of the former Chief Minister, who alleg-

edly tried to destroy evidence in the case and paid money to the victim and her family, to shield the accused.

They have been charged under Sections 204 (destruction of document or electronic record to prevent its production as evidence), and 214 of the IPC.

The chargesheet lists 74 individuals as witnesses, including the minor who has been the victim in the case. She has been listed as witness number 1. Her mother, the complainant in the case, who died reportedly of cancer on May 26, was also listed as a witness. The mother-daughter duo had already recorded their statements before the magistrate under Section 164 of the Cr.PC.

## MSCB 'scam': police at odds with ED over closure report

**Press Trust of India**  
MUMBAI

In a development concerning the alleged ₹25,000-crore Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) scam, the Mumbai police and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are at loggerheads over the closure report filed before a court here.

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the city police on Thursday opposed the central agency's plea against closing the case, citing that the apex cooperative bank did not suffer any unfair loss due to the purported fraud.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar was named as an accused in the original case registered by the EOW of city police.

While the police sought to close the case as they found no significant loss to the bank, the ED intervened, expressing concerns that accepting the closure report would impact their ongoing money laundering investigation linked to the scam.

The ED has already filed prosecution complaints and supplementary char-

gesheets in the case, emphasising the interconnected nature of the investigations.

The EOW filed a written submission in the court in which it rebuffed the ED's intervention, noting that a similar plea had been rejected previously by a special court for cases involving MPs and MLAs.

The timeline of events includes the police filing a closure report in September 2020, which was initially accepted by the court.

However, further investigation was initiated in October 2022 based on protest petitions and the ED's involvement.

The EOW moved to close the case again in March this year, asserting that no unfair losses were incurred by the bank due to the alleged fraud.

The FIR, which followed a High Court order in August 2019, alleged that loans of several thousand crore rupees obtained by sugar cooperatives, spinning mills and other entities from district and cooperative banks were diverted and not repaid.

## Tax hike on tourist buses: Kerala Minister warns T.N. of tit for tat

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Minister for Transport K.B. Ganesh Kumar has lashed out at Tamil Nadu for raising tax on tourist buses from the State.

Rounding off the discussion on the demand for grants for the Transport Department and taxes on vehicles in the Budget in the Assembly on Thursday, the Minister said even Ker-

ala State Road Transport Corporation bus had been seized.

As Tamil Nadu officials were not relenting, Kerala would also impose a similar tax hike on vehicles from Tamil Nadu, making it difficult for Sabarimala pilgrims from the neighbouring State during the impending pilgrimage season.

Though Kerala had good relations with Tamil Nadu,

the latter had raised the tax on tourist buses by ₹4,000 a seat without any discussion with the State government here or asking its opinion, said the Transport Minister. He said if people travelling from the State to Tamil Nadu were harassed, those coming from there would meet the same fate. If KSRTC buses were stopped there, buses from T.N. would be meted out the same treatment here.

### Maoists surrender

Four members of Galkonda Dalam of the banned CPI(Maoist) surrendered before the police in Andhra Pradesh's Alluri Sitharama Raju district on Thursday.

## Centre's agreement with BIAL may play spoiler to T.N. CM's plan to open airport at Hosur

### NEWS ANALYSIS

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Can Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's plans for an international airport in Hosur become a reality?

As per the agreement for the Development, Construction, Operation and Maintenance of the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) signed between the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, and Bangalore International Airport Ltd. (BIAL) on July 5, 2004, no airport can operate within an aerial distance of 150 km of the airport before the 25th anniversary of KIA, which falls in May 2033.

The agreement states: "No new or existing airport shall be permitted by Gol to be developed as, or improved or upgraded into, an international airport within an aerial distance of 150 km of the airport before the 25th anniversary of the airport opening date."

The agreement grants exclusive rights to BIAL to handle domestic flights. The proposed airport at Hosur falls within an aerial distance of 150 km of the KIA.

In order to operate commercial flights, airport operators will have to get a no-objection certificate

(NOC) from BIAL if the proposed site is within an aerial distance of 150 km of the KIA.

BIAL has refused to allow operation of commercial flights at the HAL airport on Old Airport Road in Bengaluru citing the agreement.

### Refuses to comment

The BIAL, operator of the KIA in Bengaluru, has refused to comment on the plan. "We would not like to comment on this," said a BIAL spokesperson.

The proposed airport would come as a relief for those living in the southern parts of Bengaluru as it will reduce the travel time to reach KIA.

## Telangana Cabinet expansion next week

**The Hindu Bureau**  
HYDERABAD

A meeting of the Congress in New Delhi on Thursday night, attended by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, witnessed the go-ahead to the proposed Cabinet expansion in

the first week of July. Mr. Revanth Reddy, who has been camping in Delhi for the last four days along with Mr. Vikramarka and Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and AICC in-charge of TG Deepa Dasmunshi, met AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal to discuss the Cabinet rejig plan.

## Amnesty for RMP founder's killers: Kerala govt. suspends officials, but UDF sees red

**G. Anand**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The political backwash of the 2012 murder of Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) founder T.P. Chandrasekharan beset the Kerala Assembly again on Thursday.

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) walked out for the second time in three days, accusing the government of 'lying' to the House about the move to grant remissions to Chandrasekharan's assassins.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was absent and Local Self-Governments Minister M.B. Rajesh replied in Mr. Vijayan's stead to the submission. Speaker A.N. Shamseer, who had drawn Opposition criticism for allegedly defending the go-

vernment on the issue, was not on the Chair. Deputy Speaker Chittayam Gopakumar officiated in his place.

Mr. Satheesan accused the government of diluting prison rules and conditions for remission of sentence to stack the decks in favour of Chandrasekharan's killers. He said the police had asked K.K. Rema, MLA and Chandrasekharan's wife, about her dispensation to grant clemency for her husband's killers. "You should be ashamed of yourself for using the establishment's heft to release the killers," Mr. Satheesan said.

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**

**DEATH ANNIVERSARIES**

**FOURTH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mrs. Subbalakshmy Narayanan (Thangam)**  
W/o R.V. Narayanan Retd. Dy. CE SRIYS  
Passed away on 27.6.2024  
Cremation: 10:00 am on 28.6.2024  
Dasasthu: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024  
Deeply mourned by  
Children:  
KS Venkatraman & Lakshmy Subbu Subramaniam (Mani) & Sri Charanya S R Gopalakrishnan & Shobha  
Brothers: Ganeshan, Krishnamurthy, Raman, Rajan,  
Grand children: Vrishin, Mahima, Viswesh and Shankamarayanan & other family members  
+91 90439 85260

**DEATH**

**Dr. K.R. SUTHANTHRA, MBBS, DO**  
Retired Govt Medical Officer Tamil Nadu  
25.9.1948 - 23.06.2020  
We miss you so much and will live forever in our hearts.  
Fondly remembered by  
Family Members

**Turn to the sports pages to participate in today's quiz**

**Yesterday's winners:**

1. Mahesh Khurma, Bengaluru
2. Chejarla Sai Prakash, Chittoor
3. Munna Koner, Patna

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE, CACHAR :: SILCHAR. AUCTION NOTICE.**

**(For auction of seized areca nut total 253096.42 Kg)**

In pursuance of the instructions passed by the Hon'ble Court sealed quotation affixed with Court fee of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are invited from interested buyer/party for sale of areca nuts (not fit for human consumption)seized under the below listed cases registered at Silchar, Dholai and Kalain Police Station indicating their total quoted amount against the whole lot of auction material.

SL.	CASE NO.	HON'BLE COURT ORDERED DTD.	QUANTITY	PRESENT PLACE OF STORAGE
1.	Silchar PS Case No. 840/23	12/03/2024	31482 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
2.	Silchar PS case no.1308/23	12/03/2024	10832 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
3.	Silchar PS case no. 1260/23	12/03/2024	5430 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
4.	Silchar PS case no. 996/23	12/03/2024	8600 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
5.	Silchar PS case no.940/23	12/03/2024	11425 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
6.	Silchar PS case no. 923/23	05/03/2024	7552.21 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
7.	Silchar PS case no. 866/23	05/03/2024	8600 Kg.	Silchar P.S.
8.	Dholai PS Case No.292/2022	26/02/2024	9960 Kg.	Dholai PS
9.	Dholai PS Case No.304/2022	26/02/2024	15960 Kg.	Dholai PS
10.	Dholai PS Case No.310/2022	26/02/2024	3970 Kg.	Dholai PS
11.	Dholai PS Case No.314/2022	26/02/2024	7320 Kg.	Dholai PS
12.	Dholai PS Case No.330/2022	26/02/2024	21700 Kg.	Dholai PS
13.	Dholai PS Case No.263/2022	26/02/2024	1080 Kg.	Dholai PS
14.	Dholai PS Case No.18/2023	26/02/2024	26250 Kg.	Dholai PS
15.	Dholai PS Case No.74/2023	26/02/2024	9,500 Kg.	Dholai PS
16.	Dholai PS Case No.92/2023	26/02/2024	5,800 Kg.	Dholai PS
17.	Dholai PS Case No. 124/2023	27/02/2024	600 Kg.	Dholai PS
18.	Dholai PS Case No.161/2023	26/02/2024	3000 Kg.	Dholai PS
19.	Dholai PS Case No.209/2023	26/02/2024	860 Kg.	Dholai PS
20.	Dholai PS Case No.229/2023	26/02/2024	10560 Kg.	Dholai PS
21.	Dholai PS Case No.239/2023	26/02/2024	17900 Kg.	Dholai PS
22.	Kalain PS Case No.84/2023	26/02/2024	11,000 Kg.	Kalain PS
23.	Kalain PS Case No.324/2023	26/02/2024	6341.343 Kg.	Kalain PS
24.	Kalain PS Case No.469/2022	26/02/2024	1605.60 Kg.	Kalain PS
25.	Kalain PS Case No.112/2023	26/02/2024	1943 Kg.	Kalain PS
26.	Kalain PS Case No.461/2022	26/02/2024	1222.40 Kg.	Kalain PS
27.	Kalain PS Case No.91/2023	26/02/2024	4602.86 Kg.	Kalain PS
28.	Kalain PS Case No.361/2023	26/02/2024	7750 Kg.	Kalain PS
29.	Kalain PS Case No.243/2023	26/02/2024	250 Kg.	Kalain PS

**Total quantity =253096.42 Kg**

Interested party may inspect the sample of auction-able materials from 29-06-2024 to 05-07-2024 in the respective Police Stations and may contact the undersigned at the office of the Superintendent of Police, Cachar for details of the locations of the various Police Stations where the auction materials are kept. The prescribed bid documents can be obtained from the office of the undersigned from 29/06/2024 to 05/07/2024 during office hours by paying a non-refundable amount of Rs. 500/- (Rupees five hundred)in cash.

The sealed quotations will be received up to 12:00 Noon on 05/07/2024 in the office of the Superintendent of Police, Cachar and will be opened at 01:00 PM on the same day i.e. 05/07/2024 in presence of the bidders or their authorized representatives who choose to be present in presence of auction committee.

**Terms & Conditions:-**

1. The base price fixed for seized areca-nuts is Rs. 100/Kg (Rupees One Hundred) only per Kg); Inclusive of GST @ 5%.
2. Bidders will have to quote their price against Total lot size of 253096.42 Kg.
3. The quotation must be accompanied with Earnest Money 2% (Two percent) of the base price in the form of Demand Draft/ Call deposit drawn in favour of Superintendent of Police, Cachar. The earnest money will not be in interest bearing. Moreover, Earnest Money deposited less than the base price of the whole lot will be straightaway rejected.
4. The successful bidder will be required to deposit the bid amount/ quoted amount in the Treasury Office, Cachar within 7(seven) working days from the date of issue of acceptance letter in order to receive the lifting order.
5. The bidders shall also submit Income Tax clearance certificate\* for last two financial years.
6. The Earnest Money of the successful bidder will be released only after the deposit of the bid amount/ quoted amount by the successful bidder.
7. The Earnest Money of the unsuccessful bidders will be refunded after receiving due application/ authorized letter for collection.
8. The bidders will have to submit documentary evidence in support of their identity and residential status. (Aadhar Card\*, Bank Passbook with current update\*, Trade License\*, GST Registration and its regular filing (3B & GSTR-1)\*, & PAN Card\*) alongwith their quotations.
9. Govt. Tax; if any will be borne by the successful bidder.
10. The quotations without any of the above documents marked (\*) will be directly rejected.
11. The motto of sale is as-is where is and whatever there is basis. The Rule of Caveat Emptor is applicable.
12. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason therefor.
13. The cost of transportation, loading and unloading will be borne by the bidder concerned.
14. The successful bidder has to deposit Court Affidavit citing therein that the seized areca nuts will not be used for human consumption and will be used as raw material for other industrial purpose before lifting the items.

Sd/-  
Superintendent of Police  
Cachar Silchar, Assam

Janasanyog /C/870/ 24/28-Jun-24

## SPOTLIGHT



Khushi Rathi uses her father's smartphone to study when it is available, at Kanwari village in Hisar district, Haryana. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

# A phone of her own

Across rural India, data show that girls are less likely to own smartphones than boys. **Ashna Butani** visits Haryana's Hisar district to understand the repercussions of the gap in ownership of digital devices on young women, their admission to college, and preparation for competitive examinations

In the winding alleys of Haryana's Nalwa village, Hisar district, just about 165 km west of New Delhi, India's Capital, a group of teenage girls takes time out from studying and household work to meet in the evening. They talk of leaving, to study in a bigger city and build a life of their own.

For Raveena Saroha, 16, the appeal of going out to study stems from her desire to "experience the world outside". Saroha, who hails from a family of farm labourers, has relatives who moved to Delhi, and who, in their weekly calls, tell her about the many reputed colleges that she can go to, given her calibre and performance in school.

Currently in Class 12, she says, "I do not know about the admission process or the entrance exam, as I do not have my own phone to use for research and studies." The first-generation learner has only one phone at home, which she gets little access to. When she imagines her future, she thinks of studying Punjabi, her favourite subject, and returning to Hisar to teach. But the path in front of her has not been laid out just yet.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (rural) 2023, 'Beyond Basics', which surveyed 35,000 youth in the 14-18 age group in one or two rural districts in each State, showed that 90% of surveyed households had smartphones. Of the surveyed youth, 94.7% of males and 89.8% of females could use them. Of the males who knew how to use smartphones, 43.7% owned such a device, while in females, only 19.8% owned one.

In Sirsa district, this number was 32.4% for males and 9.9% for females in the 14-16 age group. The percentage was higher in youth aged 17-18, where 69.6% of males and 36.8% of females owned phones. This device gap has an impact on how much information comes to girls for higher education, in terms of online application to universities and paid or free online study resources.

Hisar, one of the 22 districts in Haryana, has many villages where vast expanses of fields are accompanied with some schools, skill training centres, and colleges. In 2023, the National Commission for Women recorded 1,115 complaints of crime against women, of the total 28,811. As per the 2011 Census, the sex ratio of Haryana stood at 879. As per government numbers shared in 2022, the sex ratio in the State was 865 for 2017-2019.

Sunil Jaglan, a gender and education activist in the State, points out that boys' education is prioritised. While many girls would like to study, even those with the highest marks are left with little information about what to do next, and how to apply to colleges for entrance tests, he adds.

Jaglan, who started the 'Selfie with Daughter' and 'Lado go online' campaigns to encourage the presence of girls online, and normalise society's outlook towards this in rural Haryana, says, "Earlier, all information about admissions would appear in local papers and TV channels. Due to the changing nature of information intake, the only way for students to know more is through their phones, as most information comes to phones." He says most girls are ambitious and want to

I do not know about the admission process or the entrance exam as I do not have my own phone to use for research and studies

**RAVEENA SAROHA**  
Student

study further, so some look to private companies that guide students, while others manage to do the research on their own when their parents allow them to use smartphones at home.

Yogender Singh, a government school teacher in Yamunanagar district, says smartphones are still a luxury for many in rural Haryana. A good smartphone would set a family back by ₹8,000, and though less expensive than a laptop, it is still hard to afford as a personal device.

"Many families are struggling to make ends meet, so they cannot afford smartphones. In addition to this, they have to recharge data, which earlier used to cost around ₹100 a month but has gone up to ₹200 a month in the past year or so," says Singh, who teaches students from Classes 9 to 12. There is also the pressure to get married at a young age, he says.

### A different reality for those with means

Meanwhile, a handful of students who have the means and access to information, hope to change the situation in their hometowns. A few kilometres down the same road slathered in dust from a highway construction, another student has similar dreams of going to a city and studying. Hailing from a well-to-do family, the daughter of a government teacher, Surabhi (name changed on request), who studies in one of the few private Central Board of Secondary Education schools in Nalwa, says the admission process has been smooth for her.

"There are two tablets and a laptop at home, so that has helped me figure out the admission process," she says. Surabhi adds that the access helped her in filling out forms for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for undergraduate courses in Central universities and the Common Law Admission Test, the pan-India entrance exam for entry into law colleges. She gets enough time on the devices to prepare for the tests, with online material.

The ASER survey noted, "Girls use the devices equally and equally well as the boys in rural settings when they are given equal and unfettered

access to the devices. In contrast, when their access is constrained, their learning also is likely to be affected negatively." It also noted that the National Education Policy 2020 strongly recommends leveraging technology to improve educational processes and outcomes by promoting digital literacy and tech-based initiatives.

It further observed that the data show that more females in the age group are likely to aspire to higher education than their male counterparts. However, while similar proportions of male and female youth reported having used a smartphone for education-related tasks and for social media during the week, males were twice as likely as females to have ever used a smartphone to access online services such as paying a bill or booking a ticket (38% of males vs 19% of females had ever done so). Up to 50.6% of males had an email ID compared with 29.9% of females.

### Parents worry about 'misuse'

Like Raveena, many girls in villages have restricted access to devices. Piyush Sangwan, 16, a Class 12 student got a tablet during the COVID-19 pandemic from her government school.

Recalling how she shifted to online classes then, she says most of her studies now take place on the device. Her mother, who keeps a close eye on her while she uses it, says, "Many students misuse these devices, so we have to make sure that our

daughters are not taking the wrong path. We restrict access for their safety."

Priyanka Barwar, 18, who is currently seeking admission in a BA course in Hisar, says she is still confused about what she wants to do next – a distance learning course while preparing for the civil services exam or a professional or skill-based course that would secure her a job. For her too, research hours are limited. "Whenever I want to use the phone, my parents are concerned that I am talking to someone," she says. The same rule does not apply to her brothers, aged 16 and 12, who play the video game PUBG when they get access to the phone. She asks her 16-year-old brother to help her find courses.

The ASER survey showed males were also far more likely than females to use a smartphone for entertainment. So, 69% of males versus 46% of females reported playing games on a smartphone in the week preceding the survey.

Some parents are also worried about how society will perceive their daughters once they have a phone, points out Anjum Islam, 23, a lawyer who grew up in Haryana's Mewat and fought stereotypes to pursue her educational aspirations. "When I started my internship in college and

saved up some money, I could finally buy my own phone. I had to explain to my family that I was not doing anything wrong with having access to the information that is out there in the world. People in the village would still tell my family that I had been ruined because I had a presence online," she says, recalling the online trolling.

She now volunteers for the 'Selfie with Daughter' campaign, which aims at instilling a sense of pride among parents in their daughters in the State. She works on cases pertaining to gender-based violence.

### Economic stress doesn't curtail dreams

In Kanwari village, Khushi Rathi, 15, wakes up at 4 a.m. to study on the one smartphone shared among five siblings. Since her brothers use the phone during the day, Khushi, who her family calls "studious", tries to make the most of the morning hours.

While she hopes to become a doctor and is preparing for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) via YouTube videos and online applications, her younger brothers, in Class 8, are interested in engineering and technology.

"I decided I wanted to become a doctor when I saw that there are not enough doctors in government hospitals in Hisar," Khushi says. She uses the National Council of Educational Research and Training mobile application to study Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

Her father, Dinesh Rathi, who works as a truck driver, often drives to other States, so phone access is interrupted for the children. "I want my daughter to study hard and make a name for herself, but I cannot afford a new phone at the moment," he says.

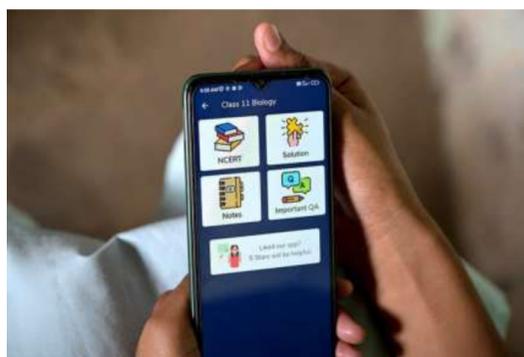
The NEET forms cost ₹1,700 for the general category; ₹1,600 for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Economically Weaker Section (EWS); and ₹1,000 for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwBDs).

In the CUET forms, students are asked to provide their details as well as preferences for test centres. Students also have to attach copies of their identity proof and caste certificates if any. The fee structure is ₹400 per subject for the general category, ₹375 for OBCs and EWS category students, and ₹350 per subject for SCs, STs, PwBDs, and gender-minority students.

Speaking about how smartphones play an important role in the admission and examination preparation phases, Jaglan says, "Since the pandemic, education has moved online slowly. Information on admissions and forms are available online." He adds that most rural areas have Common Service Centres – government centres aimed at assisting people in areas of agriculture, health, education, banking, and financial services – free of cost. Though students get assistance while applying for scholarships, information on admissions is not as accessible in these centres.

When Khushi isn't studying online, she is found buried in her books, joke her brothers. With a Science book and a Hindi translation of Rabindranath Tagore's short stories in her hands, Khushi, who finds happiness in borrowing storybooks from the community library, says preparatory material is expensive and hard to find. The only time she stepped out of the district was during a school trip to Ambala in Class 5, a formative memory for her. She hopes to study outside the district and later return to practise medicine.

Unsure of whether her father will be able to afford the fees, Khushi remains focused on the end goal: "Not many girls have become doctors in my district. I hope to change that."



Girls cannot access online study material easily because they don't own smartphones or are not given free use of them. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

**Anuj Kumar**  
anuj.kumar@thehindu.co.in

“The world might remain fixated on formula, but I will continue to experiment,” says Nawazuddin Siddiqui. The actor is in Delhi, to talk about Anand Surapur’s *Rautu Ka Raaz*, his latest character study of a “slow-footed” police officer from a quiet hamlet in Uttarakhand, which is untouched by crime until a murder disturbs the tranquillity of the place.

The versatile actor says he doesn’t have secrets like most Bollywood stars. “My life has been an open book. Even when I tried to keep something out of the public discourse, I was not given that privilege.” Yet, he says, this has not affected the variety of roles offered to him.

“I have never been image-conscious. Heroes manage to keep the personal out of the picture but still do the same stuff on screen. I have been lucky that the industry allowed me to play personalities as diverse as (Saadat Hasan) Manto and (Balasaheb) Thackeray. They were poles apart not only from each other, but also from who I am and where I come from. I am yet to do a film set in western Uttar Pradesh where I get to speak the local language.”

When he was shooting for the imposing police officer in *Kahaani*, he was also playing the seedy, Taimur Langda in *Talaash*. “I have resisted moulds,” he underlines.

**In love with the outdoors**  
Someone who prefers shooting outdoors in real locations rather than on sets in the Filmcity, Nawaz says, “Atmosphere speaks to an actor and gives a kick that brings a natural appeal



## Cast in a fearless mould

**Back in uniform with *Rautu Ka Raaz*, Nawazuddin Siddiqui reflects on the industry’s trust in his talent, Bollywood’s increasing control over the streaming space, and playing Costao Fernandez in his next**

to the character. On the sets, it becomes a little mechanical; I realised it early on while shooting a short film with Irrfan bhai in Jaisalmer.”

Negi, the police officer in *Rautu Ka Raaz*, is not as sharp and prompt as the one in *Kahaani*, he says. Nawaz attributes this to his circumstances and the location. “He is suffering from a personal trauma because of which he doesn’t sleep properly and behaves awkwardly during the investigation. There is a name

for the condition,” he says, referring to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Then, he says, the film is set in a slow-paced atmosphere, and the storytelling follows the languid life in the hills “where silence matters” and, “you can hear your voice”. “We spent days before the shooting in the region. It impacted my body language as the Durga Puja atmosphere in Kolkata had in *Kahaani*.”

Not pleased with the way a section of streaming platforms

**Limitless versatility** (Left) Nawazuddin Siddiqui in *Rautu Ka Raaz*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

are progressing, Nawaz, who counts *Photograph* (2019) and *Serious Men* (2020) as his most significant works in the last decade, says it seems lavish big-budget projects and stars are keen on occupying the space, originally meant for quality world cinema.

**In reality**

He sees *Photograph*, Ritesh Batra’s quaint romantic drama between a street photographer and a bright student, as a milestone because “Usually we talk about extraordinary characters, but here is a man whom you won’t give a second look at and, more importantly, by the end, you don’t really know whether the two were in love or not. In life, you come across a female acquaintance with whom you spend time and feel good, but when she moves on, you are left wondering whether there was *unsiyat* (affection) or not,” muses Nawaz.

He does not buy the idea that political climate has changed the nature of the content on streaming platforms. “It is a result of internal tussle and one-upmanship. Those indulging in making propaganda films are doing it on their own; the ministry is not forcing them to. Similarly, no one stopped us from making or releasing *Afwaah* (on rumour mongering and fake news on social media). The distribution system was at fault for its box-office performance. It was released only in 50 theatres. I am waiting for the time when a film led by actors like Nawazuddin, Manoj Bajpayee, or Pankaj Tripathi gets 5,000 screens. People want to watch

our films; at least give us a chance,” he says.

He says, budgets fail not the idea, and the chances of budgets going wrong are higher with stars than actors like him. “The OTT release takes away the stamp of hit and flop that comes at the box-office, and we know who is more worried about the image.”

**Exploring perspectives**

Nawaz pins the hope on young filmmakers who are “in awe of Bollywood” and regional cinema, particularly Malayalam. “The way stars of Malayalam cinema are experimenting with content should inspire us. Who would have thought Mammootty would explore a subject like *Kaathal*?”

He admits that experimentation and too much faith in youth has its flip side as he discovered in his last two-three films where it seemed the makers relied only on his performance to sail through.

“When you take risks, it happens. At times, storytelling loses its way, and sometimes the editing lets you down, but one should keep trying.”

Nawaz has just finished another biopic that he hopes will bring him back on the world stage. Produced by Sejal Shah of *Serious Men* fame, Nawaz is playing Costao Fernandez, the retired upright Customs Officer from Goa who got embroiled in a controversy in the early 1990s after a politician’s son was killed during a chase in a gold smuggling case. “I got hooked on how he questions the corrupt and doesn’t give up on honesty.”

*Rautu Ka Raaz* premieres on ZEE5 on June 28



## Tools to empower

**A Sunday children’s library at Studio Safdar provides a nurturing space for kids from disadvantaged sections of society to explore their creativity**

**Anurag N**

Every Sunday morning, Studio Safdar in Shadi Khampur in West Delhi, is filled with the boundless energy of neighborhood children, all bustling with laughter and learning. Inside a room with black painted walls, a yellow bulb shines on children sitting on the floor and reading books intently or engaged in activities such as drawing and acting.

Shirda Khan is fascinated by a picture of a hornbill; Khushnuma Saifi helps Asad Ahamad with the popular Hindi rhyme *Lambi Dhadi Vale Baba* (The man with the long beard); A tussle breaks out over a

set of crayons. In the midst of the din, Rehnuma continues reading her book, *Tale of Khichdi*. In another corner, a group of children are busy shooting a trailer for an upcoming theatre festival, Shadipur Natak Utsav.

Named after the late Safdar Hashmi, playwright-director who popularised Indian street theatre, the Safdar Studio is an independent, non-funded space for arts and activism, established in 2012 by Jana Natya Manch, the political street theatre group founded by Hashmi, who was killed by a mob during a street play.

“Safdar always wanted a space in areas where the working class lives, so that they could easily

**Reaching out** Children from economically disadvantaged sections of society come to the Safdar Trust Centre to enjoy a few hours of creativity. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



have access to a creative outlet. We gave shape to his idea and set up this comprehensive cultural space under the Studio Safdar Trust,” says Moloyashree Hashmi, his wife and secretary of the Trust.

At least 30 children, between four and 14 years of age, show up between 10 am and noon, every Sunday. Volunteers are hired for the programme for three months to assist the children with reading.

“In 2013, we first started a children’s library but that worked only during the summer holidays. In 2024, we thought of using the space for different activities and look beyond just the library,” says Moloyashree.

For the children who come, the two-hour session is split into two parts. The first hour is dedicated to engaging with books – some children read, others pore over the pictures, and a few read to themselves. Volunteers read out stories to help everyone comprehend.

The second hour includes activities such as drawing, games, and on-the-spot creative interactions.

“The activities help them identify their potential and understand each other better,” says Nikhil Sharma, library in-charge. “We encourage the children to think, tweak the storylines of the books they read or even invent new games,” he adds.

Many children apparently come to the centre without informing their parents. Nikhil recalls a touching moment when a child brought her six-month-old brother, balancing a book in one hand and holding the baby in the other.

“There are a few children who visit once and do not return. We have now put in place an attendance tracking system and realise the main reason for children dropping out is migration or poverty,” says Moloyashree and adds, “the pandemic was a setback. Reopening after the pandemic was a challenge as families had relocated. We had to bring the children back after lot of deliberations with the parents.”

The children are now getting ready for the upcoming annual event, the Shadipur Natak Utsav, scheduled to be held in September this year. The children create their own plays and stage them. In addition, artistes from across the country come to entertain them.

“Some children do not attend school; I feel overwhelmed when I realise I am their first teacher imparting skills or knowledge to them,” says Ikra, who herself attended the Sunday library and is a volunteer now. She embodies the programme’s vision of community engagement in gaining knowledge.

## Bihar on your plate

**The popularity of Bihari cuisine in the city has grown beyond the litti-chokha**

**Rahul Verma**

There was a time when, the moment someone mentioned Bihari cuisine, we would associate it with *litti-chokha*. However, over the last few years, we have broadened our horizons. Now, Delhi offers a wide variety of Bihari food including Champaran meat, mustard fish, aloo chokha, and, of course, litti-chokha.

Bihar’s cuisine made its presence felt when the city began embracing the food of the people who had over the years become a significant part of its lifeline. Suddenly, small carts and makeshift shacks could be seen in different parts of the city, selling sattu ka sherbet and litti-chokha.

The cuisine from the region offers a lot more than that and with rich variations. The Maithil Brahmin cuisine, for instance, features various kinds of fish dishes, including Rohu cooked in mustard gravy. You will find sub-regional offerings at the two Bihar State houses in the city – Bihar Niwas and Bihar Bhawan. The restaurant in Bihar Niwas is run by Potbelly, a popular restaurant. On the menu are all kinds of dishes – from fish chokha and machchi biryani to gol mirch chicken, dal pitti and besan sabji.

The restaurant or canteen at the other State house is more modest: it has a limited menu, but is air-conditioned, small and neat, with comfortable chairs. I decided to focus on the snacks and asked for aloo chops (₹45 for six), kala channa ghugni (₹75), a plate of bhuna mutton with teen kona paratha (₹255), and, of course, some litti-chokha (₹95).

The food was rather hot, but I enjoyed it, especially the flattened aloo chop and the kala channa, which had been cooked with onion, tomato, coriander, ginger and garlic. The litti – baked wheat balls filled with sattu – was served with a runny potato



**Getting popular** Bihar’s signature drink sattu; (below) all-time-favourite litti chokha. GETTY IMAGES

chokha, which had a strong flavour of mustard oil that I quite relished.

However, the mutton didn’t work for me, the pieces were a bit too hard.

The menu card describes the meat as Champaran mutton, which has become a buzzword in Delhi these days. Many places across the city offer this dish. Just the other day, I saw a small eatery called Champaran Meat Shop in the main market at Mayur Vihar Phase 2 and a Champaran Meat House in Laxmi Nagar. An outlet called Masala Queen in Indrapuram prepares the meat with black pepper and desiccated coconut. I had some delicious Champaran meat (also called Ahuna meat) from a

delivery outlet called The Chhaunk a while ago as well. Now, even Gulati – the much-loved restaurant popular for offering so-called Punjabi and Mughlai dishes in the Pandara Road Market – has Champaran meat on the menu.

I still remember the delightful taste of Bihar’s mutton curry that I had at a food contest-cum-festival in the capital several years ago. The meat gravy was light, yet full of flavour. A big fat garlic bulb had been left to simmer in the gravy, and by the time the meat was ready, it had absorbed all the spices and tasted heavenly when mashed with the rice and meat. Bihar Bhawan’s meat, alas, did not wield the same kind of magic.

But the canteen is worth a visit. The food is value for money.

*Bihar Bhawan is at 27, Kautilya Marg; 12.30pm to 10.30pm; Call 011-23017368*

## STEP OUT

**Of personal mournings**

Familiar Paths, Different Destinations features works by Berkeley-based Al-An deSouza. The exhibition showcases his recent digital paintings based on photographic originals, such as Flotsam and A Condensation of Blood in conversation with an earlier series, The Lost Pictures. His photographs question conventional beliefs about photography’s ability to capture and retain singular moments in time, and a photograph’s outwardly inert character. At Talwar Gallery, C-84 Block C Neeti Bagh; Till June 30; 11am to 7pm



**Transformative journey**

Sunayana Malhotra’s vibrant lotus-themed paintings Ananda, is about transcendent happiness, spiritual depth, and the human psyche. The intricate layers of her artworks highlight a unique blend of Nature, spirituality and artistic expression and represent ultimate well-being and inner peace. At Visual Art Gallery India, Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road; Till June 30; 11am to 7pm



humanity and the celestial elements of the universe. At the Visual Art Gallery, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Colony; July 2 to July 8; 11am to 7pm.

**The connections**

Shahzada Khurram has curated Divyaman Singh’s exhibition The Divine Elements Volume Two that delves into connections between human existence and the cosmos. The solo show by the artist takes viewers on an evocative journey to explore the symbiotic relationship between



## Unwarranted arrest

Timing of Kejriwal's arrest hints at bad faith, eagerness to deny him freedom

The arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the CBI in the Delhi excise policy corruption case is unwarranted and appears tainted by bad faith. It was effected just before the Supreme Court of India was due to hear an appeal against a Delhi High Court order that had stayed the bail granted to him by a lower court in a money-laundering case related to the same allegation. The High Court had stalled his release on a plea by the Enforcement Directorate, but reserved its detailed order. The Supreme Court had deferred its hearing to June 26 to await the outcome. However, the High Court, by a detailed order, formalised the stay on the grant of bail. On June 26 morning, the CBI effected his formal arrest and sought his custody for interrogation in a CBI court. It is quite strange that it decided on this particular day and circumstance to formally arrest someone who has been in custody since March 21, save for a brief interlude during which he was granted interim bail. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the sole purpose was to deny him the possibility of freedom, if the Court had restored the bail order.

The allegation that Mr. Kejriwal was a beneficiary as well as a prime mover behind the controversial excise policy that allegedly procured windfall profits for favoured liquor manufacturers is quite serious. However, the investigation has been going on for nearly two years, and suspects have been arrested from time to time. The evidence largely consists of statements made by accused persons who were subsequently granted pardon and made approvers. In these circumstances, the vacation judge who granted bail in the money-laundering case came to a reasonable conclusion that someone cannot be indefinitely incarcerated in the hope that a money trail and direct evidence would soon emerge to justify the action. Unfortunately, the High Court concluded that this verdict was arrived at without considering the entire material available and without affording sufficient opportunity to the prosecution. The picture of an accused having to go from the lowest to the highest court for bail and facing favourable and adverse orders alternately reflects poorly on a system that has been weaponised by the current regime to target political opponents. A truly impartial agency should not rush to arrest anyone, leave alone those holding high political office, but instead approach the trial court with a strong and well-documented case, and leave it to the courts to decide on the guilt or innocence of the accused. Mr. Kejriwal, on his part, should have resigned immediately on arrest to avoid the perception he could influence witnesses or tamper with the evidence.

## Net damage

India's fisherfolk must be weaned away from bottom trawling

The resumption of fishing off India's eastern coast including the Palk Bay, after the annual 61-day ban on fishing, has led to the death of a sailor from the Sri Lanka Navy. The Sri Lankan Navy had carried out an operation on June 25 morning to "chase away a cluster of Indian poaching trawlers" in Sri Lankan waters off Kankesanthurai, near Jaffna. A trawler-vessel was impounded and 10 fishermen apprehended, of whom eight were from Tamil Nadu and the rest from Andhra Pradesh. There have also been several cases of Indian (Tamil Nadu) fishermen dying too. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin, sought the intervention of the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, in releasing the vessel and the men. In his reply sent to the Chief Minister on Thursday, Mr. Jaishankar said the Indian High Commission had been seeking the early release of 34 fishermen in judicial remand and six others who were serving sentences.

This is an opportunity for the two countries to revive the negotiation process, exclusively to deal with the fisheries dispute, which became aggravated in the wake of the 1974 and 1976 bilateral agreements to demarcate their maritime boundary lines. Mr. Stalin has done well to remind Mr. Jaishankar to convene a meeting of the Joint Working Group, last held (virtually) over two years ago. The acts of Indian fishermen crossing the international maritime boundary line are clearly illegal; factors relating to protection of livelihood opportunities cannot be delinked from the importance of the preservation of the marine ecosystem. A gradual replacement of bottom trawlers being used by the Tamil Nadu fishermen is a must, but the fisherfolk require time to prepare for diversification – deep sea fishing, marine cage farming, seaweed cultivation and processing, and sea ranching. The experiences of the deep sea fishing project, being executed by the Union and Tamil Nadu governments, are clear enough to conclude that it is a failure. After nearly seven years of implementation, only 61 deep sea fishing vessels have been handed over to beneficiaries, with 19 more under construction. It would be thoughtful if the Union government clubs the project with an all-India programme, where the unit cost of a deep sea fishing vessel is ₹40 lakh higher, at least to get a better response even at this stage. The unit cost of a deep sea fishing vessel under the Central-State project is ₹80 lakh. New Delhi and Colombo can devise additional schemes to help the Northern Province's fishermen even more. But what is more important is that the two countries, representatives of the fishing community and officials from Tamil Nadu and the Northern Province should meet soon to find a way out of the dispute.

# Reasi and the 'years-old' issue of cross-border terror

The Reasi terrorist attack of June 9, the day the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, took his oath of office for a third term, is reminiscent of the attack on the Consulate General of India (CGI), Herat, Afghanistan on May 23, 2014, three days prior to his first swearing-in. Nine pilgrims lost their lives in the attack in Reasi (in Jammu and Kashmir) and 41 were injured. Fortunately, the four Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists who attacked CGI Herat were detected in time. One of the terrorists who reached the door of the building was neutralised by an alert Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawan. The terrorists had come with the intention of taking hostages and a long-haul operation to coincide with Mr. Modi's oath-taking ceremony. Clearly, both attacks had the same objective: to embarrass and enrage Mr. Modi and India on a day of great political significance.

### Continuing challenge

The possibility of the Reasi attack's links with terrorist groups in Pakistan remains high. The Jammu division has witnessed many terrorist incidents over the past few months, including after the Reasi attack. They profile the persistence of the terrorist challenge India has faced for almost 35 years especially in J&K. How far has the country succeeded in dealing with this grave problem?

Pakistan and separatists in J&K were encouraged by the success of the Afghan Jihad. Pakistan thought that if a superpower could be defeated by Afghan Islamist groups, other such groups could be used to pressure India in Kashmir through mass uprisings, violence against minorities, and terrorist actions against prominent personalities and the security forces, leading this country to abandon Kashmir. The Indian state and its security forces took time to craft defensive counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism approaches in the first half of the 1990s.

The Pakistan Army and its political class are committed to the "Kashmir cause". In the late 1980s and early 1990s, both Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto who became Pakistan's Prime Ministers in turn were supportive of the promotion of separatism in J&K by the army and intelligence agencies, through the use of terror. Ms. Bhutto decided not to hold talks with India in 1994 unless India was willing to purposefully engage Pakistan on J&K in a manner Pakistan prescribed. Consequently, there was no dialogue between the two countries while she was in office. Mr. Sharif became Prime Minister in 1997, for the second time. He decided to change Ms. Bhutto's policy and engage India.

Pakistan desired a structured dialogue with India which would focus on all issues – humanitarian, conflict resolution and the development of cooperative mechanisms. Within this rubric, its focus was on 'disputes', J&K being the priority. However, India wished to discuss Pakistani terrorism as a separate issue in the



Vivek Katju

a retired Indian Foreign Service officer

dialogue process. By the mid-1990s, India had gained the confidence to manage Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in J&K. While it was exacting a toll in lives and had disrupted normalcy, the apprehension that Pakistan would take the State out of India's grip had gone. The decision to hold Assembly elections in J&K in 1996 was a signal that while the application of force to counter terrorism was necessary and would continue, there was space to begin political activity.

### India's choosing diplomacy, dialogue

Thus, a combination of force and the restoration of political activity was used to address the problem in Kashmir: a problem within India's internal jurisdiction. Distinct from the problem in Kashmir was the issue of Kashmir. This related to the recovery of the State's territory in Pakistani control. Under the Simla Agreement of 1972, India was committed to resolving this issue peacefully, through negotiations. However, in 1972, the idea that Pakistan would promote terrorism through Islamist non-state actors under its control had not been contemplated. Hence, the constraints imposed by the Simla Agreement became void once Pakistan resorted to terrorism and India could legitimately treat Pakistani terrorism as a 'strategic' issue, i.e., one which required the application of force in the external sphere. However, India chose the path of diplomacy and dialogue.

India and Pakistan agreed on the mechanics of a bilateral composite dialogue in September 1998. The composite dialogue listed 'terrorism and counter-narcotics' as one of the eight issues of engagement. It became clear to India from the very first bilateral exchange on this issue in October 1998, that Pakistan was unwilling to address India's concerns. This has continued to remain Pakistan's attitude because the calibrated use of terrorist groups against India became a part of its security doctrine from the 1990s. Pakistan has adopted this approach for, if nothing else, it has meant pinning down an estimated two lakh security personnel in J&K to handle terrorism. That is a conservative number.

From 1998 to 2016, all three Prime Ministers – Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi – pursued the path of diplomacy, as part of the Composite Dialogue, to address Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Indeed, Dr. Manmohan Singh tried to insulate the larger bilateral relationship by establishing with Pakistan a joint anti-terrorism mechanism, but it went nowhere.

The problem with the diplomatic approach was that public opinion in India was for military action after an 'unacceptable' terrorist attack or provocative and 'unacceptable' Pakistani action. However, governments chose only to withdraw from the dialogue process. A prominent illustration of this proposition was witnessed after the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack when Dr. Manmohan Singh opted out of the dialogue

process; he chose to garner global diplomatic support against Pakistan. There was public pressure to take kinetic action but he opted not to. Earlier, India had seriously considered using its military forces against Pakistan in December 2001, as a reaction to the terror attack on Parliament. It was the bravery and the sacrifice of Parliament's security personnel which had prevented the killing of a number of Indian political leaders. The A.B. Vajpayee government mobilised the Indian armed forces but eventually decided not to go to war because President Pervez Musharraf gave an assurance that Pakistan would not use territory under its control to promote terrorism against India. It did not keep its word.

### The use of pre-emption

Where India actually departed from the use of diplomacy and used military force against Pakistani terrorism was after the Pulwama attack of 2019. It undertook the Balakot aerial strike (2019) and also announced a doctrine of pre-emption. Earlier too it had used force in a limited way by way of undertaking surgical strikes in the wake of the Uri terrorist attack of September 2016. Despite these undertakings, the ambiguity on the use of force remains. Obviously, kinetic action is to be undertaken against an 'unacceptable' attack. Besides, the doctrine of pre-emption is based on the right to take out terrorist targets if preparations are being made in Pakistan to launch an 'unacceptable' terrorist attack. The question is what is 'unacceptable'.

It may be also pointed out that India used the full strength of its defence forces to defeat Pakistan's regular military intrusion in Kargil in 1999, but that situation obviously did not come within the rubric of terrorism. Hence, sustained kinetic action did not pose a dilemma.

Pakistan's use of terrorism against its neighbours is generally recognised by the major powers. Its reliance on plausible deniability has not been sustainable for years. India too has given material linking Pakistani terrorist groups to terrorist incidents but Pakistan has not taken action against them. This was clear after the Mumbai terrorist attack. After the Pathankot airstrike in January 2016, India allowed a Pakistani team which included an Inter-Services Intelligence officer to visit the airstrike. However, Pakistan again did not take the investigation forward. Despite these cases, it is important to pursue the practice of sharing information and evidence in terrorist cases to ensure the credibility of Indian assertions with the international community.

After the Reasi attack, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar expressed the ambitious intention of finding a "solution to years-old cross-border terrorism". He could begin the process of putting a curb on Pakistani terror by pointing out to the international community that the first step on an escalatory ladder between nuclear countries is the use of terror.

In India's responses to Pakistan-backed terror, New Delhi needs to sharpen its definition of what is an 'unacceptable' terror attack

# Get the Vande Metro routing right

The Vande Bharat trains have captured India's imagination. But out of the 51 origin-destination (O-D) pairings with 82 VB rakes of Vande Bharat trains introduced by Indian Railways (IR), at least 10 O-D pairs have very low patronage. Since the Railways recovers only 47 paise for every rupee it spends on passenger services, it stands to reason that before it introduced the Vande Bharat trains, the Indian Railways should have conducted a scientific identification of O-D pairs to guarantee that these trains are well patronised on all routes. However, that did not happen. Rough estimates indicate that the Indian Railways has been losing about ₹100 crore due to poor patronage of some of the Vande Bharat O-D pairs.

The first Vande Metro prototype rake with 12 coaches and with passenger facilities comparable to those on Vande Bharat trains was produced by the Rail Coach Factory Kapurthala, Punjab. These trains are intended to run up to 250 kilometres between major cities and neighbouring towns. While selecting O-D pairs for the Vande Metro trains, the Railways should not repeat the same error that it did while selecting the O-D pairs for the Vande Bharat trains.

### Categories of train services

The Railways provides at least three types of services for distances of up to 250 km. The first is the Express/Mail, which has stops in major towns en route. The second category is ordinary trains in the Railway's parlance, also known as slow-moving, multi-stop passenger trains. The third is the electric multiple unit/mainline electric multiple unit (EMU/MEMU), also referred to as "local trains", which make numerous stops to link major cities with their suburbs and even farther out. The passengers on the local trains experience a crush loading during peak hours.

Although national highways have been developed to connect the major cities with smaller towns, for all practical limitations, the



Thiruvannapuram S. Ramakrishnan

a railway expert

Lessons must be learnt from the losses being incurred on some origin-destination pairings under the Vande Bharat services

buses that ply for distances up to 250 km are not luxury buses (such as Volvo and Scania). Hence, the quality of the ride is not up to the desired level. Car travel may provide about 90 kmph as average speed, but it is not affordable for middle-class passengers.

### A potential travel gamechanger

Like Vande Bharat trains, Vande Metro trains include a continuous, fully air-conditioned gangway that allows passengers to board and depart from any entrance, travel between coaches, and use the bio-toilets. When the doors are closed, fatalities that quite often happen during boarding and disembarking in EMU and MEMU trains will not happen on Vande Metro trains. The Vande Metro will, therefore, fundamentally alter how people travel across distances of up to 250 km. With a maximum design speed of 130 kmph, these trains can run between 75kmph and 90 kmph on average, depending on the track and stops. Numerous advantages will follow from this, such as quicker travel times, more pleasant travel, secure boarding and disembarkation, and modern lavatory facilities.

Because of the energy required for air-conditioning facilities, Vande Metro trains have far greater energy costs than non-air-conditioned second-class carriages. A prototype Vande Metro train costs ₹8 crore a coach to manufacture, which is significantly more than the cost of second-class suburban coaches. This could drop to ₹6 crore a coach in bulk production. Given this, the Railways will not be able to run Vande Metro trains at a rate comparable to that of the second class of currently running trains.

Second-class travellers currently pay 45 paise, 22 paise, and 18 paise a kilometre on mail/express, ordinary, and EMU/MEMU trains, respectively. Travelling at extremely low cost is part of the behavioural lock-in that rail travellers

have adopted. Whether these second-class passengers would be willing to switch to air-conditioned Vande Metro trains at a higher ticket price is the million-dollar question. The recent installation of air-conditioning coaches on a few rakes of the suburban rail system in Mumbai has not yielded the expected outcomes.

### Air-conditioned services, pricing

Since most people in Mumbai use monthly passes for transit, a comparison examination of those pricing would be more appropriate. A monthly season ticket can be purchased for ₹105 to ₹500 if you do not have air-conditioning, and ₹650 to ₹3,150 in an air-conditioned service. Two years ago, the Railways carried out the request made by a number of passengers (they travel at an extraordinarily high density of 14 people per square metre) for a few air-conditioned coaches in each train. Only 4% of local train customers changed from non-air-conditioned to air-conditioned coaches, in 2023. But many people without proper tickets have also begun to use the air-conditioned coaches, which has led to air-conditioned coaches becoming very crowded.

As a result, neither the Indian Railways nor the passengers who travel on air-conditioned services who have had to wait on platforms for their turn or travel in crowded air-conditioned coaches benefited financially from it. There is no systemic check-in for local trains, in contrast to RapidX (Vande Namo), where there is one for executive class and ordinary class.

The Indian Railways should not repeat the same mistake it did on the Vande Bharat trains on the Vande Metro. The Railways would greatly benefit from a methodical analysis of demand projections for various possible O-D pairs before selecting the routes for VM trains (based on the willingness and ability of passengers to pay). This would result in excellent patronage, improved use of the limited train services, and, ultimately, result in higher revenue for the Indian Railways.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### On the Emergency

It is strange that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government is now harping on the excesses of the Emergency instead of addressing the pressing concerns being experienced by the people of India (Page

1, June 27). It is noteworthy that there was no mention of the ongoing ethnic strife in Manipur that has drawn world-wide attention. The BJP does not seem to have changed its spots. If this is its tone and tenor, government and Opposition cooperation and any

meaningful dialogue between the two of them is unlikely to happen.

V. Padmanabhan  
Bengaluru

The Emergency days were traumatic not only for the general public but also for many a political leader,

government employees and several other sections of the society including the media. However, it does not

behave well for political leaders to remind the public about those days. People are aware of the sufferings

and those responsible for those terrible days have been punished politically. Let us talk about nation development rather than the past misdeeds of certain political parties and their leaders.

V.S. Kannan,  
Chennai

### Corrections & Clarifications

In Datapoint (Opinion page, June 25, 2024), "Was the Ram Mandir a voting issue in the 2024 LS polls?", the line in the fifth paragraph should have read: "...Which is the one work done by the Union government in the last five years that you have liked the most?"

# Did a constitutional conscience drive much of the Dalit and OBC vote?



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**Ravikant Kisana**  
is an Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at Woxsen University, Hyderabad. His research looks at the intersections of caste with structures of privilege and popular culture

## PARLEY

**T**he Constitution is seemingly at the centre of political rhetoric and symbolism in India right now. Opposition leaders have held up copies of the Constitution while walking into Parliament. They have waved these in the Prime Minister's face. They have also held these copies while taking oath. Some argue that this is the Opposition's tip to the mandate that it believes it has received from the country's marginalised and oppressed communities to "Save the Constitution". So, did a constitutional conscience drive much of the Dalit and OBC (Other Backward Classes) vote this Lok Sabha elections? And to what extent? Harish Wankhede and Ravikant Kisana discuss these questions in a conversation moderated by **Abhinav Lakshman**. Edited excerpts:

**How do both of you read these developments? Do you think this is a hat tip to the mandate that the Opposition believes it has received to 'Save the Constitution'?**

**Harish Wankhede:** For a very long time, the Opposition was wondering how it could [pose a] challenge to the Hindutva onslaught. I think this time the Opposition figured it out. Constitutionalism became a very fascinating force for the Congress and its allies. Further, there was, of course, a decline [in the performance] of parties [that are synonymous with] social justice, such as the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) in Uttar Pradesh and the RJD (Rashtriya Janata Dal) in Bihar. So, there was a space in which the Congress could create a larger dialogue suggesting that they (the Bharatiya Janata Party) are a threat to the ideals of Indian democracy. The Constitution became a sort of mascot of that larger narrative. There was a very assertive, powerful arrival of the BJP as a dominant hegemonic force (over the last 10 years). Constitutionalism has emerged as a significant and powerful ideological tool to challenge that.

**Prof. Ravikant, how do you see the waving of the Constitution in the faces of people?**

**Ravikant Kisana:** I see it in a slightly zoomed out, macro way. In India, especially during elections, we have to keep in mind that there are always immediate issues, but voting patterns are dictated by many different grassroots-level issues. In this election, a series of things came together. There are two main stories: one, the Opposition got its story right; and two, the BJP election machinery did not really get its act together (as much as it would have liked). The



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other INDIA bloc leaders carry copies of the Constitution during a protest at Parliament House complex in New Delhi. PTI

kind of model that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime set up fundamentally contradicted the political goods that a lot of his core constituents were voting for. And in States where the BJP was able to do that, that is, deliver the public goods, the constitutional narrative did not work, such as in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. There is a national narrative that the Constitution is under threat. Then, this would be the case in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh too, is it not? Gujarat has seen mass movements where Scheduled Castes (SCs) have been mobilising and OBCs are also mobilising. So, that is another framework we need to see this from. There is a larger narrative, yes, of constitutionalism. And so, when the MPs take oath, they wave it in the Prime Minister's face. But that is, you know, pageantry. That is what MPs have reduced it to in the last two decades. I understand why they are doing that. But I think the issues are slightly complicated.

**Let us discuss the places where this constitutional narrative seemed to have worked. The question is, do you think it was a narrow vision that worked, such as the fear of having affirmative action removed? Or did the narrative also bring together larger principles such as maintaining a secular state and institutional independence and fundamental liberties over duties, for instance?**

**RK:** If you see U.P., the BSP was neither aligned with the INDIA bloc nor with the NDA (National Democratic Alliance). The last few elections have been very bad for the BSP because the BSP voter is an ideological voter and is constantly being cornered in U.P. to vote out fascism. So, obviously, the Constitution being under threat became a big issue (for the BSP). Despite many



Many different sections had their own interpretations of what that constitutionalism was. So, as a term, it was a mobilising factor which could be used in different parts in different ways.

RAVIKANT KISANA

BSP voters shifting to other parties, the party retained in U.P. around 9% of the vote share, which is not a small share (though) it is significantly lower than what (BSP leader) Mayawati usually gets. The BSP voter is probably the voter who is most concerned about constitutionalism. Even then, that party has retained a nearly 10% vote share. So, I think these things have to be looked at in a slightly different way.

We don't know what has worked. There are many theories going around. One, of course, is the Thakur backlash in U.P., especially the rumour that (Chief Minister) Yogi Adityanath was going to get replaced after the Lok Sabha elections. (Samajwadi Party chief) Akhilesh Yadav's Bahujan coinage, PDA (Pichhda Dalit Alpsankhyak), resonated with some people.

But if you are in U.P., it is not going to be easy for the SCs to trust a Yadav party. So, the Constitution may be in danger and that may have gone down right to the grassroots. But how have people mobilised around it? I think it is too simplistic to say that 'Oh, because of that slogan, everyone voted for the SP and Congress'. That's not true; about 9% have still voted for the BSP (which is not part of the Opposition bloc).

**Professor Harish, I have heard that you also argued that the large part of this mandate was constitutionalism. How much of it do you think was the development of this constitutional conscience and how much of it were local factors or a multitude of factors coming together?**

**HW:** In the five major States – U.P., M.P., Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Bihar – constitutionalism emerged as a kind of a guiding principle around which the different resentments of the people collided. In these States, BSP-like parties or what is known as Ambedkarite socio-cultural and political movements have been present. These created the base of a political consciousness among the OBCs. Thus, these States already had a strong consciousness about their caste and about the benefits that the political processes had offered the marginalised communities for a very long time. And constitutionalism probably emerged

as a kind of force that connected all these issues, which were there at the local level. And there was a possibility of channelising the resentment into a language, which constitutionalism supported.

Of course, there was the failure of the BJP to deliver on substantive issues of economic empowerment, including jobs or social security or mobility in class. And therefore, this national slogan emerged perhaps that the BJP is not keen on delivering justice or social security to the marginalised communities. To deliver those, constitutionalism emerged as a bigger package. You will also find that the issue of social dignity and self-respect was extremely powerful in this discussion.

**Prof. Ravikant, to what extent do you agree with the argument that constitutional conscience significantly drove a large part of the vote?**

**RK:** If you're going to talk about constitutionalism in a narrow sense – like, there is a Constitution and the BJP is seen as a party which is against it – I was making the point that it has many dimensions. But I think what Harish is trying to suggest, if I am not wrong, is that it becomes like the lightning rod around which many issues can galvanise.

In Haryana, Dalits and Jats voted together for the first time in many decades. In many States, that happened. That word or that idea means different things to different communities. For SCs, it is the idea that representation and caste-based affirmative action are in danger. And that, as we have already seen, is a powerful social motivation for their vote. But in landed communities, there was the question of farm laws.

One of the other reasons was a splitting of long-established political parties by the BJP. This was the case in Maharashtra. That was also seen as a form of unconstitutional activity: people believe that you're not supposed to win elections like that or 'steal' elections like that. The BJP for a long time has been playing with some of these political process, playing with some of these communities too. So, I think all of that came together in that sense. Many different sections had their own interpretations of what that constitutionalism was. So, as a term, it was a mobilising factor which could be used in different parts of the country in different ways.



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## NOTEBOOK

### Flashback and fast forward

One of the best parts of being a reporter is that you chance upon historic nuggets or linkages when you least expect them

Meera Srinivasan

**N**ews announcements often bear a ring of novelty. It is perhaps the immediacy of news that makes a current initiative appear new, pioneering, and even unprecedented. But one of the best parts of being a reporter is that you chance upon historic nuggets or linkages when you least expect them. Your colleagues have covered similar, if not the same, stories decades ago or sometimes, even a century ago.

The news thrust of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Colombo on June 20, 2024, was a bilateral commitment to expedite India-backed projects in Sri Lanka. Officials said the two sides followed-up on projects outlined in the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision document adopted by the two governments in 2023. Among other things, New Delhi and Colombo vowed to promote and strengthen "connectivity in all its dimensions as the key enabler". They agreed to enhance maritime, air, energy and economic connectivity, and the media in both countries have been reporting on these initiatives.

Three days later, I attended an event at Wellawatta, a vibrant Tamil neighbourhood in Colombo, where noted Indian historian A.R. Venkatachalapathy launched his latest book, *Swadeshi Steam: V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and the Battle against the British Maritime Empire*. He said he was keen to present the work in Colombo, because V.O. Chidambaram (VOC) Pillai's Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company operated a steamer service between Tuticorin and Colombo over a century ago. VOC was undoubtedly a pioneer in Indo-Lanka connectivity.

Venkatachalapathy, who spent years combing through archives in both countries and elsewhere to research the bold business venture, spoke of an enterprising Tamil patriot's desire to challenge the maritime monopoly of the British, by setting up Swadeshi Steam in 1906. VOC saw economic nationalism as a tool to resist oppressive colonial power. Fascinatingly, nationalism of that time, anchored in a

resolve to take on and defeat the colonial powers, transcended borders. VOC set up a Colombo branch office and made frequent business trips before shifting to Colombo with his family for a brief while. Venkatachalapathy pointed to VOC's interview to *Ceylon Observer*, and his columns for the Tamil daily *Virakesari*, published in Colombo. In fact, the first reports of the Swadeshi venture appeared in the Colombo press, predating its coverage in India. Rivalry within the company and inevitable losses would subsequently bring the business down. VOC returned to India, faced imprisonment for his defiance of the British, and died in 1936. The media in Ceylon paid rich tribute to him. Venkatachalapathy's rigorously researched, evidence-based account nudges us to see Indo-Lanka connectivity in a whole new way.

Soon after hearing about this steamer service, I sought the help of my ever-prompt colleagues at *The Hindu's* library for any reference to this venture in our archives. They pulled out at least seven reports from 1906 to 1949 that refer to VOC's Swadeshi Steam company. In 1949, *The Hindu's* special correspondent in Tuticorin had covered the inauguration of an Indian shipping service from Tuticorin to Colombo by the Governor-General of India, C. Rajagopalachari. The journalist noted: "Today's function gathers significance not so much from these circumstances as from the fact that it recalls to the mind of the visitor the pioneer effort of Mr. V. O. Chidambaram Pillai some forty years ago."

Six decades later, former Colombo correspondent R.K. Radhakrishnan tracked the story of the Indian government reviving the ferry service between Tuticorin and Colombo. It was re-launched in 2011 but terminated soon for commercial and operational reasons. In 2017, a Cabinet Minister in Colombo announced that Sri Lanka would seek expressions of interest to revive the service. But the proposal seems to have gathered little steam since.

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## PICTURE OF THE WEEK

### On a wing and a prayer



A woman who lost her house in flooding due to sea incursions clutches an image of Jesus Christ and a bag of valuable possessions as she makes her way to a rented accommodation in Kannamaly, west Kochi, Kerala. S.S. KUMAR

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### The *Hindu*

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 28, 1974

#### Accord with Sri Lanka on Kachativu

New Delhi, June 27: A comprehensive agreement has been reached between India and Sri Lanka on matters relating to the boundary between the two countries in the waters of Palk Bay and related issues including the question of Kachativu. An official spokesman who disclosed this

here to-day, however, declined to give the details of the agreement which will be announced to-morrow evening.

It is learnt from authoritative sources that Sri Lanka's claim over the island has been conceded. This has been done on the basis of a fresh delimitation of the territorial waters in Palk Bay in such a way that it will automatically settle the issue without going further into the historical claims of either side to the disputed islet.

The Government of India is reported to have taken care to safeguard the fishing rights and navigational rights of India off this island.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 28, 1924

#### Ruhr problem

Berlin, June 27: Following upon M. Herriot's declaration in the Chamber with regard to expelled Germans, permission has already been given to 80,000 persons to return to French occupied territory. The return of the majority of expelled persons will be rendered possible shortly and the majority of those imprisoned at the time of the Ruhr conflict will be freed.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

GRAPHICALLY SPEAKING

## Breaking down the top brass

A look at the MPs who managed to secure ministerial berths shows members from select States such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar historically dominating the numbers, with those from Tamil Nadu drawing a blank in recent terms. The share of women in the Ministry has stagnated as opposed to an increasing share of women in both the Houses. A majority of Ministers were chosen from the Lok Sabha with the number of ministerial berths increasing at a steady pace over the years. By Nitika Francis, Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Aafthab Ahmed A and Umar Muqthar Ragamathullah



ILLUSTRATION: SOUMYADIP SINHA

With inputs from Sambavi Parthasarathy and Jasmin Nihalani. Aafthab and Umar are interning with The Hindu Data Team

**STATES OF POWER** | Tamil Nadu is the only major State that does not have an MP in the Union Ministry in the present term. The State did not have one in the last term as well and just had one — P. Radhakrishnan of the BJP — in the term before that. In general, there has been a marked reduction in the number of Ministers from the southern States — except Karnataka — since the BJP came to power in 2014, due to their relatively poorer election record in the region. The chart shows State-wise split of the number of Ministers across various terms starting from 1991. Each square corresponds to a Minister. The names include new MPs inducted as Ministers in the middle of a term during reshuffles. Colours correspond to the number of portfolios each Minister held/holds: 1-2 (light blue), 3-5 (medium blue), 6-9 (dark blue), >10 (red).



With the BJP winning more than 75% of the seats in Uttar Pradesh in both the 2014 and the 2019 elections, the State contributed a large bulk to the ministerial berths. The BJP's relatively poor performance in 2024 is reflected in the lower number of Ministers

Bihar also contributed many Ministers since 1991, with the Mandal parties being prominent partners at the Centre

In the previous term, no Ministers were from Andhra Pradesh. However following the BJP alliance with TDP, the numbers increased

West Bengal fielded the highest number of Ministers in 2009 when the Trinamool became a core member of the UPA coalition

Jitendra Singh is the only representative from J&K for the past three terms

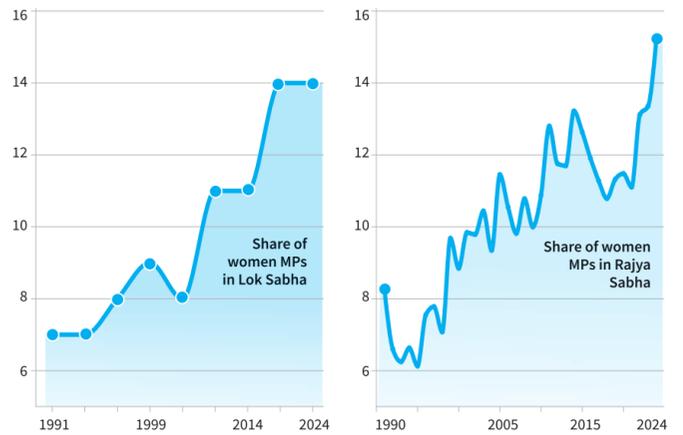
Punjab, similar to West Bengal had its best representation in the 2009 term

Smaller States, due to relatively fewer number of MPs had to make do with poorer representation in Ministries

Among major States, only Tamil Nadu does not have a Minister in the present term and in the previous one in 2019. It had only one representative in 2014. Prior to 2014, the Dravidian parties were part of national coalitions that were in power and that reflected in several ministerial berths

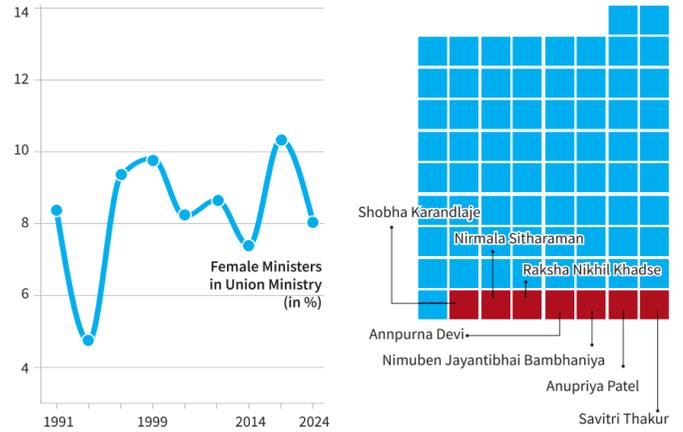
**WOMEN MANAGE TO INCREASE THEIR PRESENCE IN THE HOUSES...**

The chart on the left shows the share of women MPs (%) in the Lok Sabha and the chart on the right depicts the same for Rajya Sabha. The share has increased over time considerably in both the Houses, though it is still not anywhere near the 33% mark, which will soon become the norm, if the Women Reservation Bill is implemented. The share of women in the Lower House increased from 7% in the 1990s to 14% in the 2020s. A similar increase can also be seen in the Upper House

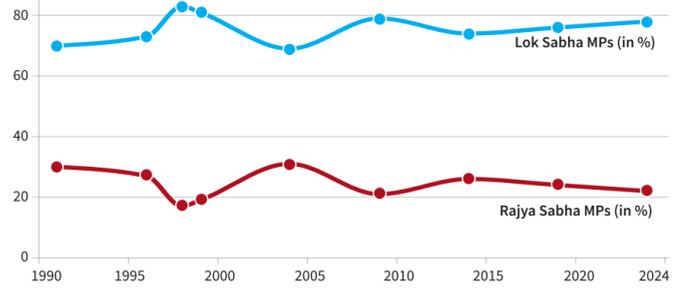


**... BUT THEIR SHARE IN THE MINISTERIAL BERTHS REMAIN STAGNANT**

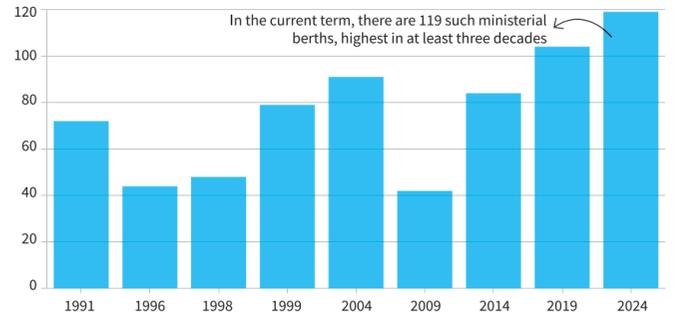
While the share of women in both the Houses has improved over time, their share in the Union Ministry has remained stagnant, in fact even dropped to 8% in the latest term compared to over 10% in the previous term when it peaked. The share of women in the ministerial positions have oscillated between 8% to 10% in the past three decades, except in the 1996 term when it reached a low of 4.5%. The chart on the left shows the share of women Union Ministers over time. The chart on the right visualises the 72 ministers in the current term, seven of whom are women



**LOWER VS UPPER** | The chart shows the share of Union Ministers from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Close to 70% or more of Union Ministerial positions have always been occupied by Members of the Lok Sabha. The share peaked in 1998 (83%). Prominent Ministers from the Rajya Sabha in the latest term include Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. Prominent members in the past include former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who was chosen for Rajya Sabha from Assam



**INCREASE IN MINISTERIAL BERTHS** | The number of ministerial berths which includes Cabinet ministers, Minister of State (Independent charge), Minister of State and the position of the Prime Minister, has increased over the years. It is important to note that one Minister can hold multiple ministerial positions. For instance, Minister Jitendra Singh holds six ministerial positions. He is the Minister of State (Independent charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences. He is also the Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office; Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Dept. of Atomic Energy and Dept. of Space. Multiple Ministers can also hold the same post. For instance, Kirti-wardhan Singh and Pabitra Margherita are both Ministers of State in the Ministry of External Affairs



NEWS IN NUMBERS

**Naturalised citizens  
Russia sent to fight in  
Ukraine**

**10,000** A top official said some had chosen to leave the country. Moscow has been accused of pressuring Central Asian migrants to join its armed forces. AFP

**Number by which list  
of threatened species  
grew**

**1,000** Over 45,000 species are threatened with extinction according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature that blames pressures from climate change, invasive species, human activity. AP

**Number of Indian  
fishermen arrested  
in Sri Lanka**

**10** The fishermen, arrested for allegedly engaging in illegal fishing in the Sri Lankan waters on Monday, will be charged with the death of a Navy sailor, who was killed in an operation to seize their trawler. PTI

**Number of people  
at risk of famine in  
Sudan**

**7.6** in lakh. International experts portrayed a grim picture of war-torn Sudan, warning that 755,000 are facing famine, amid relentless clashes between rival generals. The conflict has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded 33,000 others. AP

**Level breached by  
Sensex for the first  
time on Thursday**

**79,000** Nifty scaled the 24,000 peak for the first time on Thursday while Sensex breached the historic mark. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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IN THE LIMELIGHT

# Of monsters and supermen: tracing the roots of TV's most diabolical villains

If you've been keeping up with *The Boys*, you've likely cringed through Homelander's latest display of gut-wrenching malice; but is there another small-screen baddie out there who can give this supe a run for his milk?

Ayaan Paul Chowdhury

In its fourth season, Eric Kripke's *The Boys* and its infamously menacing main antagonist, Homelander, have managed to rise to the top – or rather, sink to the very bottom – as one of the most sadistic, evil, and nefarious characters to ever grace the small screen. Played by the excellent and notoriously Emmy-less Anthony Starr, and based on Garth Ennis's eponymous comic book series, Homelander is not just a perversion of the superhero archetype but a sickening exploration of a psyche marred by unbridled power and deep seated psychological trauma.

The caped nightmare of *The Boys*, struts through the series with the fanfare of a demigod, disdainfully smashing societal norms and human lives with equal abandon. Imagine Superman, with the emotional maturity of a petulant child and a twisted sense of entitlement. His evil is a spectacle, a garish fireworks display of unchecked laserings, and a super-sized spit in the eyes of puny, mortal life.

Yet, among a plethora of deplorable television villains, few can stand toe-to-toe with the Golden Boy of Vought as a terrifying harbinger of chaos and despair. Sure, Los Pollos Hermanos' drug kingpin Gus Fring and the dastardly Lord of the Dreadfort, Ramsay Bolton, are formidable foes, but to rival the supe, we must look to another blonde wunderkind of comic book lore who embodies malevolence with a similar flair.

Naoki Urasawa's seminal Japanese manga and anime series *Monster* has been celebrated for its complex characters and moral themes.

The story revolves around Dr. Kenzo Tenma, an idealistic and compassionate doctor, and Johan Liebert, a manipulative embodiment of evil as his foil. Their contrasting motivations and actions serve as counterpoints, with their paths deeply intertwined. The series explores the nature of good and evil, the corrupting influence of power, and the repercussions of personal choices, emphasising that the line between good and evil is often blurred, and even noble intentions can lead to dire outcomes.

Only Ennis and Urasawa seem to have distilled the archetype of intrinsic evil with terrifying panache. Homelander and Johan, in more ways than one, seem like two sides of the same sinister coin, their characters a fascinating exploration of what unfolds when individuals with no moral compass are endowed with unfathomable power. While they share a core of rancour, the manifestation of their darkness proves a grim reminder of the fragility of humanity in the face of



There is a perverse elegance to such villains that compels one to watch in fascination as their sense of selves teeters on brink of oblivion. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

unrestrained evil.

Homelander's backstory is as disturbing as it gets. Raised in a Vought-sanctioned lab with all the warmth of a freezer, he was subjected to experiments that would make Frankenstein flinch. Unlike good 'ol Superman, who had the good fortune of a wholesome upbringing, Homelander's childhood was a sterile, emotionally desolate affair, designed to mould him into the ultimate killing machine. Deprived of any semblance of human connection, he grew into a character devoid of empathy and bursting with a hunger for dominance.

Meanwhile, Johan's backstory reads like something concocted by the Brothers Grimm. His early years were marred by nightmarish Kafkaesque experiments at the infamous Red Room and subsequently, his orphanage, 511 Kinderheim: These nexuses of psychological manipulation, subjected him to an insidious array of trauma, each session meticulously designed to unravel the threads of his humanity and transform him from a cherubic innocent into a Machiavellian maestro of malice.

In both cases, their psyches, twisted and scarred beyond recognition, serve as a rattling testament to the horrors of human experimentation. Yet comparing their *modus operandi* is like juxtaposing a house on fire with a silent, deadly poison.

Homelander's evil is brash, loud, and

egotistical – a reflection of a society obsessed with celebrity and spectacle. His violence is performative, designed to assert dominance and instil fear through sheer force.

One of his earliest shockers involves letting a plane full of passengers crash, preferring to keep his squeaky-clean image rather than save innocent lives. This act is a perfect introduction to a character who values his public persona over any notion of heroism.

In the latest episode, he lasers a hole through a man's gonads after having him publicly humiliate himself. He sees people as props in his grand, horrific play, disposable and insignificant except for their role in feeding his narcissism. He is the ultimate superpowered tyrant, a twisted reflection of the superhero mythos gone horribly wrong.

On the flip side, Johan is the epitome of quiet, cerebral malevolence. If Homelander is a sledgehammer, Johan is a scalpel. His terror is woven into the fabric of *Monster* with an almost surgical precision, his greatest weapon his mind. His acts are puzzles, his motives enigmatic, his presence a whisper of dread. His reign of terror includes pitting an entire town of people against themselves, grooming children into killers, and leaving a trail of psychological ruin in his wake.

Johan's lack of empathy is rooted in his nihilistic worldview; he sees life as

inherently meaningless, and thus, his acts of evil are almost philosophical experiments, testing the boundaries of human morality and sanity. While Homelander wants to be feared and adored, Johan seeks no validation – his evil is a manifestation of his profound disillusionment with existence itself. Homelander's most disturbing trait is his desperate need for love and adoration, which he twists into a justification for his horrific deeds. His relationships are transactional, built on power and fear rather than genuine human connection. Johan, in contrast, is a solitary figure, his interactions driven by a cold, clinical understanding of human fragility. He strips away the humanity of his victims, leaving them as empty shells, haunted by the void he represents.

**Dark reflections**

Both characters serve as dark reflections of our worst fears about power and morality. There is a perverse elegance to their darkness, a kind of monstrous charisma that compels one to watch in petrified fascination as their fractured sense of selves teeters on the brink of oblivion. As we watch on in rapt horror, we are also left grappling with the uncomfortable reality that the most terrifying monsters are not lurking in the shadows, but mingling among us, donning the masks of heroes and innocents.

THE DAILY QUIZ

The murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, was the immediate cause of World War I. A quiz on the war:

Radhika Santhanam

**QUESTION 1**  
A German U-boat torpedoed a steamship which killed more than 1,100 citizens of country X. This country had initially sought to stay out of World War I. However, this event is recognised as one of the key factors for its involvement in the war. Name country X. And what is the name of the steamship?

**QUESTION 2**  
This is one of the most common catchphrases of World War I. It is the title of a 1914 book by an English writer. He believed that once the Germans were defeated, the world would never have reason to fight again. What is the catchphrase that is often attributed to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson?

**QUESTION 3**  
This was one of the deadliest battles of World War I. It was an attempt by the British and French soldiers to defeat the Germans along the Western Front. Over 19,000 British soldiers died on the first day alone. The Battle is named after a river which runs through France. What is it called?

**QUESTION 4**  
In January 1918, Woodrow Wilson presented his vision for peace to conclude World War I, and for a peaceful post-war world. A part of this vision became the basis for an international organisation founded after World War I. Name the vision and the organisation.

**QUESTION 5**  
During the Second Battle of Ypres, this chemical weapon was released by the Germans towards the French lines. Name it.



**Visual Question:**  
This Bengali pilot was India's sole World War I flying ace. His nephew became the first Chief of Air Staff. His grand-nephew is one of India's foremost journalists. Name the ace and the journalist.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:**  
1. Many of the world's first generation of nuclear power plants had twin responsibilities: to generate power for the electrical grid and to produce \_\_\_\_\_ for the national nuclear weapons programme. **Ans: Plutonium-239**  
2. The last first-generation nuclear power station to halt operations was the Wylfa facility on the Isle of Anglesey. Why did its operator have the facility built on the coast of the island? **Ans: To use seawater as coolant**  
3. Name the 1986 event involving an RBMK reactor that brought attention to its disadvantages. **Ans: Chernobyl disaster**  
4. What does INES stand for? **Ans: International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale**  
5. Name the country in whose power generation mix nuclear power has the greatest contribution. **Ans: France**  
Visual: This is the world's largest nuclear power plant in terms of net electric power. **Ans: Kashiwazaki-Kariwa**  
Early Birds: Bharath Viswanathan | Devendra Singh Chaudhary | Rajmohan V | Md Sarfaraj Nawab | Rajnandini



FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

*Origin of the word 'quiz' (E. R. Subramanyam, Amalapuram).*

Most dictionaries say that the origin of the word is unknown. But a few claim that the word owes its existence to James Daly, a manager of a theatre in Dublin, Ireland. According to a theory, James Daly made a bet with a friend. The bet was that he (Daly) would introduce a word into the English language. And what is more, he would make the newly introduced word popular overnight. He called little boys and girls and asked them to write the word 'quiz' on the walls of houses, offices, schools, factories, shops, in short, wherever they could. By the next morning, all the walls in the streets of Dublin had the word 'quiz' written on them. Everyone saw the word, but no one knew its meaning. People became very curious about the word. They wanted to know what the word meant. In fact, Daly himself did not have a meaning for the word 'quiz' when he invented it. So the word became synonymous with 'practical joke,' for that was what James Daly played on the citizens of Dublin. Gradually the word came to mean 'a test of one's knowledge.'

*The teacher gave us a quiz. The quiz was very easy. Meaning of 'Dutch Courage' (D. Vasu, Ranipet).*

We very often see in films the hero taking a peg or two of whisky before proposing to his girl friend. They drink in order to overcome their fear; drinking gives them a false sense of courage. And this is what the colloquial expression 'Dutch courage' means. It refers to the 'false sense of courage or bravery induced by alcohol.'

*Paul needed some Dutch courage before boarding the plane.*

But why is it that it is only the Dutch who are associated with the sort of courage that comes from taking alcohol? The link could be attributed to a practice that was common in the Dutch army. Before going to a battle, the soldiers drank alcohol. Another expression which is synonymous with 'Dutch courage' is 'geneva courage.' The 'geneva' referred to here has nothing to do with the city in Switzerland. It is the name of a Dutch gin, also called Hollands. So geneva courage is the courage one gets when one has had one too many genevas. This expression once again makes a reference to the heavy drinking of the Dutch people.

If one looks at the expressions involving the Dutch, it becomes obvious that the English did not think very highly of these people. For example, if somebody says, 'What you're saying is all Dutch to me' or 'What you're saying is all double Dutch to me', what he/she means is that you are, talking nonsense, it makes no sense.

*Published in The Hindu on July 14, 1992*

## Word of the day

**Abjure:**  
Formally reject or disavow a formerly held belief, usually under pressure

**Synonyms:** renounce, deny, drop

**Usage:** She abjured her political beliefs.

**Pronunciation:** bit.ly/abjurepro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /əbˈdʒʊə/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) with the subject 'Text & Context'

## From Page One

## CBI arrests two in Patna in NEET paper leak case

After questioning Mr. Prakash and Mr. Kumar on Thursday, the CBI arrested both men. However, Mr. Prakash's wife Archana Kumari claimed that her husband had arranged to rent the Patna play school in good faith, and was unaware of the malpractice being carried out at the location.

"At around 1:30 p.m., I received a call from one CBI official who told me that my husband Manish Prakash has been arrested. He is never involved in such things; in fact he is engaged in social work. I think he is falsely arrested by the CBI," Ms. Kumari said. "He just arranged the house for a few students but was not aware of what was going inside the house. One person Madhayam from his village called him and requested that few students stay for one night for the exam and urged him to arrange the place. He did so in good faith and trusted the man from his own village," she said.

However, she agreed that a fair probe should be carried out, adding that if her husband was found to be guilty, the CBI should take action against him given that the case was related to the future of thousands of students.

## Centre for both exams

The CBI continued its intensive questioning of Oasis School principal Ahsanul Haque in Hazaribagh for the second consecutive day. The agency has detained seven people in Hazaribagh, including the principal. Electronic devices, including the printer from the principal's office, were seized from the Oasis School, CBI sources said.

During questioning, the CBI found that the Oasis School had been an examination centre for both the NEET-UG exam, held on May 5, and the UGC-NET exam held on June 18. The Union Education Ministry cancelled the UGC-NET exam a day after it was held on the basis of inputs that the integrity of the examination had been compromised. Given that the Oasis School was already under scanner in the NEET paper leak case, agency sources asked how the NTA had selected the school as a centre for the UGC-NET exam as well.

The Bihar police had earlier said that a partially burnt question paper seized from the play school in Patna matched with the question paper received from the NTA. The series of that question paper had then been sent to the examination centre at the Oasis School, they said. On Wednesday, the CBI had questioned the SBI bank officials and the courier company responsible for transporting NEET question papers.

Three days ago, in conversation with *The Hindu*, Mr. Haque had admitted that the box and envelope containing the NEET question papers had been cut. He claimed that the digital lock which was supposed to open by itself at 1:15 p.m. did not open, and so the outer box had been opened using a cutter.

## President flags NEET in Parliament speech

"Today is 27th June. The imposition of Emergency on 25th June, 1975, was the biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on the Constitution. The entire country felt outraged. But the country emerged victorious over such unconstitutional forces as the traditions of the Republic lie at the core of India," she said, amid table thumping by the treasury benches and protests by the Opposition.

## BJP's counterattack

The President's reference to the Emergency came a day after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla read out a statement condemning it on the floor of the House, to mark its 49th anniversary. In a letter to Mr. Birla, Congress general secretary and MP, K.C. Venugopal, termed his statement as a "grave matter, impacting upon the very credibility of the institution of Parliament".

Many Opposition MPs held copies of the Constitution while affirming their oath as members, after an election campaign claiming that the BJP's slogan asking voters for a brute majority of "400 paar" seats was a precursor to radically amending the Constitution. Anxious to dispel these notions, the BJP has counterattacked by raising the spectre of the Emergency, imposed by a Congress government 49 years ago.

## 'EVM passed all tests'

Ms. Murmu also spoke out in robust defence of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) used in elections across the country. In a counter to demands for a return to paper ballots by a section of the Opposition, she reminded MPs of the days when ballot boxes could be looted.

"We all remember those times when ballot papers were snatched and looted. To ensure the sanctity of the electoral process, it was decided to use EVMs," the President said. "The EVM has passed every test, from the Supreme Court to the people's court, in the last few decades," she added.

When Ms. Murmu said that the government had been eager to promote peace and prosperity in the north eastern states, the Opposition benches erupted with questions on Manipur.

Noting that the people of India had again opted to give a full majority to the government, which enables speedy reforms, the President said that the government is now focused on its goal of making India the world's third-largest economy. "The government is giving equal priority to all three arms: manufacturing, services and agriculture. India is becoming *atmanirbhar* [self-sufficient] in every field at a rapid pace," she said, promising "historic steps" in the upcoming Union Budget.

## India and U.S. in talks for Stryker infantry vehicles

Deals for MQ-9B unmanned aerial vehicles and GE-414 jet engines are making progress along with defence industrial collaborations under the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology

**Dinakar Peri**  
NEW DELHI

India has expressed interest in co-producing the Stryker infantry vehicles and it is in "relatively" early stages of talks with the U.S. on the Stryker and the Javelin anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), says the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kurt M. Campbell.

At the same time, deals for MQ-9B unmanned aerial vehicles and GE-414 jet engines are making progress along with defence industrial collaborations under the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (ICET) framework.

Discussions on Stryker have been going on for several months now, and officials said the deal could potentially see local manufacture of several hundred variants of the vehicle under licence with some customisations for the Indian Army, including one with Javelin mounted on them.

However, several defence officials expressed



The deal on Stryker could potentially see local manufacture of variants under licence with some customisations for the Army. AP

reservations on going for Stryker given that several such vehicles have been developed and demonstrated by Indian companies in recent years.

## Early stages

"India has expressed an interest in the co-production of Stryker, and I think we're still in relatively early stages and the U.S. Army plans to demonstrate the capabilities of the Stryker to the Indian Army at an early opportunity," Mr. Campbell stated.

"We've had some discussions around the co-production of Javelin and Stryker. We're exploring a number of avenues for both co-production and engagement around technological areas where we could collaborate together on development more generally in R&D."

Mr. Campbell was speaking in a virtual briefing on Wednesday on the second India-U.S. ICET dialogue that was chaired by the two National Security Advisers last week.

The U.S. has in the past demonstrated both Stryker as well as Javelin for the Indian Army during bilateral exercises. Javelin was extensively evaluated by the Indian Army, though the deal did not go through.

On the MQ-9B deal, Mr. Campbell noted that the letter of offer and acceptance was delivered to India in early March, and they are awaiting signature to move forward.

"General Atomics is negotiating details of the sale with the Ministry of Defence and we are prepared, obviously, to work with them in addressing any outstanding questions," he stated.

The deal is in advanced stages and expected to go for approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in the next few months. Similarly, the deal for licence manufacture of the GE-414 engines by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) to power the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-MkIA is also in advanced stages.

## Plea in Supreme Court seeks stay on implementation of three new criminal laws

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

A petition was moved in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking a stay on the implementation and operation of three new criminal laws, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023, scheduled to come into effect from July 1.

The writ petition filed by Anjale Patel and Chhaya Mishra, represented by advocates Sanjeev Malhotra and Kunwar Sidharth, has urged the court to constitute an expert committee immediately to assess viability of the three new laws which overhauls the criminal procedure and justice system and replaces the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC) and the In-

## The plea highlights that the three laws were passed without detailed debate or effective discussion

## dian Evidence Act.

The plea highlighted that the three laws were passed without detailed debate or effective discussion in Parliament as a large number of Members from the Opposition were suspended.

"The passing of the Bills in Parliament was irregular as many Members of Parliament were suspended. There was very little people's participation in the passage of the Bills," the petition submitted.

The petition, extensively referred to reports in *The Hindu* about the suspension of 146 Opposition MPs from Parliament. It

quoted representations from the Tamil Nadu and West Bengal Chief Ministers to the Home Minister, objecting to the new laws.

It contended that the new laws were ambiguous, anti-bail, and even "inhuman" at some points such as the revival of handcuffs during arrest and provided extensive powers to the police.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which replaces the IPC, does not define terms such as "gang" and "mobile organised crime groups". The Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, which replaces the Cr.PC, allows 15 days of police custody, either to be taken all at once or in a staggered manner. The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, which takes over from the Evidence Act, has classified electronic records as primary evidence.

## Fishers held in Sri Lanka to be booked for Navy sailor's death

**Press Trust of India**  
COLOMBO

Ten Indian fishermen, arrested for alleged involvement in illegal fishing in the Sri Lankan waters on Monday, will be charged with the death of a Sri Lankan Navy sailor who was killed in an operation to seize their trawler, the authorities here said.

A senior sailor from the Navy Special Boat Squadron sustained critical injuries due to "the aggressive manoeuvres of the Indian trawler, resisting its seizure", the Sri Lankan Navy said in a statement, adding: "Unfortunately, the sailor succumbed to his injuries after being admitted to the Teaching Hospital, Jaffna..."

The trawler of the arrested fishermen was brought to the Kankesanthurai Harbour, and the

## Manipur BJP chief meets Amit Shah for solution to conflict

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI



A. Sharda Devi

The chief of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Manipur met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Thursday seeking "immediate attention to bring permanent solution and tranquillity to the State".

A. Sharda Devi met Mr. Shah for "an extensive discussion on the current situation in Manipur". Her three-year tenure as party president ended on Thursday.

Meanwhile, a State government programme to be presided over by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh in Imphal on Friday (June 28) for the distribution of benefits under various existing schemes and announcement of new schemes was cancelled at the eleventh hour. No reason was cited but sources said that the programme has been postponed to the first week of July.

Mr. Singh posted on X late Thursday evening, "Convened a meeting with the ruling MLAs to deliberate on the current situation

in Manipur."

Ms. Devi said in a post on X, "Conveyed the people's aspirations and urged immediate attention to bring permanent solution and tranquillity to the State, while appreciating the ongoing efforts. Additionally, highlighted the need for resettling IDPs (internally displaced persons) and providing maximum support for smooth rehabilitation. He assured that the Centre is aware of the delicate situation on the ground and committed to uplifting the people's aspirations."

The meeting comes days after Mr. Shah reviewed the security situation with State government officials in Delhi, on June 17.

## 'Centre will give priority to the safety of fishermen'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Thursday wrote back to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin assuring him that the Centre gave, and would continue to give, utmost priority to the welfare and security of Indian fishers.

He referred to the letters that Mr. Stalin wrote to him over the detention of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy. As on June 26, 34 Indian fishers are under the judicial remand of Sri Lanka and six others are serving sentences in the island nation, he said. The Indian High Commission in Colombo and the Consulate in Jaffna have been taking up such cases for their early release, he said.

Since 2014, the NDA government has endeavoured to address the issues of the fishing community, he said.

## In a U-turn, Mamata says eviction of hawkers not the goal of Bengal govt.

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
**Moyurie Som**  
KOLKATA

After two days of action against encroachments on footpaths by hawkers, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee made a U-turn on Thursday, saying hawker eviction was not the goal of her government.

Ms. Banerjee, who addressed a review meeting on encroachment by hawkers with senior officials and Ministers of the State government, constituted a committee to conduct a survey and submit a report to her office within 15 days.

"We are not going for hawker eviction immediately. Since they (the hawkers) have sought one month's time, we should complete our work in one month," the Chief Minister said.

For the past two days, civic authorities and police



**Packing away:** Hawkers remove encroachments after the police carried out an anti-encroachment drive in Kolkata on Tuesday. ANI

in Kolkata, and in the districts, had undertaken hawker eviction drives. Bulldozers were brought out on the streets and temporary structures built by hawkers blocking footpaths were razed.

"I have no right to take away anyone's source of income or render anyone unemployed. Millions run their family by hawking. There will be no eviction for one month. During this period, the hawkers have

to clear the footpaths," the Chief Minister said at the meeting.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson blamed political leaders and policemen for the hawkers occupying the streets. She threatened councillors with arrest if hawkers sitting on pavements illegally are not removed.

## BJP office bulldozed

A party office of the BJP was bulldozed by police of-

officials in Kolkata's Taratala area on Thursday, amid the anti-encroachment drive by the police and civic authorities following the Chief Minister's warning on illegal encroachment.

The police said the demolition of the party office was done based on a Calcutta High Court order, adding that the office was illegally constructed on land belonging to the Kolkata Port Trust. However, the exact contents of the order are not known. A scuffle broke out between police and BJP workers. Some of the workers were detained by the police.

Shaktiman Ghosh, leader of street vendors' union Calcutta Hawker Sangram Committee, said he agrees with the directives announced by the Chief Minister on Thursday and will conduct meetings with fellow street vendors in the upcoming days to establish a proper system.

## Jaishankar flags concern over violence in Myanmar

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with Myanmar's Foreign Minister U. Than Shwe on Wednesday as the latter transited through Delhi on his way to Tehran for the 19th Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

The meeting acquires significance as it materialised in the backdrop of the fast deteriorating security scenario in Myanmar where the military rulers

are facing a tough resistance from the Ethnic Armed Organisations.

"Discussed our deep concern at the impact of continuing violence and instability in Myanmar on our border. India is open to engaging all stakeholders in addressing this situation. Particularly flagged illegal narcotics, arms smuggling and trafficking in persons as priority challenges," said the External Affairs Minister after the meeting.



**APPEAL**  
Master Dhruv Saini, son of Yogesh Kumar, 3 years admitted in Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, is suffering from Thalassemia Major. The only curative treatment for Thalassemia Major is Bone Marrow Transplant. He is planned for Haploidentical Bone Marrow Transplant. The cost of transplant at this hospital is approximately Rs. 39,00,000/-  
Please send donation however small and save the boy. Cheque/DD/M.O. favouring Save Poor Lives A/c Dhruv Saini. Our Account Details: SIB Account No. 20000913487, State Bank of India, R.A.Puram and IFSC Code: SBIN001855. You can donate through Google Pay No. 9884607377, UPI Id: savepoorlives@oksb. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. Act.  
Save Poor Lives Registered Public Charitable Trust, Flat No. A1, Ceebros Garden, Ground Floor, Old No.76, Kamarajar Salai, Raja Annamalaiapuram, Chennai-600028. Contact No. 044 42044165 & 044 35691848, Mobile: 9884607377, Email: savepoorlives@gmail.com. Our website: www.savepoorlives.com

# INDIA plans adjournment motion on NEET issue

Decision was taken at a meeting of the Opposition bloc held at Kharge's official residence; both the Houses of Parliament are expected to start debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President today

**Sandeep Phukan**  
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties belonging to the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc will move adjournment motions in both the Houses of Parliament on Friday over the alleged irregularities in the National Entrance-cum-Eligibility Test (NEET) and paper leaks in other public exams.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Opposition bloc, held at the official residence of Congress president and Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge. The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, was present at the meeting attended by floor leaders of parties in the alliance. Mr. Gandhi is likely to formally spell out the Opposition's strategy on Friday morning at a media interaction just before the Lok Sabha begins.

An adjournment motion is a tool that seeks to stop all other businesses of the House and take up the is-



**Course of action:** Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and K.C. Venugopal at a meeting on Thursday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

sue for which the motion has been moved. On Friday, both the Houses of Parliament are expected to start the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address.

While the government is unlikely to agree to such a motion, sources indicated that Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan is ready to answer queries on all issues regarding NEET and other public exams and steps taken to strengthen the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts many of these exams. The source cited

above said the Minister will intervene even during the Motion of Thanks debate since Opposition members plan to raise the issue while participating in that debate.

In her address to the joint sitting of Parliament on Thursday, President Droupadi Murmu said the Union government is fully committed to a fair investigation in the recent incidents of paper leaks and ensure that the guilty are punished.

Reacting to the President's Address, Mr. Kharge, in a post on X,

said: "Listening to the President's address written by the Modi government, it seemed as if Modi ji is in a perpetual state of denial! The mandate was against him because the people of the country rejected his slogan of '400 plus' and kept the BJP away from the figure of 272".

The Congress chief said there was nothing in Ms. Murmu's speech that suggested a way forward to resolve the NEET issue.

"Modi government cannot run away from its responsibility by just simply saying that 'we should rise above partisan politics'. The youth is demanding justice. Union Education Minister will have to take responsibility for this," Mr. Kharge said.

CPI general secretary D. Raja, in a post on X, said, "The first 15 days of Modi 3.0 have seen major mismanagements like frequent paper leaks, jeopardising the future of lakhs but the Government still wants to continue with a centralised and homogenising education system, which has evidently failed".

# Rahul meets Om Birla, says resolution on Emergency could have been avoided

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

A day after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla read out a resolution on the imposition of Emergency, referring to it as a dark period, Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the House Rahul Gandhi met Mr. Birla to convey his displeasure. He said the Chair should have remained "impartial and avoided the resolution".

Separately, Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal wrote to the Speaker, in which he said "such a political reference from the Chair is unprecedented in the annals of the history of Parliament".

Asked about the meeting between Mr. Gandhi and the Speaker, Mr. Venugopal described it as a courtesy call after Mr. Birla officially designated Mr. Gandhi as the LoP.

"We discussed so many things about Parliament functioning. Of course, this issue also came up. Rahulji, as Leader of Opposition, informed the Speaker about this issue, and said it could have been avoided from the Speaker's reference. That is clearly a political reference, it could have been avoided," Mr. Venugopal said, referring to the resolution on the Emergency.



**Point of contention:** Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi with newly elected Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday. ANI

On Wednesday, when Mr. Birla was re-elected Speaker of Lok Sabha, he read out a resolution in the House on the 1975 Emergency.

The resolution blamed the Congress for "suppressing the rights of the people" and "attacking the principles of democracy".

"Making such a political reference from the Chair is unprecedented in the annals of the history of Parliament. This coming from the Chair as one of the 'first duties' of a newly elected Speaker assumes even graver proportions. I, on behalf of the Indian National Congress, express our profound concern and anguish over this travesty of parliamentary traditions," he said.

In his letter to Mr. Birla, Mr. Venugopal said it was a grave matter that impacted "the very credibility of the institution of Parliament" and made a travesty of parliamentary traditions.

On Wednesday, when Mr. Birla was re-elected Speaker of Lok Sabha, he read out a resolution in the House on the 1975 Emergency.

# Congress's invocation of Constitution a pretence: BJP

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday criticised the Congress for objecting to the condemnation of Emergency in a resolution read out by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla in the House on Wednesday.

BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad said the main Opposition party's invocation of the Constitution was just a pretence. "It irks the Congress whenever the issue of Emergency is raised... Why shouldn't it be discussed even though 50 years have passed," he asked, adding that citizens needed to be informed about it.

He said during the Emergency, then Opposition leaders such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Lalu Prasad, Mulayam Singh, Nitish Kumar, and Ram Vilas Paswan were jailed and activists of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) were tortured. Journalist Kuldeep Nayar was sent to prison and censorship was imposed on the press. The then Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government in Tamil Nadu was dismissed, he said, adding: "The Congress continues to carry this sin."

# INDIA bloc parties back SP MP's views on removing Sengol

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Parties of the INDIA bloc on Thursday rallied behind Samajwadi Party MP R.K. Chaudhary's views that "Sengol" (sceptre) should be removed from Parliament and a copy of the Constitution be placed there instead.

Mr. Chaudhary has, in a letter to pro tem Speaker Bhatruhari Mahtab, contended that the "Sengol", which was installed in the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with much fanfare last year, was a symbol of "monarchy" and not "democracy".

INDIA bloc parties, including the Rashtriya Janata Dal, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Congress, came out in support of the SP member.

"The sceptre represents monarchy. In a democratic country, it has no role to play. Its place is in the museum. Where democracy rules and people elect their representatives, it is better to have the Constitution. We don't have any stand, but if SP has said it, it is justified," T.K.S. Elan-

**He had said a copy of the Constitution should be placed in Parliament instead of the Sengol**

govan of the DMK said. His party colleague, Dayanidhi Maran, echoed his views. "It is silly politics played by the BJP. It is their narrative."

Congress MP Manickam Tagore supported Mr. Chaudhary's demand, criticising the government for creating high drama during the inauguration of the new Parliament building. "This is a good suggestion from our SP colleague."

Misa Bharti of the RJD said the "Sengol" should be kept in a museum and not Parliament.

Mr. Chaudhary on Thursday said that now the SP leadership would decide what had to be done. The NDA criticised the comments. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath posted on X that the remarks revealed the ignorance of the SP leaders and demonstrated their lack of respect for Indian history and culture.

# Rajya Sabha decides to revoke suspension of AAP MP

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Six newly elected MPs from Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh took oath as members of the Rajya Sabha in the first sitting of the House after the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha on Thursday.

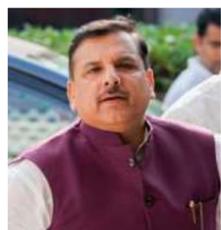
Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar also announced the revocation of suspension of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) member Sanjay Singh.

Mr. Singh was suspended from the House from July 24, 2023, till the Committee of Privileges submitted its findings. The

committee had presented the reports on the pending matters against Mr. Singh and 11 others on Wednesday.

"The committee, while holding Sanjay Singh guilty of breach of privilege of the Council in all the cases, recommended that the member has already suffered sufficient punishment for the transgression," Mr. Dhankhar said.

The committee had held 12 Opposition MPs, including Mr. Singh, guilty of misconduct for disrupting House proceedings last August, and cautioned them to desist from such behaviour in future. The report



Sanjay Singh

stated that the panel has accepted Mr. Singh's unconditional apology in the matter and recommended revocation of his suspension after considering that the punishment suffered by him was sufficient.

"The committee con-

cludes that the 12 members, namely Sanjay Singh, Shaktisinh Gohil, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sandeep Kumar Pathak, Naranbhai J. Rathwa, L. Hanumanthaiah, Syed Nasir Hussain, Kumar Ketkar, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi are held guilty of serious transgression of privileges and commission of contempt of the Council of States. The committee, accordingly, recommends that no action is warranted against Kumar Ketkar, Naranbhai J. Rathwa and L. Hanumanthaiah who have since retired from membership of

the council. That Sanjay Singh, Shaktisinh Gohil, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sandeep Kumar Pathak, Syed Nasir Hussain, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi should desist from indulging in such misconduct in future and scrupulously adhere to exemplary conduct and optimise their performance in the House," the panel said in its report.

**Motion of Thanks**  
The House met after President Droupadi Murmu addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament. The House will pass a Mo-

tion of Thanks to the President for her address after a discussion.

Among those who took oath was Congress MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh, followed by Sarfaraz Ahmad of JMM and Pradip Kumar Varma of the BJP. BJP leaders Banshilal Gurjar, Maya Narolahi and Balyogi Umeshnath also took oath as members of the House.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of the House J.P. Nadda and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi were among those present in the House.

**KERALA SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT (KSWMP)**  
LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

Project Director, Kerala Solid Waste Management Project (KSWMP) under LSGD, intends to notify tender for Hiring of the following activities:

Sl. No.	Activity	Published Date
1	Consulting Services for Engagement of Manpower Service (HR) Agency for KSWMP	07 June 2024

RFP along with TOR is available at [www.kswmp.org](http://www.kswmp.org) and <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in>. Interested Consultants must submit their Proposals through the electronic-procurement portal of Government of Kerala <https://etenders.kerala.gov.in>.  
Telephone: 0471-2333011,  
E-Mail: [tenderkswmp@gmail.com](mailto:tenderkswmp@gmail.com)  
(D3/365/2024/I&PRD)

**Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike**  
Office of the Executive Engineer,  
(Lakes-Yelahanka), 3rd Floor, Annex Building-3,  
N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560 002.

No. EE(Lakes-YK)/Tend-02/2024-25 Date: 27.06.2024

**Short Term Tender Notification (4th Call)**  
(Two Cover System) (Through GOK Kpp Portal)  
website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> only

The Executive Engineer, Lakes-Yelahanka, BBMP Bengaluru, invites Tenders on Item Rate basis from the registered contractors of BBMP or equivalent registration with CPWD/KPWD/Railways/MES or any State Govt. Organisations for the works mentioned below.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Approx value of work (₹. in Lakhs)	EMD (in ₹.)
1.	Installation of Flood Control Arrangement/Escape Gates for lakes in Yelahanka Zone.	100.00	2,00,000/-

**Calendar of Events:** (1) Available of Tender documents: 29.06.2024 after 4:00 p.m. (2) Pre-bid meeting: 11.07.2024 at 4:00 p.m. (3) Last Date for receipt of Tenders: 15.07.2024 upto 4:00 p.m. (4) Opening of Technical bid: 16.07.2024 at 4:30 p.m. (5) Opening of Financial bid: After approval of Technical bid (will be informed later).  
Sd/- Executive Engineer, (Lakes-Yelahanka), BBMP.

**Rajasthan State Highways Authority**  
(Constituted by State Government through Notification dated June 2, 2015 in PWD, Rajasthan)  
Corporate Office: Nirman Bhawan, Jacob Road, Civil Lines, Jaipur-302006

No: F/7(353)SHA/PPP/2018-19-00001-Part File(1)D-510 Date: 24.06.2024

**RECRUITMENT NOTICE**

Rajasthan State Highways Authority invites applications for recruitment to the following posts:-

S. No.	Name of The Post	No. of Posts	Method of Recruitment
1	Member (Safety and Technology)	01	On the recommendation of a Search & Selection Committee
2	Member (Concessions and Public-Private Partnerships)	01	

Details regarding Essential Qualification, Terms and Conditions, and Application are enclosed and can be seen on the Authority's website <https://rsha.rajasthan.gov.in> or <https://pwd.rajasthan.gov.in>. Application in the prescribed format shall reach RSHA Head Quarter at Jaipur by July 15, 2024, up to 15.00 Hrs. (IST) or can be e-mailed on: [ho\\_rsha@rajasthan.gov.in](mailto:ho_rsha@rajasthan.gov.in). The envelope containing the application must be superscripted in bold letters as "Application for the post of Member (Safety and Technology)/ Member (Concessions and Public Private Partnerships)".

The advertisement can be withdrawn at any time at the discretion of the Competent Authority without assigning any reasons thereof. "Corrigendum" or "Addendum" or "Cancellation" to this advertisement, if any, shall be published only on the website of RSHA and will not be published in the newspapers. Therefore, the Applicants are advised to check the website of RSHA regularly.

(V.L. Dhankhar)  
Member, RSHA  
Nirman Bhawan, Jacob Road,  
Civil Lines, Jaipur-302006  
DIPR/C/4941/2024

Government of Karnataka  
**Department of Collegiate and Technical Education**  
NO. 1, Unnatha Shikshana Soudha, Sheshadri Road, Bangalore - 560 001  
Phone: 080-22223906, email: [dce.tenders2017@gmail.com](mailto:dce.tenders2017@gmail.com)

No.: DCE/ITS/PUR/12/2024-INFO (Computer No. 1437822) Date: 27.06.2024

**E-Tender Notification**

The Commissioner for Collegiate and Technical Education, Bangalore hereby invites bids in Two-Cover system through e-Procurement portal from eligible bidders for the following Tender. The Tender Documents with detailed terms and conditions may be obtained from the website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>.

Tender Schedules are as below

Sl. No.	Tender Name & Number	Date of Floating Tender on e-Procurement Portal	Date and Time of pre-bid meeting	Last date and Time for bidding through eprocurement portal
1.	Tender No: DCE/2024-25/IND0020 "Supply of Books for the Government First Grade Colleges of the Department of Collegiate and Technical Education, Bangalore"	27/06/2024	02/07/2024 11.00 AM	12/07/2024 5.30 PM
2.	Tender No: DCE/2024-25/IND0021 "Supply of Furniture to RUSA funded Government First Grade Colleges of the Department of Collegiate and Technical Education, Bangalore"	27/06/2024	01/07/2024 11.00 AM	12/07/2024 5.30 PM

Sd/-  
Director of Collegiate Education, Bangalore

DIPR/CP/637/Zen/2024-25

**WBEIDC**  
Webel Bhawan, Sector-V,  
Salt Lake, Kolkata 700 091.

Notice Inviting e-Tender No. WBEEL/EOT/COM/24-25/00004, Date: 25-06-2024  
For "Request for Proposal for engagement of Operation Partner for Operation, Maintenance and Transfer of e-Waste Management Facility at Sonarpur Hardware Park, West Bengal"  
Due date of Submission: 21 Days from Publication.  
Interested parties may go through website <https://wbetenders.gov.in> and <https://www.wbeel.in>  
For details or contact 033 - 2339 2297 / 033 - 2339 2364  
ICA-19924/02024

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, CENTRAL (R&B) CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR.**

Mail i.d. : [secbbsr@gmail.com](mailto:secbbsr@gmail.com)

**E-procurement Tender Call Notice No.01 of 2024-25**  
No.2573 (Estg.) Bhubaneswar the 26th June-2024

The Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for one number road work to be received in online bidding, double cover system for construction work as detailed in : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from 5.00 P.M. of 01.07.2024 to 5.00 P.M. of 15.07.2024. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened at 11.00 A.M. of 16.07.2024 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in). Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/- Er. P.K.Mohanty  
Chief Construction Engineer,  
Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar.  
B-49: OIPR-34005/11/003/2425.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA email : [serwsbd2003@yahoo.com](mailto:serwsbd2003@yahoo.com)  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA.**

No: / / e-Procurement Notice for Building works Date: / /

1. Name of the Work : Construction of Building Works - (01 No)  
2. Class of Contractor : "A" Class & Special of (Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authority.  
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.726.75 Lakhs (Approximately)  
4. Details projects as per Annexure attached :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bids
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda	CCERWCSBD - Online - 02/2024-25	01.07.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	16.07.2024 up to 05.00 P.M.	15.07.2024 up to 1.00 P.M.	18.07.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	To be intimated separately

5. The details of works can be seen from the web site: <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>  
6. Any Corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the above e-tender web site.

Chief Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda.  
O-61: OIPR-25182/11/0004/2425

**IN BRIEF**



**Another bridge caves in; 4th collapse in eight days in Bihar**

A fourth bridge has collapsed in Bihar within eight days. On Wednesday evening, a bridge came crashing down in Kishanganj district of the northeast Seemanchal area of the State. Since June 19, bridges have collapsed in Araria, Siwan and Motihari (East Champaran) districts. In the past two years, six bridges have caved in across the State. On Wednesday, a portion of the bridge, 70 metres long and 12 metres wide, built in 2011 under the *Mukhyamantri Gram Sadak Yojna* (Chief Minister's Rural Road Project), collapsed. The bridge over the Mariya river connects the Bahadurganj and Dighalbank blocks in the district.

**'Drop cases against Arundhati Roy over Kashmir comments'**

The top UN human rights official on Thursday voiced concern over the use of anti-terror law in India to silence critics, and urged authorities to drop cases against author Arundhati Roy. "#India: We are concerned by the use of #UAPA anti-terror law to silence critics. Repeat call for review of law & release of human rights defenders detained under it. Urge authorities to drop cases against Arundhati Roy and Sheikh Showkat Hussain," the UN Human Rights Office, led by High Commissioner Volker Turk, said. Earlier this month, Delhi L-G.V.K. Saxena accorded sanction to prosecute Ms. Roy and professor Sheikh Showkat Hussain under the UAPA for speeches at an event in 2010. PTI

**No permit for J&K Bar Association election**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
SRINAGAR

The J&K administration has for the fifth continuous year denied permission for elections to the J&K High Court Bar Association in Srinagar, citing "secessionist ideology" and "free legal aid to anti-national elements" as one of the reasons.

"I have perused all the facts/reports and inputs of the matter placed before me and am satisfied that there is an emergent situation which can lead to breach of peace and disruption of public order, (if) the JKHBA, Srinagar, proceeds forward with the scheduled elections," the Srinagar District Magistrate said.

It is the fifth year that elections of the Bar are not being allowed in Kashmir.

**Uttarakhand govt. to study risk posed by 13 glacial lakes during monsoon**

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

With the monsoon setting in, the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Department (USDMA) will do a vulnerability study of 13 glacial lakes, five of them in "high-risk zone", from July. The study aims to provide data to help avoid calamities such as lake outbursts. Ranjit Sinha, Secretary, USDMA, briefed reporters about the new lakes which were identified through satellite earlier this year.

Mr. Sinha said the Himalayan glaciers were in danger from climate change, and continued checks were required to ensure safety.

The lakes in Darma, Laksaryanghati, and the Kuti-yangti Valley in Pithoragarh district, and the Vasudhara Tal lake of the Dhauliganga basin in Chamoli district are posing a



**Major risk:** The glacial lake outburst at the Rishiganga Valley in Chamoli had claimed 72 lives in February 2021. PTI

high risk. These lakes, ranging between 0.02 sq. km and 0.5 sq. km in area, are situated at elevations of 4,000 metres above sea level.

"Our teams will start a bathymetry study of the five potentially high-risk lakes from the first week of July. The study will give us correct and accurate infor-

mation regarding the size of the lakes, how the glaciers were formed, how they are melting, and more," Mr. Sinha said.

Earlier this month, the USDMA has asked the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to share a report on the status of the five high risk glacial lakes.

"After accessing the risk,

we will puncture the lakes and place pipes inside it," he said.

**Two expert teams**

In March, the State government formed two expert teams to assess the risks associated with these glacial lakes. The teams comprised experts from the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, the Geological Survey of India, the National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee, the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, and the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology.

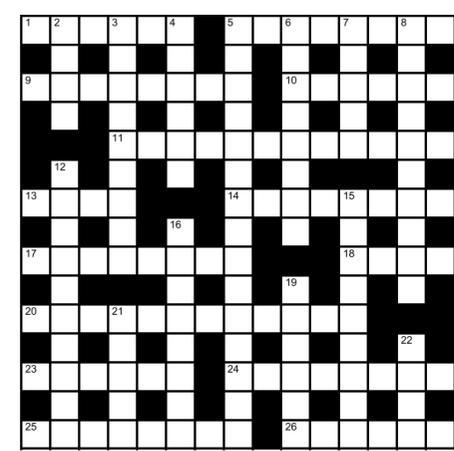
Two major glacial lake outburst floods took place in Uttarakhand in the past decade.

The first was at the Kedarnath valley in June 2013 which led to 6,000 deaths. The other was at the Rishiganga Valley in Chamoli in February 2021, which claimed 72 lives.

- 14 Company honcho in Delhi on vacation, joined by minister (8)
  - 17 Spooner's discarded stinking bird (8)
  - 18 Carol abused - one left (4)
  - 20 Liked relaxing outside a particular place with hills, dales and water bodies (4,8)
  - 23 American agents catching accountant's bloomer (6)
  - 24 Casual help in need steals book (4-4)
  - 25 Judges back old German service on the radio (8)
  - 26 Trapping of people inside ends in fighting with one troublemaker starting to attack leader of Opposition (6)
- Down**
- 2 Periodically stamp out escalating poisonous growth (4)
  - 3 Avtaar's unfinished task - cutting supplies for groups that destroy food (4,5)
  - 4 Races run by English Amateur Society (6)
  - 5 Bears led kittens around for idle enjoyment (4,3,8)
  - 6 They swing with force, avoiding those stopping the ball (8)
  - 7 Ounce jumped at the precise moment (2,3)
  - 8 Ike's introduction in episode with new hero is amazing (10)
  - 12 Slippery character in European country, close to politicians, works on his own (10)
  - 15 Criminals counter cop (9)
  - 16 Recycling of plastic outside American cities like Lincoln and Phoenix (8)
  - 19 Bent on skipping Disney movie (6)
  - 21 Host discussed Einstein's ratio of energy to speed of light (5)
  - 22 Official record of proceedings from Alcatraz, nicked every now and then (4)

**THE CROSSWORD+ 14213**  
(set by Avtaar)

To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site. @ <https://qr.go.page.link/jjpTn>



- Across**
- 1 Foreign worker in Indian political group arrested by state (2,4)
  - 5 Fell, like Archer? (4,4)
  - 9 Christmas clothing section stocking knight's headgear (8)
  - 10 Case of engineer ducking training for duty (6)
  - 11 Doctor sends man away for resources (4,3,5)
  - 13 Ice-cold expression? (4)

**SUDOKU**

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

**Solution to previous puzzle**

C	A	T	C	H	Y	J	A	S	M	I	N	E
A	A	T	H	A	T	I	N	G				
F	E	N	J	G	R	E	E	K	O	T	T	E
T	G	H	I	A	I	E	E					
A	L	O	F	F	O	R	E	C	A	S	T	S
N	L	E	T	T	A	S						
S	O	L	D	I	E	R	A	D	R	O	I	T
A	A	E	E	N								
A	S	H	R	A	M	B	U	G	B	E	A	R
S	T	T	U	I								
U	N	S	E	T	I	E	S	O	F	A	S	J
P	I	A	K	D	T	A	H					
E	R	R	O	R	I	N	H	E	R	I	T	E
R	A	S	N	A	A	E	I					
B	O	W	L	I	N	G	B	R	I	D	L	E

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

**SC, Delhi HC seek NTA response to petitions on NEET**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The National Testing Agency (NTA) continued to face the heat over the conduct of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) for admission to undergraduate medical courses on Thursday with the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court seeking its response to separate petitions raising grievances with respect to the uploading of the optical mark recognition (OMR) sheets by the agency prior to the announcement of the results and out-of-syllabus questions.

A Vacation Bench of the top court headed by Justice Manoj Misra issued notice to, and directed, the NTA to clarify the time limit for raising the grievance that some candidates had not been able to access their OMR sheets.

Justice Dharmesh Sharma of the Vacation Bench of the Delhi High Court ordered the NTA to state its stand on a petition alleging "out of syllabus" questions.

**OMR sheets**  
In the Supreme Court, senior advocate R. Basant, appearing for a private coaching centre, said a few students had not received

**One of the petitions alleged that there was 'out-of-syllabus' question in the physics paper**

their OMR sheets on the NTA website. Though the Bench initially questioned the coaching centre's *locus standi* to file a writ petition under Article 32 alleging violation of fundamental rights, it later asked the NTA counsel to file a reply and tagged the petition along with other NEET matters scheduled for hearing on July 8.

On June 20, the top court had sought responses from the Centre, the NTA and others on a slew of petitions, including those seeking scrapping of the test and a court-monitored investigation.

The court had orally observed that even "0.001 per cent negligence" on the part of anyone in the conduct of the examination should be thoroughly dealt with.

The petition in the High Court alleged that a physics question on radioactivity was out of syllabus. The petitioner alleged a "manifest error" with respect to another question.

The Bench posted the petition for July 16.

**Antelope-like mammal from Bhutan recorded at lowest elevation in western Assam**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

The mainland serow, a mammal that looks like a cross between a goat and an antelope, has been recorded at the lowest elevation beyond Bhutan, its natural home, in Assam.

A team of scientists recorded a lone mainland serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis thar*) at 96 metres above the mean sea level at the Raimona National Park in western Assam. Also, the elusive animal has been found for the first time within a radius of 1 km from a human habitation.

The finding with photographic proof was published as a scientific paper in the latest issue of the *Journal of Threatened Taxa*. The paper was authored by M. Firoz Ahmed,



**Lone ranger:** A mainland serow at the Raimona National Park in western Assam. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

senior scientist at biodiversity conservation group Aaranyak; senior conservation biologist Dipankar Lahkar; Nibir Medhi; Nitul Kalita; Bhanu Sinha, Divisional Forest Officer, Kachugaon; forest officials Pranjali Talukdar, Biswajit Basumatary, and Tunu Basumatary; Ramie H. Begum, Associate Professor, Assam University; and

Abhishek Harihar, the director of Tiger programme, Panthera.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the mainland serow inhabits areas at altitudes of 200 metres to 3,000 metres. Its habitat is across the border in the Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.

**MADGALDEEP** SCENT 3in1  
PREMIUM QUALITY INCENSE PERFUME LIKE FRAGRANCES

**FAITH**  
**Connect with God**

We live in a world where there are many things, but we need not go anywhere in search of God. The Tamil saying, "Engum ulla Kamman" sums it up concisely. We can see Him anywhere and everywhere but we need to have the eye to see Him in our mind. His divine presence is in all things around us. We should establish the connectivity with Him. We need to focus our inner eye upon Him, said Sri Tridandi Srimannarayana Ramanuja Chinna Jeeyar in a discourse.

It is a fact of life that where there is light there is also darkness. A lamp is lit to dispel darkness. Similarly the darkness within one should be replaced with the light of divinity. It is natural for a person to love another, but even that is divine, when viewed correctly. When one says, "I cannot live without you," he is the jivatma and the person addressed is paramatma.

The concept of developing the inner eye to see God is best exemplified by the Vaishnavite Azhvars, whose works are codified under Nalayira Divya Prabhandam. Born in the divine land of Tamil Nadu, the Azhvars experienced God like none other, while leading simple, ordinary lives. Vibrating with divinity, the Nalayira Divya Prabhandam has encompassed the universe, with the verses being rendered every day at homes and temples.

**IN BRIEF**



**Reliance Jio raises mobile data tariffs effective July 3**

Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. announced an increase in tariff on Thursday, marking the first in a likely industry-wide spike in mobile data prices close on the heels of spectrum auctions. The increase, ranging from 16-22%, will kick in on July 3, and will not apply to users of the company's JioPhone devices. The price of the cheapest monthly plan has gone up from ₹155 to ₹189. The firm's average revenue per user is less than this amount, at ₹181.70 as of Q4 2023-24.

**CCI junks competition law violation case against Google**

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has dismissed a complaint against Google India alleging the tech giant abused its dominant position to favour Truecaller in the market for caller ID and spam protection apps, as it found no evidence of violation of competition law. "The Commission finds no prima facie case of contravention of the provisions of Section 4 of the Act is made out against Google in the instant matter," the fair trade regulator said.

**'Infosys CEO settles charges of lacking insider trading curbs'**

Infosys CEO Salil Parekh settled charges for failing to place adequate internal controls to prevent insider trading at India's No.2 IT services exporter during a 2020 contract, the country's markets regulator said on Thursday. Mr. Parekh agreed to pay ₹2.5 million (about \$30,000) to settle the markets regulator's charge, which related to a contract for Infosys to provide U.S. financial firm Vanguard with a cloud-based record-keeping platform.

**RBI rejigs SAARC currency swap plan**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to put in place a revised framework for currency swap arrangement for SAARC countries for 2024 to 2027. "Under the Framework, a separate INR swap window has been introduced with various concessions for swap support in Indian rupee," the RBI said. "The total corpus of the rupee support is ₹250 billion." The RBI will continue to offer swap arrangement in U.S. dollar and euro under a separate U.S. Dollar/Euro Swap Window with an overall corpus of \$2 billion.

**'Delhi to host global meet on recycled plastics'**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Projecting India's plastic recycling industry to grow to \$6.9 billion by 2033, the All India Plastic Manufacturers' Association and the Chemicals and Petrochemicals Association have announced a Global Conclave on Plastics Recycling and Sustainability (GCPRS), to be held at Bharat Mandapam, Delhi from July 4 to 7. "GCPRS will convene experts from India and abroad to tackle pressing concerns in plastic waste management, recycling, and sustainability. We will also discuss the impact of plastic on the environment," the organisers said.

**UltraTech Cement acquires 23% stake in India Cements**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Aditya Birla Group's UltraTech Cement Ltd. announced it was making a non-controlling financial investment to pick up 23% equity stake in India Cements Ltd (ICL). Block deal data showed UltraTech initially bought 6.02 crore ICL shares, or 19.4% stake. Earlier in the day, UltraTech's Board approved the purchase of up to 7.06 crore equity shares of ICL at up to ₹267 apiece. Having acquired 19.4%, the UltraTech board met again on Thursday and approved acquisition of 3.4%, or 1.04 crore equity shares, up to ₹285 apiece. This transaction is expected to



be completed within a month, the cement maker said in a regulatory filing. The cost of the entire 23% stake is estimated at about ₹1,900 crore.

**Damani sells stake**  
While promoter N. Srinivasan and his family would still remain the largest shareholders in ICL with 28.4% stake, UltraTech will

become the second-largest shareholder, after reportedly purchasing the entire stake of serial investor Radhakrishnan Damani and his associates. As per ICL's shareholding pattern as of March, Mr. Damani and Gopikishan Shivkishan Damani collectively held 20.78% stake in the company. Another 2% was owned by Damani-linked entities.

**Southern markets**  
ICL has a capacity of 14.45 MTPA with eight cement plants located in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Rajasthan. ICL shares surged 11.5% on the BSE to close at ₹293.15, while UltraTech rose 5.07% to ₹1,714.80.

**Kotak Life eyes gross written premium of ₹20,000 cr. in FY25**

**N. Anand**  
CHENNAI

Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance Company (Kotak Life) is hoping to achieve a gross written premium (GWP) of more than ₹20,000 crore for FY25, said a senior official. "We ended last fiscal with a GWP of ₹17,700 crore and this fiscal, we would like it to be over ₹20,000 crore," Piyush Trivedi, Kotak Life Product Marketing and Health Tech Head - Alternate Digital Channels, said during an interaction. He said Kotak Life was hoping to increase its market share from 4% to 5% in FY25 by opening new

**'Kotak Life hopes to increase its market share from 4% to 5% in FY25 by opening new branches among other measures'**  
branches, rolling out new products, refurbishing existing products, and strengthening bancassurance and digital channels among others.

**New offering**  
On Thursday, Kotak Life announced the introduction of 'Kotak Gen2Gen Protect', a product that covers two generations with a single term plan.

**CBIC clarifies on ESOPs' tax**

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

Employee Stock Options (ESOPs) given by foreign companies to employees of their Indian subsidiary at prevailing market value will not attract GST, the CBIC has said. This clarification forms part of the 16 circulars issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), following the meeting of the GST Council on June 22.

**Correction**

The photograph carried with the top INBRIEF 'Repo Bank sets credit growth target of ₹21,750 cr. for FY25' (June 27) erroneously referenced RBL Bank. The error is regretted.

**'Economy robust despite global risks'**

India's financial system remains resilient with scheduled commercial banks' gross NPA ratio sliding to a multi-year low of 2.8%, RBI says in its Financial Stability Report; lenders' improved balance sheets is enabling sustained credit expansion

**Lalendu Mishra**  
MUMBAI

The Indian economy and the financial system remain robust and resilient, anchored by macroeconomic and financial stability, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in the 29th issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR), which was released on Thursday.

With improved balance sheets, banks and financial institutions were supporting economic activity through sustained credit expansion, the RBI said.

According to the FSR, the capital to risk-weighted

**Report card**

India's financial system is robust and resilient, anchored by macroeconomic and financial stability, says RBI



- Banks' capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR) and CET1 ratios at 16.8% and 13.9%, respectively, as at end March
- Stress tests for credit risk show that SCBs would be able to comply with minimum capital requirements
- Global economy facing risks from prolonged geopolitical tensions, elevated public debt, slow disinflation

assets ratio (CRAR) and the common equity tier 1 (CET1) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) stood at 16.8% and 13.9%, respectively, as at end-March 2024.

SCBs' gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio fell to a multi-year low of 2.8% and the net non-performing assets (NNPA) ratio declined to 0.6% at end-March 2024.

"Macro stress tests for credit risk reveal that SCBs would be able to comply with minimum capital requirements, with the system-level CRAR in March 2025 projected at 16.1%, 14.4% and 13.0%, respectively, under baseline, medium and severe stress scenarios," the central bank said in the FSR.

**'Not forecasts'**

"These scenarios are stringent conservative assessments under hypothetical shocks and the results should not be interpreted as forecasts," it added.

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) re-

mained healthy, with CRAR at 26.6%, GNPA ratio at 4.0% and return on assets (RoA) at 3.3%, respectively, at end-March 2024, it further said.

**'Slow disinflation'**

The RBI noted in the FSR that the global economy was facing heightened risks from prolonged geopolitical tensions, elevated public debt, and the slow progress being made in the last mile of disinflation.

Despite these challenges, the global financial system had remained resilient, and financial conditions stable, the Reserve Bank added.

**SEBI tightens norms on financial influencers, eases rules for delisting**

**Reuters**  
MUMBAI



India's markets regulator on Thursday asked brokers and mutual funds to stop using the services of unregulated financial influencers for marketing and advertising campaigns.

A booming Indian stock market has increased the popularity of so-called financial influencers who advise on stocks and other related investments through their channels on YouTube and Instagram and often have a large number of followers.

The decision was taken to address concerns relat-

ed to 'certain persons, including unregulated entities, inducing investors to deal in securities based on inappropriate claims,' the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said in a press statement issued after a board meeting. It, however, added financial influencers en-

gaged in investor education will be exempt from the new restrictions.

India had 154 million trading accounts as of April, as per SEBI data, a more than four times jump from the 36 million trading accounts in April 2019.

It will be the responsibility of the regulated entity to ensure individuals with whom it is associated do not breach the rules of conduct set by SEBI, including avoiding the promise of assured returns.

**Derivative-linked stocks**  
SEBI also introduced new criteria to decide on stocks that can be linked to deriv-

ative products, such as futures and options, as proposed in a discussion paper earlier this month.

The total number of stocks eligible for derivative trading will rise marginally, SEBI Chair Madhabi Puri Buch said.

The SEBI board also approved changes to delisting rules that would make it easier for companies to exit from stock exchanges.

Companies can now offer shareholders fixed prices for shares as an alternative mechanism to delist from stock exchanges.

Currently, delisting is carried out via reverse book-building.

**Persistent heat may dash RBI's inflation hopes: BoB**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The persistent heat wave in tomato, onion and potato producing States is likely to keep food prices elevated for a few more months, and could push retail inflation past the Reserve Bank of India's estimates for the first two quarters of FY25, economists at Bank of Baroda said on Thursday.

Mandi arrivals of these vegetables have slid significantly in Q1 FY25, with potato supplies down 12.3%, onion 29.1% lower, and tomato down 18.5%, triggering a sharp price rise.

**MARKETS**

**MARKET WATCH**

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	79,243	0.72
US Dollar	83.45	0.14
Gold	72,180	-0.16
Brent oil	85.82	1.03

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3175.15	-4.65
Adani Ports	1485.50	17.70
Apollo Hosp	6192.50	55.70
Asian Paints	2880.85	17.50
Axis Bank	1288.95	-3.55
Bajaj Auto	9417.45	-57.20
Bajaj Finserv	1603.10	2.85
Bajaj Finance	7166.75	8.55
Bharti Airtel	1475.80	16.30
BPCL	304.85	6.45
Britannia Ind	5430.30	8.60
Cipla	1480.90	1.80
Coal India	467.05	-1.70
Divis Lab	4522.35	-23.00
Dr Reddys Lab	6235.90	165.85
Eicher Motors	4713.80	-25.90
Grasim Ind	2637.60	85.35
HCL Tech	1454.90	11.20
HDFC Bank	1696.15	-4.35
HDFC Life	593.25	-4.20
Hero MotoCorp	5485.20	32.20
Hindalco	686.25	10.55
Hind Unilever	2462.15	16.55
ICI Bank	1219.90	1.90
IndusInd Bank	1502.75	4.85
Infosys	1573.35	32.65
ITC	425.60	1.65
JSW Steel	943.15	23.95
Kotak Bank	1830.55	32.40
L&T	3564.40	-38.55
LTIMindtree Ltd.	5377.05	199.55
M&M	2888.95	37.45
Maruti Suzuki	12178.75	-19.50
NestleIndia	2533.75	-0.50
NTPC	377.15	12.10
ONGC	267.50	-0.25
PowerGrid Corp	331.55	-4.85
Reliance Ind	3061.10	33.05
SBI Life	1463.45	12.55
State Bank	844.00	-1.35
Shriram Finance	2951.05	-38.00
Sun Pharma	1516.25	-4.90
TataConsumerPro	1085.60	-1.30
Tata Motors	972.10	20.25
Tata Steel	174.16	-1.60
TCS	3934.15	78.30
Tech Mahindra	1432.25	19.20
Titan	3380.60	7.85
UltraTech Cement	11716.70	573.60
Wipro	510.80	15.60

**EXCHANGE RATES**

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on June 27

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	83.26	83.58
Euro	89.1	89.45
British Pound	105.31	105.72
Japanese Yen (100)	51.88	52.09
Chinese Yuan	11.45	11.5
Swiss Franc	92.8	93.16
Singapore Dollar	61.37	61.61
Canadian Dollar	60.83	61.07
Malaysian Ringgit	17.64	17.72
Australian Dollar	55.43	55.65

Source: Indian Bank

**TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAM : TIRUPATI**  
Office of the Chief Engineer  
**TENDER NOTICE**  
Adv.No.05/D3/CE/TTD/2024-25 & NIT No.5/SE-III/TTD/2024-25 Dt:26/06/2024  
Name of works: (1) Providing Interiors, Acoustic treatment, Painting, Electrical works including Air-Conditioning & Yard lighting etc., for S.V.Auditorium in S.V. College, New Delhi, Amount Rs.580 Lakhs, Mixed tender type. Time for completion 12 months.  
NOTE: For full details log on to the website https://www.tirumala.org.  
TTD-40021(31)/1/2024-PRO SEC(Adv.No.48) Date:27-06-2024 EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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**NOTICE INVITING TENDERS**

Tender No.	Scope of Work	Due date
242513 001729	Procurement of Caustic Soda Lye for Unit-I & Unit-II.	10.07.2024
242513 001737	720 GSM Kraft Corrugated Circular Disc (5 Ply) 97 CM for Unit - I & Unit - II.	10.07.2024
242513 001738	180 GSM Kraft Reels of various sizes for Unit-I & Unit-II.	10.07.2024
242523 000983	Procurement of 90 GSM Plain Kraft Reels & Sheets of various sizes in 24 BF for TNP&L Unit - I.	15.07.2024

Email: 242513001729 - purchase.rawmati@tnpl.co.in  
242513001737 ; 1738 - purchase.packing@tnpl.co.in  
242523000983 - purchase.packing.u2@tnpl.co.in

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNP&L Website and NIC Portal only. Detailed requirements, Quantity, Period, Terms & conditions, Tender fee, EMD, etc., are available in the tender document which can be downloaded from websites: www.tnpl.com/https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgepp/app  
DIPR/2106/Tender/2024 TNP&L - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper

**ESIC**  
EMPLOYEES STATE INSURANCE CORPORATION  
(Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India)  
ESIC Hospital Peenya, 55-4/1, Plot No.1, 5th Main Road (ITI Campus), Survey N. 11, Yeshwanthpur, Bengaluru-560022  
Ph.No. 00-29723468, Email: mspennyka@esic.nic.in

सं./No.492/A/12/13/Rectt/2014/Esst दिनांक/Date: 26.06.2024  
करा.बी.नि. अस्पताल पीन्या, बेंगलूरू में पार्ट टाइम आयुर्वेद चिकित्सक का अनुबंध के आधार पर नियुक्ति के लिए दिनांक 10.07.2024 को प्रवेश साक्षात्कार WALK-IN INTERVIEW ON 10.07.2024 FOR ENGAGEMENT OF PART TIME AYURVEDA PHYSICIAN ON CONTRACT BASIS AT ESIC HOSPITAL, PEENYA, BANGALORE  
कर्मचारी राज्य बीमा निगम, अस्पताल, पीन्या में अनुबंध के आधार पर पार्ट टाइम आयुर्वेद चिकित्सक की सेवाओं की आवश्यकता है / Employees State Insurance Corporation, Hospital, Peenya, Bengaluru intends to engage the services of Part Time Ayurveda Physician on contract basis.  
• आरक्षण भारत सरकार के दिशा-निर्देशानुसार / Reservation as per Govt. of India guidelines.  
उपरोक्त पदों के लिए पात्रता मानदंड, अन्य नियमों और शर्तों युक्त विस्तृत विज्ञापन, आवेदन पत्र/बायो-डेटा प्रपत्र हमारी आधिकारिक वेब साइट www.esic.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है / The detailed Advertisement containing eligibility criteria, other terms and conditions for the above posts, Application Form / Bio-Data Form are available on our official web site www.esic.gov.in.  
हस्ता./- / Sd/- चिकित्सा अधीक्षक / Medical Superintendent

**समुद्री उत्पाद निर्यात विकास प्राधिकरण**  
**THE MARINE PRODUCTS EXPORT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
(शांतिनिकु एवं उद्योग मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)  
(Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India)  
एमपीडीईए हॉउस, पनमपल्ली एवेन्यू / MPEDA House, Panamipally Avenue  
कोच्चि/Kochi - 682038, केरल / Kerala.  
(दूरभाष / Tel: 0484-231901) ईमेल / Email: ho@mpeda.gov.in  
वेबसाइट / Website: www.mpeda.gov.in

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**Office of the Additional Director General of Police, Police Computer Wing,**  
7th Floor, M.S. Building, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru 560001.  
E-mail: adgppcw@ksp.gov.in Tel No.22353871

**No.16/STS/ADGP/PCW/2024-25 Dated: 25.06.2024**

**e- TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
The tender are invited in "Two Cover System" as per Karnataka Transparency in Public Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through e-Tendering of Government of Karnataka website ([www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in](http://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in)) for Supply and Install of following items required to the Police Stations across the State.

Sl. No	Tender No.	Particulars	Qty	Last Date for submission of tender
1.	KSP/ 2024-25/ INDO090	Supply of Medium End Desktop	400	20/07/2024 by 17:30 hrs
2.		Supply of Medium End Laptop	24	

Tender forms containing technical specifications, can be downloaded from <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. Those who are willing to implement the project must necessarily be registered in e-Procurement portal. The training about e-Procurement is being provided at e-Procurement cell, e-Governance Department, M. S. Building, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru 560 001. The vendors may contact the Helpline No :91-8046010000 +91-8068948777. For further details the vendors are requested to visit the website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. Tender document will be available on <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from 28/06/2024.

1. Details : Downloading of Tender Document & last date of submission of Tender from (28/06/2024 to 20/07/2024 before 17:30 hrs). (2) EMD amount : Rs.4,75,000/-(Rs. Four Lakh Seventy Five thousand only) which shall be paid online through any of the following modes. (1) Credit Card (2) Debit Card, (3) National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT), (4) Detail of the payment mode as mentioned in the bid document (e-payment document available on website).(3) Pre bid Meeting : 09-07-2024 at 12.00 hrs.(4) Technical bid :23-07-2024 at 11.30 hrs (5) Commercial bid : 29-07-2024 at 11.30 hrs.

Sd/-  
Additional Director General of Police  
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COLOMBO Sri Lanka calls on Russia to discharge its citizens from Army



Sri Lanka has asked Russia to allow its former soldiers fighting in Moscow's war against Ukraine to return home voluntarily...

YANGON Former Myanmar President Thein Sein makes a rare trip to China



Former Myanmar President Thein Sein departed for an official visit to China on Thursday, Beijing's embassy in Yangon said...

MOSCOW Russia sent 10,000 naturalised citizens to fight in Ukraine: official



Russia has sent around 10,000 naturalised citizens to fight in Ukraine, a top official said on Thursday.

WASHINGTON U.S. Supreme Court allows emergency abortions in Idaho



The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on Thursday to permit - for now - abortions to be performed in Idaho when pregnant women are facing medical emergencies.

Bolivian general arrested after failed coup attempt

Led by Army chief Juan José Zúñiga, troops stormed the government palace, but quickly retreated after President Arce sacked the rebel general; 'everything is now under control,' says a Minister

Associated Press LA PAZ



Bolivia's now-dismissed Army chief Gen. Juan Jose Zuniga being escorted by policemen following his arrest on Wednesday.

Led by a top general vowing to "restore democracy", armoured vehicles rammed the doors of Bolivia's government palace on Wednesday in what the President called a coup attempt...

rushed the square outside the palace, waving Bolivian flags, singing the national anthem and cheering. The soldiers' retreat was followed by the arrest of Army chief Gen. Juan José Zúñiga...

The government said on Thursday that 17 people, including active and retired military personnel and civilians have been arrested in the case. "What was this group's goal? Their goal was to overturn the democratically elected authority," Mr. del Castillo told presspersons.

Under control Late on Wednesday, Defence Minister Edmundo Novillo said "everything is now under control".

Surrounded by the new military chiefs appointed by Mr. Arce, Mr. Novillo said Bolivia lived a "failed coup". The apparent coup attempt came as the country has faced months of tensions and political fights between Mr. Arce and his one-time ally, former leftist president Evo Morales...

Kenya police fire rubber bullets, tear gas at protest

Agence France-Presse NAIROBI

Kenyan police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at demonstrators in Nairobi on Thursday, as protesters returned to the streets despite President William Ruto's scrapping of contentious tax hikes after deadly clashes.

Former Chinese Defence Minister sacked from party

Associated Press BEIJING



Li Shangfu

Former Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu was expelled from the ruling Communist Party and is being investigated for corruption and bribery, the official Xinhua news agency reported on Thursday.

Insiders have claimed that he is undertaking a widespread purge of officers suspected of conspiring with foreign forces or simply being insufficiently loyal to Mr. Xi.

nese politics and can enjoy extensive privileges. In its statement, the Ministry gave no details of the allegations against Mr. Li, other than saying that his alleged crimes were "exceptionally pernicious" and that they posed "an enormous danger".

Israel warns it could send Lebanon 'back to Stone Age'

Agence France-Presse WASHINGTON

Israel launched air strikes on Gaza on Thursday after warning Hezbollah, Hamas's ally in Lebanon, to avoid a large-scale war that would send the neighbouring country "back to the Stone Age".

Sunak, Starmer clash in final debate on tax and borders

Sriram Lakshman LONDON



Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer

In a final and noisy pre-election debate on Wednesday night, U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer argued loudly with each other on the cost of living, taxes and welfare, immigration and gender.

council tax your home, your car, you name it, they will tax it," Mr. Sunak said. On immigration, Mr. Starmer attacked the Prime Minister for the impracticality of the government's plan to deport migrants with failed asylum claims to Rwanda.

'Over half of Sudanese face acute food insecurity'

Agence France-Presse PORT SUDAN

More than half of Sudan's population is facing high levels of "acute food insecurity", a situation exacerbated by the country's devastating war, said a report cited by the United Nations on Thursday.

The U.K.'s tax burden had hit record levels under the Sunak government. The independent Institute of Fiscal Studies warned earlier in the week that neither party was being upfront about the trade-offs that would have to be made between taxes and public services, which are already in disarray.

Culture wars The debate also went into some of Britain's culture wars. The candidates were asked if they would protect women-only spaces. They both agreed on the equivalence of "sex" and "biological sex" but differed on the legal instruments required to achieve women-only spaces.

with the EU, as he pushed back against Mr. Sunak's accusation that a better deal came with the free movement of EU citizens across the U.K. border. Although Mr. Sunak trails Mr. Starmer in polls, Mr. Starmer also has low popularity. During Wednesday's debate, both candidates accused the other of making empty promises.

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RE-TENDER-CUM-AUCTION SALE NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002. The following property/ies mortgaged to City Union Bank Limited will be sold in Re-Tender-cum-Public Auction by the Authorised Officer of the Bank, under Rule 8 (6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002...

HIMACHAL PRADESH JAL SHAKTI VIBHAAG NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Table with 5 columns: SN, Name of Work, Estimated Cost (in Rs), EMD (in Rs.), Time, Last date. Includes details for restoration of rain damages and horticulture land.

Govt. of Himachal Pradesh Jal Shakti Vibhag NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

Table with 4 columns: Job No., Name of work, Estimated cost, Earnest Money, Time of completion. Includes details for construction of Lift Irrigation scheme.

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**NEW RECORD**

**Farooqi the bowler with most wickets in an edition of T20 WC**



Afghanistan left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi made history on Thursday, becoming the bowler with most wickets taken in a single edition of ICC T20 World Cup. Farooqi reached this milestone against South Africa, dismissing Quinton de Kock. He has taken 17 wickets in eight games at an average of 9.41 and an economy rate of 6.31.

**HIGH PRAISE**

**Bumrah is 1000 times a better bowler than me, says Kapil**



Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than what he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an economy of 4.08. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil said.

**NOT IDEAL**

**Flower calls pitch for South Africa-Afghanistan semifinal 'dangerous'**



Former Zimbabwe captain Andy Flower on Thursday labelled the pitch for the T20 World Cup semifinal between South Africa and Afghanistan as 'dangerous'. "You can't blame Afghanistan for doing what they did at the toss, but batting first was tough. You didn't know what a good score would be and they were blown away."

**MOTIVATION**

**Hope we've inspired young kids to pick up a bat and ball: Trott**



Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott hopes his team's historic T20 World Cup run will "inspire young kids to pick up a bat and ball" in the war-ravaged country. "I hope that we've inspired young kids to pick up a bat and a ball and play cricket, and want to play for their nation. Hopefully, everybody's proud of what the side did," he said.

# Rohit, Suryakumar take India to 171 on tricky pitch

On a start-stop-start day, the duo stitches together a crucial 73-run partnership for the third wicket after Kohli and Pant fall cheaply; Hardik, Jadeja and Axar provide the final flourish

**T20 WORLD CUP**

**Ashwin Achal**  
GEORGETOWN

Rohit Sharma (57, 39b, 6x4, 2x6) and Suryakumar Yadav (47, 36b, 4x4, 2x6) excelled on a challenging pitch to push India to 171 for seven against England in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup semifinal here on Thursday.

The sticky Guyana National Stadium surface tested batters with low bounce. It took tremendous skill and patience for Rohit and Suryakumar to come good. The duo put on a crucial 73-run third-wicket stand to take India to safe waters.

The start of play was delayed, as rain appeared in instalments. The ground-staff was a busy lot – rushing in with covers when the showers came and getting the outfield ready in brighter times.

The small crowd cheered as Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli took strike. Kohli flattered to deceive, flicking a full ball for six before completely missing a straight one.

Rishabh Pant did not last long either, chipping a length ball from Sam Cur-

ran to the infielder. India blossomed when Rohit and Suryakumar came together. There was attacking intent despite the tough conditions. Suryakumar got going with a clean straight hit in the second cherry he faced.

The trademark paddle scoop was unleashed as well, when Suryakumar hoisted a wayward Chris Jordan into the deep fine-leg stands.

**Skillful**

Rohit judged the pace of the surface well, staying low and hitting late. The captain negated the threat of leg-spinner Adil Rashid, who entered the attack in the seventh over. Rohit greeted Rashid with a reverse sweep, and followed up with a conventional sweep to leave the spinner rattled.

India was on a roll, but rain returned to cause another delay. With 250 minutes in the bank to extend playing hours, there was no reduction of overs required.

Rohit and Suryakumar continued from where they left off. Left-arm seamer Curran took a beating in the 13th over, leaking 19 runs.

Suryakumar drew first



On the ball: Rohit and Suryakumar showed attacking intent despite the tough conditions, powering the Men in Blue to a challenging total. PTI & GETTY IMAGES



blood with an inside-out scoop over point, and the second maximum came through an outrageous Rohit sweep.

Rashid got the big breakthrough in the next over, deceiving Rohit with a googly which crept under the bat. Jofra Archer dis-

missed Suryakumar with a slower ball, leaving India at 124 for four. Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja and Ax-

ar Patel struck a few big blows to keep the scoreboard moving at a healthy pace. India will believe that

this total is well above the par score, as the pitch offers a great deal of help to the spinners. Kuldeep Yadav, Axar and Jadeja will be

**SCOREBOARD**

**INDIA**  
Rohit Sharma b Adil Rashid 57 (39b, 6x4, 2x6), Virat Kohli b Topley 9 (9b, 1x6), Rishabh Pant c Bairstow b Curran 4 (6b), Suryakumar Yadav c Jordan b Archer 47 (36b, 4x4, 2x6), Hardik Pandya c Curran b Jordan 23 (13b, 1x4, 2x6), Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 17 (9b, 2x4), Shivam Dube c Buttler b Jordan 10 (6b, 1x6), Arshdeep Singh (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (lb-2, w-1): 3; Total (for seven wks. in 20 overs): 171.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-19 (Kohli, 2.4 overs), 2-40 (Pant, 5.2), 3-113 (Rohit, 13.4), 4-124 (Suryakumar, 15.4), 5-146 (Hardik, 17.4), 6-146 (Dube, 17.5), 7-170 (Axar, 19.5).

**ENGLAND BOWLING**  
Topley 3-0-25-1, Archer 4-0-33-1, Curran 2-0-25-1, Adil Rashid 4-0-25-1, Jordan 3-0-37-3, Livingstone 4-0-24-0.  
**Toss:** England.

**England 62 for five**  
England was 62 for five in 10 overs with Brook (19) and Livingstone (3) at the crease. Salt (5), Buttler (23), Moeen (8), Bairstow (0) and Curran (2) were the batters back in the dugout. Axar scalped three while Bumrah and Kuldeep picked one each.

itching to have a crack at it. England, on the other hand, needs a couple of batting heroes to stay alive in the tournament.

## Trott calls the surface at Tarouba 'unfit' for a WC semifinal



Crestfallen: Afghanistan coach Trott has words of solace for skipper Rashid. PTI

**Press Trust of India**  
TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott lambasted the pitch that was used for the T20 World Cup semifinal against South Africa, saying it was unfit for a contest of such magnitude.

"I don't want to get myself into trouble and I don't want to come across as bitter or it being a case of sour grapes but that's not the pitch that you want to have a match, a semifinal of a World Cup on, plain and simple," Trott said.

"It should be a fair contest. I'm not saying it should be flat completely with no spin and no seam movement, I'm saying you shouldn't have batters worrying about going forward," he explained. "They should be confi-

dent in foot movement and be able to hit through the line or use their skills. T20 is about attacking and about scoring runs and taking wickets, not looking to survive."

"If the opposition bowled well and got to a position where they bowled very, very well and it's through skill, then that's fine and then it's about adapting to that," he said.

"But once the ball starts misbehaving and rolling, if we had bowled as straight as South Africa had, I think you would have seen a very interesting second half as well," he added.

"We only got back to hotel at three o'clock and had to leave at eight... we didn't get much sleep so the guys obviously were very tired and a lot to process emotionally and physically".

## Clinical South Africa demolishes Afghanistan, storms into the summit clash for the first time

**Ayan Acharya**  
TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

The first T20 World Cup semifinal between Afghanistan and South Africa at the Brian Lara stadium on Wednesday laid bare the fickle beauty and cruelty of sport. Having gained Full Member status in 2017, Afghanistan was now competing for a chance to feature in its first final against a South African side, whose cricketing history is replete with World Cup heartbreaks.

In the end, Aiden Markram's team inflicted upon its opponent a nine-wicket defeat and with it, the kind of pain that will linger.

On a mildly overcast evening, on a tough grassy pitch with a cracked look, the Proteas blew Afghanistan to smithereens, skittling it for 56, the lowest total in a T20 World Cup knockout game.

In response, South Africa lost opener Quinton de Kock early, leaving Reeza Hendricks and Aiden Markram to negotiate a tricky half hour of play, where the Afghan new-ball bowlers used the variable bounce and seam movement to keep them quiet. But the paltry nature of the target meant Hendricks remained unbeaten on 29 off 25 and Markram on 23 off



Setting it up: Jansen's wickets of Gurbaz and Kharote up front sent Afghanistan to a point of no return. GETTY IMAGES

21 as they got past the finish line with more than 11 overs to spare.

Earlier, Afghanistan's collapse after choosing to bat was slightly surprising but not shocking. The surprise lay not in how it collapsed, but where it collapsed. That it happened in Tarouba, a venue not known for housing a batting minefield, should raise eyebrows. Was this an Afghan collapse or a tribute to South Africa's top-drawer bowling? Both teams wanted to bat, but bowling first might not have been a

bad option, as Marco Jansen (three for 16), Kagiso Rabada (two for 14) and Anrich Nortje (two for seven) soon demonstrated. Rahmanullah Gurbaz was the first to go, nicking a full ball from Jansen to Hendricks at slip. After a few errant deliveries down the leg side, Jansen got one to tail away from middle and off and was immediately rewarded. It wasn't an unplayable ball, but Gurbaz's mistake proved costly as it exposed the middle order.

In a blink-and-you-will-miss span of play, Afghanistan was cut open by the South African seamers. The bowling was certainly disciplined and even intelligent as the tall South African quicks exploited the up-and-down bounce with back-of-length deliveries. But it did not justify a scorecard that read 50 for eight at the halfway stage. As heart-wrenching as this defeat was, Afghanistan will take pride in its inspiring run this edition, while South Africa will get down to preparing for its date with destiny.

**SCOREBOARD**

**AFGHANISTAN**  
Rahmanullah Gurbaz c Hendricks b Jansen 0 (3b), Ibrahim Zadran b Rabada 2 (5b), Gulbadin Naib b Jansen 9 (8b, 2x4), Azmatullah Omarzai c Stubbs b Nortje 10 (12b, 2x4), Mohammad Nabi b Rabada 0 (3b), Nangeyalia Kharote c de Kock b Jansen 2 (7b), Karim Janat lbw b Shamsi 8 (13b, 1x4), Rashid Khan b Nortje 8 (8b, 2x4), Noor Ahmad lbw b Shamsi 0 (2b), Naveen-ul-Haq lbw b Shamsi 2 (8b), Fazalhaq Farooqi (not out) 2 (2b); Extras (b-6, lb-1, w-6): 13; Total (in 11.5 overs): 56.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-4 (Gurbaz, 0.6 overs), 2-16 (Naib, 2.3), 3-20 (Ibrahim, 3.1), 4-20 (Nabi, 3.4), 5-23 (Kharote, 4.6), 6-28 (Omarzai, 6.3), 7-50 (Janat, 9.3), 8-50 (Noor, 9.5), 9-50 (Rashid, 10.2).

**SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING**  
Jansen 3-0-16-3, Maharaj 1-0-6-0, Rabada 3-1-14-2, Nortje 3-0-7-2, Shamsi 1.5-0-6-3.

**SOUTH AFRICA**  
Quinton de Kock b Farooqi 5 (8b, 1x4), Reeza Hendricks (not out) 29 (25b, 3x4, 1x6), Aiden Markram (not out) 23 (21b, 4x4); Extras (w-2, nb-1): 3; Total (for one wkt. in 8.5 overs): 60.

**FALL OF WICKET**  
1-5 (de Kock, 1.5).

**AFGHANISTAN BOWLING**  
Naveen 3-0-15-0, Farooqi 2-0-11-1, Rashid 1-0-8-0, Omarzai 1.5-0-18-0, Naib 1-0-8-0.  
**Toss:** Afghanistan.

**PoM:** Jansen. South Africa won by nine wickets with 11.1 overs to spare.

**Press Trust of India**  
TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

South Africa skipper Aiden Markram was certain that he does not want to play another match on the pitch here, but was chuffed to see his side tame a challenging track in the semifinal to enter its maiden T20 World Cup final.

"If we reflect back on this wicket, we'll probably be pretty happy that we're not playing here again. T20 cricket as a whole, you want entertainment," said Markram.

"The wickets that we've had throughout the competition have been pretty challenging. Having said that, still taking the positives we can. Wickets are tough. So, finding a way to win is probably the most important thing. So, it's again just adapting and playing the pitch and the game that's in front of you."

Markram wants to relish the feeling of entering a World Cup title clash.

**Nice feeling**  
"The bits that we're realising now, it's obviously a really nice feeling. This team's been together for a long time now as a white ball group, and it's nice for us to get to a final."

## INBRIEF



## Gukesh starts with a win; Praggnanandhaa held

D. Gukesh started off on a positive note, beating Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania in the first round of the Superbet Classic chess tournament here on Wednesday. The Indian emerged on top to give his campaign a positive start in his first classical game since winning the Candidates tournament. R. Praggnanandhaa tried hard but had to settle for a draw against Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in a keenly-contested game.

**The results: Round 1:** Maxime Vachier-Lagrave drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi; Nodirbek Abdusattorov drew with R. Praggnanandhaa; D. Gukesh bt Deac Bogdan-Daniel; Firouzja Alireza lost to Fabiano Caruana; Anish Giri drew with Wesley So.



## Sri Lanka's head coach Silverwood steps down

Sri Lanka's head coach Chris Silverwood on Thursday stepped down following the team's dismal outing in the T20 World Cup, Sri Lanka Cricket announced. Former captain Mahela Jayawardene had resigned as consultant coach on Wednesday. During Silverwood's tenure, Lanka won the T20 Asia Cup in 2022 and also reached the final of the 50-over Asia Cup last year.



## Rahane to play for County side Leicestershire

Ajinkya Rahane has signed with English county side Leicestershire for the second half of the ongoing season, the club announced on Thursday. As per the deal, he will be featuring in the team's final five games of the ongoing County Championship, besides playing the One Day Cup, where the Foxes are the defending champions.



## Jayawardene resigns as consultant coach of SLC

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) announced the resignation of former batter and skipper Mahela Jayawardene from the post of consultant coach of the national teams at various levels following a disappointing ICC T20 World Cup campaign in the West Indies and USA. The ongoing T20 World Cup was poor for Sri Lanka as they failed to reach Super Eights. With just three points, Lanka finished at third spot in Group D.

## Shiven, Aadya, and Gowshika move into the semifinals

India's Shiven Agarwal, Aadya Budhia and M. Gowshika moved into the semifinals in their respective age categories at the 31st Asian junior individual squash championships in Islamabad on Thursday. However, five other Indians lost in the quarterfinals.

## Indian results (quarterfinals):

**Boys: U-15:** Shiven bt Abdul Ahd Butt (Pak) 11-4, 11-7, 11-5.  
**U-17:** Yusha Nafees lost to Abdullah Nawaz (Pak) 1-11, 7-11, 2-11.  
**Girls: U-13:** Aadya bt Mahnoor Ali (Pak) 11-4, 11-8, 6-11, 11-6; Gowshika bt Makaan Lin Cassidy (HKG) 11-8, 11-9, 11-8.  
**U-15:** Ankita Dubey lost to Harleem Tan (Mas) 2-11, 5-11, 5-11; Diva Shah lost to Lo Pui Yin Chole (HKG) 6-11, 6-11, 9-11.  
**U-17:** Unnati Tripathi lost to Doyce Lee Ye San (Mas) 3-11, 1-11, 6-11.  
**U-19:** Nirupama Dubey lost to Akari Midorikawa (Jpn) 7-11, 9-11, 11-6, 11-9, 5-11.

## Spinners give India the edge as South Africa seeks consistency

Sneh and Rajeshwari add depth to the arsenal; Wolvaardt, Kaap and Luus need to do the heavy lifting for the visitors

## SA IN INDIA

S. Dipak Ragav  
CHENNAI

With an in-form batting line-up, a high-quality bowling attack led by a strong spin core and home advantage, India starts as a firm favourite against South Africa in the one-off Test that begins here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Friday.

Having won the One-Day International series in Bengaluru comprehensively (3-0), the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will look to continue its unbeaten run against the Proteas.

Considering that the core of the team is largely carried over from the ODIs, the home team will feel it has most of its bases covered.

Smriti Mandhana was on song in the one-day leg, scoring two centuries and a 90 in the final match, and the stylish left-handed batter will look to continue her purple patch while Harmanpreet, too, was in fine nick, scoring a century.

More importantly, all-rounders Deepti Sharma and Pooja Vastrakar, who were impressive in the ODIs with bat and ball, give the hosts a crucial edge.



Gearing up: Pacer Arundhati will look to create a buzz if she's handed a Test debut. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

The fact India can also depend on Sneha Rana, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, and Shubha Sathesh in this format shows the depth in the squad.

The Chepauk pitch is known for being one of the most spin-friendly surfaces in the country, and the red

soil surface for this game is expected to help the tweekers considerably.

Meanwhile, for the visitors, a lot will depend on skipper Laura Wolvaardt, Marizanne Kapp and Sune Luus shouldering the responsibility of tackling the Indian spinners.

Wolvaardt and Kapp were amongst the runs in the 50-over format, and if they get going in this contest, it will allow the rest of the batters to play around them.

On the bowling front, South Africa will rely heavily on newly-turned off-spin-

ner Luus and left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba to give the breakthroughs.

Speaking on the eve of the match, Wolvaardt felt consistency over four days would be crucial for her side.

"In Bangalore, we were inconsistent with the ball and bat. I think we had some really good cricket in patches. But then we had some pretty bad cricket in different patches that lost us the entire game.

"And I think in Test cricket, it will be even more important to stay more consistent over a longer period of time," said Wolvaardt.

## The teams (from):

**India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Priya Punia, Shafali Verma, Shubha Sathesh, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetri (wk), Sneha Rana, Saika Ishaque, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Arundhati Reddy and Renuka Thakur Singh, Shabnam Shakil.

**South Africa:** Laura Wolvaardt (Capt.), Anneke Bosch, Tazmin Brits, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Mieke de Ridder (wk), Sinalo Jafta (wk), Marizanne Kapp, Masabata Klaas, Suné Luus, Eliz-Mari Marz, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Tumi Sekhukune, Nondumiso Shangase and Delmi Tucker.

Match starts at 9.30 a.m.



Wolvaardt.  
B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

## Play more Tests across levels or leave it: Wolvaardt

## Sports Bureau

CHENNAI

South Africa captain Laura Wolvaardt underlined the need for an improved red-ball framework back home, calling for more fixtures across levels or abandoning the format.

South Africa does not have a domestic multi-day structure with all senior members coming into the fixture with sparse Test experience.

"It's obviously a challenge for most of us not having any sort of preparation in the format. Just coming straight into an international multi-day game is difficult," said Wolvaardt ahead of the one-off Test against India.

"For example, balls that I've been cover-driving my whole life, I now need to leave. That is difficult for me because it happens on instinct and I have to fight the way that I've been batting for my entire career.

"I think either we need to play a lot more Test cricket and incorporate it into our domestic practice and training, or we must just leave it because playing one in three years is very hard to adapt to. But I'm on the side to have more of it."

One of the biggest consequences of the gulf in experience is a spin handicap the Proteas are wary of. The visitors faced plenty of spin in the nets, anticipating a wicket primed for tweekers to thrive on. For instance, opener Tazmin Brits was seen facing only spin from the net bowlers in her brief and breezy net session on Thursday afternoon. She often went down the pitch and even played a reverse-sweep.

"India do have a really big home ground advantage. I think winning a Test in India is very tough," the 25-year-old said.

## 'Series will help us understand the wickets'

S. Prasanna Venkatesan  
CHENNAI

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Thursday recognised the importance of Indian players getting to play at different venues across the country through National assignments and the Women's Premier League (WPL) ahead of next year's ODI World Cup in India.

Last December, India played two Tests versus England and Australia at the D.Y. Patil stadium in Navi Mumbai and the Wankhede stadium. Subsequently, the Women's Premier League (WPL) was held at the M. Chinnaswamy stadium and the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Three ODIs versus South Africa were also

played in Bengaluru this month. Now, as the players get to experience playing at the M.A. Chidambaram stadium here in a one-off Test versus South Africa from Friday, she said: "As a team, it's a great opportunity for us. We're getting used to home conditions. Even though they are home conditions, we don't have much experience. But I think these series will definitely give us a lot of confidence to see how the wicket is going to behave and what combinations we can look for the World Cup. Just one year left, and I think as a team, we are taking this opportunity with both hands."

Harmanpreet still has the best bowling figures by an Indian woman against South Africa in Tests, cour-



Talking tactics: Skipper Harmanpreet and bowling coach Salvi discuss key points on the eve of the Test. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

tesy her match haul of 9/85 which helped India thrash the Proteas by an innings and 34 runs ten years ago in Mysore. While the skipper chooses not to bowl as

much in the longer formats off late, she didn't rule out the possibility of rolling her arm at Chepauk.

"If I get the opportunity (to bowl), definitely (I will

bow). Not only me, but Smriti (Mandhana) is also bowling now, and if need be, we can use her as well," she quipped.

While the Indian think tank balances big picture planning alongside match progression, Harmanpreet underlined that it was important for the players to view the game in parts.

"In the long format you have to be there (in the middle) for four days. But if you think like that, as a player you can overthink. The last time (we played a Test), we only thought about winning the sessions and that really helped us. The best thing about Test cricket is you have time to come back. If you lose one session, you always have time to make up for things."

## Kiran smashes Olympic qualifying mark, books Paris ticket

## ATHLETICS

Uthra Ganesan  
PANCHKULA

Kiran Pahal had already caused a flutter on Thursday morning, running the fastest 400m in the heats. But the extent of her achievement sunk in only in the evening when the 23-year old from Haryana smashed everything in sight – the meet record, her personal best and, most importantly, the Olympic qualifying mark – on the opening day of the 63rd Inter-State athletics championships here.

Kiran clocked 50.92 seconds – the OQ mark is 50.95s – to become only the second Indian ever to go under 51, behind national record holder Hima Das. Interestingly, she was participating in her first competition this year, after an eight-month gap, and this is the first time she has breached the 51-second mark.

Her previous best was a 51.84s set during the Ha-



Special day: Kiran broke a few records in the women's 400m while Parvej sauntered to victory in the men's 1500m. RITU RAJ KONWAR

ryana State championships in 2022. Add the fact that she trains on her own in Rohtak, has no sponsors and is practically downed by her family and it becomes clear why her eyes welled up after the race.

"My father was my biggest support but after his death two years ago, I have been alone. My mother and brother haven't spoken to me in over a year. There was a time when I had thrown away my kit and decided I won't compete again. But competition is a high only an ath-

lete can understand," a choked Kiran said.

Family is only one of the many fronts on which she has been fighting. Having made it to the national camp in 2022, she was removed last year. Everything from training to competition to diet has been a struggle. "I even wanted to enter in the 200m but was unable to do so from the State," she revealed.

While the Indian men's and women's relay teams have already qualified, India is racing against time in the mixed relay. With her



time here, Kiran might be an asset for the relay side, which looks tough with the AFI rule of not considering national campers but she is open to the idea. "Anything that can help India," she shrugged.

In the men's event, however, things were more settled with the relay team stars all getting direct entry into the semifinals and easily booking their spots in the final.

In the men's 1500m, the showdown between NCAA sensation Parvej Khan and Avinash Sable never hap-

pened with the former sauntering to victory in the first heat and the latter not starting. Sable, however, is confirmed for the 3000m steeplechase as per AFI.

In the morning heats, 100m national record holder Manikanta Hoblidhar finished a disappointing fifth with 11.10 seconds and did not start in the semifinals.

There were no surprises otherwise with the top 3 – Animesh Kujur, Amlan Borgohain and Gurinder Singh – winning their respective semifinals. Hi-

ma Das timed 12.69s in the 100m to finish sixth in her heat and did not qualify for the semifinals. The main contenders in men's high jump – Sarvesh Kushare, Tejaswin Shankar and Jesse Sandesh – all qualified for Friday's final.

## New meet record

In the 5000m – one of the three finals held on the day – Gulveer Singh set a new meet record of 13 minutes, 34.67 seconds, bettering his own previous mark by more than eight seconds but it was far from the Olympic qualifying mark of 13:05.00. Among the women, Uttarakhand's Ankita clocked 16:12.27 to take gold while in hammer throw, Manju Bala finished on top with 63.66m.

## The results (only finals):

**Men: 5000m:** Gulveer Singh (UP, 13:34.67), Sunil Dawar (14:02.75), Gagan Singh (Har, 14:05.66).  
**Women: 5000m:** Ankita (Utk, 16:10.31), Seema (HP, 16:10.37), Sanjivani Jadhav (16:12.27).  
**Hammer Throw:** Manju Bala (Raj, 63.66m), Harshita Sehrawat (Del, 62.20m), Tanya Chaudhary (UP, 61.57m).

# Mirabai treading cautiously

The champion lifter is taking precautions to avoid a repeat of her heart-breaking experience at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year



**Vigilant:** Mirabai is taking care not to pick up an injury during training. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

## WEIGHTLIFTING

**Y. B. Sarangi**  
KOLKATA

Keen to add another Olympic medal to her silver in Tokyo, weightlifter Mirabai Chanu is taking precautions to avoid a repeat of her heart-breaking experience at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year.

For Mirabai, the only Indian lifter to have qualified for Paris 2024, the last Asian Games, where she injured her right hip during the competition and could not register a total, was a learning experience.

"I take care not to pick up an injury during my training. I am careful about my technique, strength (training) and diet. What I eat and recovery are important. What exercises I do

and which muscles I focus on are also important," said Mirabai during an interaction facilitated by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Thursday.

The ace lifter went through five months of rehab after the Asian Games and competed in the IWF World Cup in Phuket in April to successfully lift 184kg. It was 18kg less than her aggregate in the Tokyo Games, and she would need to lift more than 200kg to brighten her medal chances in Paris.

"Now I am lifting 80 to 85 per cent (of what I am capable of). There is a month left for the Games. I will increase my load gradually."

The 29-year-old, who is going through mixed emotions ranging from excitement to anxiety to tension to nervousness, is sched-

uled to leave for Paris on July 7 to train there in the run-up to the Games.

"I have faced a lot in the last three years due to injuries. The competitors have changed. I wonder whether I can [win a] medal again. But if I give my 100 per cent, then I can get a medal for the country."

"I am privileged to get an opportunity to train in Paris ahead of the Olympics. I thank the SAI and the Indian Weightlifting Federation for their support."

Mirabai also thanked her coach Vijay Sharma for his guidance. "I discuss everything with Vijay sir. He treats me like his daughter. My life changed after getting associated with him in 2014," said Mirabai, looking forward to another successful Olympic campaign with her coach.

# Vaidehi Chaudhari makes it to the last-eight stage

## TENNIS

### Sports Bureau

Vaidehi Chaudhari overcame a sedate start to beat Sohyun Park of Korea 0-6, 6-4, 6-2 in the second round of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament in Taipei, Taiwan, on Thursday.

**The results:**  
**€74,825 Challenger, Milan, Italy: First round:** Andre Begemann (Ger) & Jonathan Eysseric (Fra) bt Rithvik Bollipalli & Niki Poonacha 6-2, 4-6, [10-6].

**\$25,000 ITF men, Hillcrest, South Africa: Second round:** Ishaque Eqbal bt Alexey Aleschev (Rus) 4-6, 6-2, 5-1 (retired); Aryan Shah bt Toby Martin (GBR) 6-4, 6-4.

**Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Aditya Balsekar & Thando

Longwe-Smit (RSA) bt Isshaque Eqbal & Kris Vann Wyk (RSA) 6-1, 6-3;  
**Pre-quarterfinals:** Aditya & Thando bt James Beaven (GBR) & Darrshan Suresh (Mas) 2-6, 7-5, [10-].

**\$15,000 ITF men, Tianjin, China: Second round:** S. Mukund bt Zhang Linghao (Chn) 6-3, 6-4.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan: Second round:** Savely Ivanov bt Siddharth Vishwakarma 7-5, 7-6(3); Martin Borisouk bt S.D. Prajwal Dev 6-3, 6-4.

**Doubles: Quarterfinals:** S.D. Prajwal Dev & Nitin Kumar Sinha bt Kirill Kolganov & Yerassyl Murat (Kaz) 7-5, 5-7, [10-5].

Daniel Khazime & Maxim Zhukov bt Daniel Ibragimov & Karan Singh 0-6, 6-4, [10-4].

**\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: First round:** Sai Kartek Reddy & Dev Javia bt Amr Elsayed (Egy) & Ilia

Simakin 6-4, 3-6, [10-8].

**\$40,000 ITF women, Palma del Rio, Spain: First round:** Anastasiia Gureva bt Rutuja Bhosale 6-2, 6-2.

**Doubles: Quarterfinals:** Rutuja Bhosale & Sophie Chang (USA) bt Leonie Kung (Sui) & Vasanti Shinde 6-3, 6-2.

**\$25,000 ITF women, Taipei, Taiwan: Second round:** Vaidehi Chaudhari bt Sohyun Park (Kor) 0-6, 6-4, 6-2.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Los Angeles, USA: First round:** Sahaja Yamalapalli bt Elise Wagle (USA) 7-6(1), 7-6(4).

## LIVE TELECAST

**India Women vs South Africa Women:** Only Test, day 1, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 9.30 a.m.

**Hockey:** Pro League, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 8 & 10.30 p.m.

## SNAPSHOTS

### Punjab Junior Hockey League from Saturday

NEW DELHI: The Punjab Hockey League (PHL), featuring six teams in the junior section, will be organised by Roundglass Academy from Saturday.

Matches will be staged over the weekend on home and away basis at prominent grounds in Jalandhar, Mohali, Ludhiana and Jiwan Nagar. The inaugural match will be between Surjit Hockey Academy, Jalandhar and Namdhari Sports Academy.

SGPC Academy, Amritsar, PIS Mohali, PIS Ludhiana and Roundglass Academy will be the other teams.

"Exposure to competitive matches is very important for the development of young players. The Junior PHL aims to do that. The league format will help coaches to experiment

with different strategies as each team is assured of 10 matches. We hope the league will be a landmark in our efforts to promote hockey at the grassroots in Punjab," said Rajinder Singh, Dronacharya awardee and technical lead of Roundglass Academy.

### Kashish enters final

JAIPUR: Top seed Kashish Bhatia fought her way past Himaanshika Singh 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 in the semifinals of the Rs.100,000 AITA women's tennis tournament at the SKIT Campus on Thursday.

**The results (semifinals):** Kashish Bhatia bt Himaanshika Singh 3-6, 6-3, 6-2; Avani Chitale bt Divya Bhardwaj 6-3, 6-2.

**Quarterfinals:** Kashish bt Mahika Khanna 6-3, 6-1; Himaanshika bt Snigdha Patibandla 6-4, 7-5; Avani bt Pavithra Reddy 6-0, 6-3; Divya bt Richa Chougule 6-3, 6-3.

# Focus is on fine-tuning the basics, says Esha

## SHOOTING

**V.V. Subrahmanyam**  
HYDERABAD

At 19, shooter Esha Singh will be one of the youngest participants across all disciplines in next month's Paris Olympic Games and feels she is in the comfort zone with her preparations being really good.

Esha, who is back home for a short break after a camp in Luxembourg, said she was preparing for her event, 25m pistol, for her maiden Olympics like a beginner.

"I don't want to debate

on the kind of competition that will be there or on my own prospects. But I would like to keep the preparations as simple as possible. The focus is on fine-tuning the basics," Esha said in a chat with *The Hindu* here on Thursday.

She added that she was really happy to have got the opportunity to represent the country in the Olympics.

"I am very, very excited with the Olympics being so close now. I wouldn't say it would be tough as I have been going through the same experience in terms of preparations as I have been going through for all

the international events over the years. I am prepared for any challenge," said the shooter, a product of Gagan Narang's Gun For Glory Academy.

### No pressure

"I don't feel the pressure of expectations. I always believe in competing with myself and keep reminding myself that I took up the sport with so much interest and passion. "I will be preparing to compete with myself rather than even think about who the opponent will be," Esha said. "I just need to keep enjoying the moments and hope things fall in place."



Esha. FILE PHOTO

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iii	Bid Submission Start Date	10/07/2024 at 10.00 hrs.
iv	Last date of online e-Tender submission	18/07/2024 up to 16.00 hrs.
v	Bid will be opened on	19/07/2024 up to 16.00 hrs.
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**Government of Jharkhand**  
**Dr. Ramdayal Munda Tribal Welfare Research Institute, Ranchi**  
Department of Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, Minorities Ranchi-834008  
Phone No. 0651 -2551824, E-mail: - [tri.directorate@gmail.com](mailto:tri.directorate@gmail.com); [dir-triranchi@gov.in](mailto:dir-triranchi@gov.in)  
Ref no. 997Ranchi, Dated: 26.06.2024  
**Re-Expression of Interest**  
Dr. Ramdayal Munda Tribal Welfare Research Institute (TRI), Ranchi invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from interested Universities (all Colleges)/ Department of Universities/ Government Institutes/ Recognized Research Institutes for undertaking a Research Project of TRI, Ranchi during the financial year 2023-24.  
**Topic: A Study for Nutritional Enrichment of Food Basket of Students of Welfare Dept. run Residential Schools**  
Interested agencies are hereby requested to submit Expression of Interest (EOI) duly forwarded by Director of the Institutes/Registrar of Universities/Head of Departments [applicable to Universities (all Colleges)/ Department of Universities only] along with technical EOI giving relevant details of the organization/ Institute/ University necessary for evaluating the competencies on or before 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The price should be all inclusive (inclusive of all requisite statutory taxes, if applicable) and not open ended. The intending agencies may submit their EOI in sealed envelope on or before the due date. Technical proposal should be sealed in a separate envelope clearly marked in BOLD A TECHNICAL PROPOSAL FOR: "A Study for Nutritional Enrichment of Food Basket of Students of Welfare Dept. run Residential Schools" (Please specify name of the concerned project) written on the top of the envelope. These envelopes are to be addressed to the Director, Dr. Ramdayal Munda Tribal Welfare Research Institute (TRI), Morabadi, Ranchi-834008. TRI will not be responsible for delay in transit or damages or loss of proposal document sent by post.  
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# Georgia makes history with shock win over Portugal

Kvaratskhelia gives the tournament debutant the lead in the second minute while Mikautadze adds the second; Turkiye edges into last 16 with tense win over Czechia



Top finish: Kvaratskhelia scores Georgia's first against Portugal. AFP



Agence France-Presse  
GELSENKIRCHEN

Georgia is through to the last 16 of Euro 2024 after Wednesday's 2-0 win over Portugal, a historic triumph in the former Soviet Republic's first appearance at a major international tournament.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia gave Georgia a shock lead against a second-string Portugal team with just over a minute on the clock.

Georges Mikautadze then ensured Georgia would claim the biggest football victory in the Black Sea nation's history with a 57th-minute penalty.

Willy Sagnol's team qualifies from Group F as

one of the four best third-placed finishers after its first ever European Championship win, which set up a daunting clash with red-hot Spain on Sunday.

Portugal had already qualified for the next round as group winner and coach Roberto Martinez made eight changes from the team which swept Turkey aside to guarantee first place last weekend.

However, his team was on top for most of the match and looked likely to equalise before Antonio Silva, who gave the ball away for the first goal, was harshly penalised for light contact with Luka Lochoshvili to give away the decisive penalty.

Regardless Portugal will face Slovenia on Monday and, saving any injuries, Martinez will have a mostly rested first XI to call upon.

Meanwhile, Turkiye reached the knockout phase at a major tournament for the first time in 16 years after a bad-tempered 2-1 win over a battling 10-man Czechia on Wednesday.

## Final points table

Team	P	W	L	D	GF	GA	GD	Pts
<b>Group A</b>								
Germany (Q)	3	2	0	1	8	2	6	7
Switzerland (Q)	3	1	0	2	5	3	2	5
Hungary	3	1	2	0	2	5	-3	3
Scotland	3	0	2	1	2	7	-5	1
<b>Group B</b>								
Spain (Q)	3	3	0	0	5	0	5	9
Italy (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
Croatia	3	0	1	2	3	6	-3	2
Albania	3	0	2	1	3	5	-2	1
<b>Group C</b>								
England (Q)	3	1	0	2	2	1	1	5
Denmark (Q)	3	0	0	3	2	2	0	3
Slovenia (Q)	3	0	0	3	2	2	0	3
Serbia	3	0	1	2	1	2	-1	2
<b>Group D</b>								
Austria (Q)	3	2	1	0	6	4	2	6
France (Q)	3	1	0	2	2	1	1	5
Netherlands (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
Poland	3	0	2	1	3	6	-3	1
<b>Group E</b>								
Romania (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	3	1	4
Belgium (Q)	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	4
Slovakia (Q)	3	1	1	1	3	3	0	4
Ukraine	3	1	1	1	2	4	-2	4
<b>Group F</b>								
Portugal (Q)	3	2	1	0	5	3	2	6
Turkiye (Q)	3	2	1	0	5	5	0	6
Georgia (Q)	3	1	1	1	4	4	0	4
Czechia	3	0	2	1	3	5	-2	1

Vincenzo Montella's Turkiye finished second behind Portugal to progress, as the Czechs were eliminated despite a brave performance on a sweltering night in Hamburg.

Turkiye will face Austria in the last 16 in Leipzig on Tuesday, its first major tournament knockout match since the Euro 2008 semifinals.

The Czechs were reduced to 10 men in the 20th minute when Antonin Barak was given the earliest red card in Euros history, beating France's Eric Abidal unwanted record in 2008.

**The results: Group F:** Czechia 1 (Soucek 66) lost to Turkey 2 (Calhanoglu 51, Tosun 90+4); Georgia 2 (Kvaratskhelia 2, Mikautadze 57-pen) bt Portugal 0.

# Venezuela into quarterfinals after a hard-fought victory over Mexico

COPA AMERICA

Agence France-Presse  
LOS ANGELES

Venezuela booked its place in the quarterfinals of the Copa America on Wednesday with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Mexico that ensured Jamaica's elimination from the tournament.

Mexico-based veteran striker Salomon Rondon stroked in the only goal from the penalty spot to seal all three points for Venezuela, which is top of Group B with six points from two games.

Mexico, meanwhile, can still qualify for the knock-



Well taken penalty: Rondon, centre, leads Venezuela's celebration after scoring from the spot. AP

out rounds with a victory over Ecuador in their final group game on Sunday.

But the Mexicans will be left kicking themselves at their failure to take at least

a point from Wednesday's clash with Venezuela.

Mexico's Orbelin Pineda missed an 87th-minute spot kick that would have made it 1-1, his effort par-

ried away by Venezuela goalkeeper Rafael Romo.

Rondon fired Venezuela into the lead in the 57th minute Mexico's Julian Quiñones brought down Jon Aramburu with a clumsy challenge in the area.

Venezuela's win confirmed Jamaica's exit from the tournament following its 3-1 loss to Ecuador in Las Vegas earlier on Wednesday.

Ecuador held off a spirited second-half rally by the Reggae Boyz to claim a vital three points.

**The results:** Ecuador 3 (Palmer 13-og, Paez 45+4-pen, Minda 90+1) bt Jamaica 1 (Antonio 54); Venezuela 1 (Rondon 57-pen) bt Mexico 0.

# Campbell retires after missing out on Paris

Agence France-Presse  
SYDNEY

Australian swimmer Cate Campbell has announced her retirement after failing to qualify for a fifth Olympics, ending a career in which she set seven world records and won a slew of medals.

The 32-year-old, regarded as one of the best relay swimmers, missed out on a Paris berth in the 50m and 100m freestyle at the Australian trials this month. "I gave the pursuit of a fifth Olympics everything I had, and therefore, even in failure, there is a small, indelible kernel of pride," she said on Wednesday.

**THE HINDU POWERPLAY T20 TRIVIA QUIZ**

- Which full member country has the most wins against a single opponent in all T20 Internationals up until the group stage of the 2024 T20 World Cup? (9-0 against Bangladesh)
- With a total run aggregate of 222, which game holds the record for the fewest runs aggregated in a T20 World Cup game where both teams played the full 20 overs?
- Prior to the 2024 World Cup, what was the lowest score India had successfully defended in a full 20-over game in a T20 World Cup?

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# Euro 2024 – a German summer fairytale in the making

With stunning goals, end-to-end play and new records, the tournament still has a long way to go before a champion is crowned; judging by the way the group stage has gone, the second act has the potential to make it a fairytale for football fans around the world



**Memorable moment:** Georgia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili celebrates with a teammate after the stunning win over Portugal. The victory put the team in the round-of-16. AFP

## Vighnesh P. Venkitesh

**C**urtains are down after the first act of European drama playing out in the German theatre and the audiences have witnessed every emotion playing out. From elation to heartbreak, from scare to survival, the group stage of Euro 2024 delivered more than what fans expected from a continental tournament.

After a delayed tournament with reduced and controlled crowds owing to the pandemic and a World Cup held in West Asia, Europe has come alive to celebrate international football in its backyard with no distancing and disruptions, and the exuberance brimmed in the stands for each match.

What played out in Leipzig's Red Bull Arena sums up the emotions that were on display throughout. Croatia, needing nothing less than a victory to go through to the knockouts was leading Italy since the 55th minute of the game when its veteran talisman Luka Modric made amends for a missed penalty to become the oldest goalscorer in the history of the tournament.

But Italy took the game back with the last kick of the game, silencing the Croats waiting for the final whistle to storm the pitch. And when their joy turned to tears, the defending champion let out a sigh of relief having come back from the brink of elimination to see another day.

"Football is cruel," Modric said after the loss. "That's part and parcel of football. Sometimes it brings a lot of happiness, but sometimes it makes you very sad as well."

Meanwhile Georgia had another story to tell.

### A miracle

Arriving at the tournament with no expectations and celebrating its entry itself as a historic moment, the team managed by Frenchman Willy Sagnol has conjured up a miracle.

"The only responsibility we had was to make the Georgian nation proud of their players. And I think we've done it the best way," Sagnol said.

Given the same requirements as Croatia to make the grade in its first ever major tournament, Georgia had a real Goliath in front in the form of former champion Portugal and the mighty Cristiano Ronaldo leading the line. But Georgia had its slingshot loaded and struck in the second minute of the game through Napoli's Kvicha Kvaratskhelia. And its grit proved more than enough to

fend of Portugal's relentless attacks and won the game with a comfortable 2-0 scoreline to book a place in the round of 16.

"When you're the small team, you know you have nothing to lose," Sagnol said after qualification. "The only thing we said before the competition is whatever happened, we don't want any regrets after the competition, the regret of maybe not having played our football or maybe not having enjoyed the competition as much as we should have done."

"So, you have no weight on your shoulders. It's difficult when you're France, when you're England, when you're Spain, when you're Portugal, because you're under pressure, because people expect you to win."

While every tournament has its own dark horses, looked over during discussions and predictions only to go farther than anyone could have imagined, Germany has been a tournament of Davids so far. Though no major Goliaths other than Croatia fell in the group stage, the heavyweights and favourites had their task cut out. The underdogs made it clear from the first matchday that every group was a group of death, and no one should

expect a cakewalk.

But as every team struggled at one point or the other, from hosts Germany on the hunt for a *sommermarchen* (summer fairytale) to give a perfect farewell to their beloved Toni Kroos, who came back from retirement to provide much needed anchor to the team, to the star-studded France seeking to re-establish dominance and England looking to bring football home but nearly stumbled along the way from lack of chemistry and incompatible tactics, one team stood tall and brought back memories of its scary prime.

Spain became the first team to lock in its position in the knockout roster and was the only team to win all three matches in its group: the group B which pundits had declared the group of death. And what makes it more appreciable is the fact that it did it without conceding a goal, again the only team to do so.

There is a visible shift in gameplay and mentality of La Roja, who have moved on from their tiki taka era, whose loss of steam was evident from the way the team played for majority of the last decade.

Gone are the days when the team prioritised possession over offensive manoeuvres, and the current crop of

players under the guidance of former national youth team coach Luis de la Fuente are making use of young guns Nico Williams and Lamine Yamal in the wings to thrust forward at every chance possible.

As with every tournament, such dominance is by no means a measure to predict the trajectory of the team, but the Spanish armada has spread its sails, full wind behind and looking formidable. Yet, de la Fuente is trying his best not to get the performances make them lose focus. "It doesn't cost anything to dream, but we need to keep our feet on the ground," he said after the conclusion of the group stage.

With Spain, Germany, France and Portugal on a collision course after being slotted into the same side of the knockout roster, the tournament is far and wide open.

With stunning goals, end-to-end gameplay and new records, the tournament still has a long way to go before a champion is crowned, and judging by the way the group stage has gone, the second act has the potential to make this German summer indeed a fairytale for football fans around the world.

## THE GIST

▼ With Spain, Germany, France and Portugal on a collision course after being slotted into the same side of the knockout roster, the tournament is far and wide open

▼ While every tournament has its own dark horses, looked over during discussions and predictions only to go farther than anyone could have imagined, Germany has been a tournament of Davids so far

▼ Arriving at the tournament with no expectations and celebrating its entry itself as a historic moment, Georgia managed by Frenchman Willy Sagnol has conjured up a miracle

▼ When Croatia's joy turned to tears, Italy — the defending champion — let out a sigh of relief having come back from the brink of elimination to see another day



**Bundle of joy:** Mattia Zaccagni's equaliser deep into injury time (90+8) broke Croatian hearts and sent Italy into the next stage. AFP

SCIENCE

# Healthcare providers need to pay greater attention to informed consent

Consent is supposed to be taken by the doctor performing the procedure, however, in most places in India, this work is relegated to the nurses to save the doctors' time. The patient's signature has to be taken only after explaining all the information in the form clearly

Christianeze Ratna Kiruba

In April, I visited a popular private hospital in Guwahati so that my father-in-law could be treated for a collection of fluid around his left lung – known as a pleural effusion. To diagnose the cause, doctors suggested that some of the fluid be removed via a needle for testing, which is the standard practice.

In the procedure room a nurse placed an unfilled consent form before me and said "Sign here." This was the 'Informed Consent' form. Informed consent is considered the cornerstone of a doctor-patient relationship. It means that a patient needs to be given all the information regarding their condition, including treatment options, the steps of a procedure if one is suggested along with possible complications. This information allows the patient to make a balanced, well-informed decision on available options, including whether they would like to undergo the procedure (or consent to a treatment option or procedure, so to speak).

This blank consent form which was presented to me did not serve its intended purpose. It flouted the principles of informed consent as laid down by a seminal judgement of the Supreme Court in 2008, in several ways. Firstly, consent is supposed to be taken by the doctor performing the procedures. However, in most places in India, this work is relegated to the nurses to save the doctors' time. The form also needs to contain information about the procedure and the possible complications in a language that the patient understands. The patient's signature has to be taken only after explaining all the information in the form clearly. However, in most hospitals across India, "Sign here" is often the only instruction patients receive before they are asked to consent to treatments and medical procedures.

### Inadequate process

Over the years, several studies have been published auditing the informed consent process in various treatment facilities in India. These studies reveal gross inadequacies in the process of obtaining consent from patients. A study published in 2015 in the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology India* revealed that while 75% per cent of women who underwent caesarean sections were told why they needed the surgery, only 25% were told the steps of the procedure and what complications could be expected. Another study, published in the *Journal of Medical Society* in 2019, audited 100 consent documents from different



While 75% per cent of women who underwent caesarean sections were told why they needed the surgery, only 25% were told what complications could be expected. GETTY IMAGES

hospitals to check whether adequate information was provided in them. This study revealed that almost all the documents lacked around one-third of the essential medical information they needed to contain.

The other important aspect of health where consent plays a crucial role is biomedical research, where people may be enrolled as participants in clinical trials. There too, it appears that there are several issues with the robustness of the informed consent process. A 2023 study published in *Perspectives in Clinical Research* revealed that out of 44 online surveys audited, 10 completely lacked informed consent forms while the remaining 34 had informed consent forms which were either incomplete or not adherent to the guidelines set by ICMR.

"An informed consent form is a very important legal document," says K. Mathiharan, a forensic medicine and medical law expert. "When a doctor faces litigation for medical negligence or for complications, the signed informed consent will prove that the patient was counselled regarding the complications and consented to the procedure with knowledge of the same. This is why doctors and hospitals prioritise getting signatures on these forms for every procedure," he explains. However, as evidenced by my own experience, a signed consent form does not necessarily mean that any information was communicated.

### Inability to consent

"Most of the forms you see in hospitals are in English. This means that they cannot be read by people who don't know the language and they depend on



Informed consent is considered the cornerstone of a doctor-patient relationship

doctors/nurses to tell them what's in the form. Some patients may not know how to sign and one will see an interesting juxtaposition of their fingerprints on a paper in English," adds Dr. Mathiharan.

"I have met patients carrying forms that state that they have left a hospital against medical advice," says a duty doctor working in Satribari Christian Hospital, Guwahati. "When asked why they left the hospital, they say that they were told that the hospital had no beds and that they were being referred elsewhere and made to sign the paper. They did not know that the paper implied that they left against the advice of the doctor."

These narratives as well as statistics come together to impress upon us that the informed consent procedure in India leaves a lot to be desired. Before considering solutions, it is crucial to understand why it is important. Studies show that patients experience more satisfaction with their treatment if adequate information is provided and consent is taken. Studies also reveal that patients respond better to treatment when a good informed consent process is employed before initiating it. Informed consent also opens the door for shared decision-making – where a patient and the doctor work as a team to ensure the best possible outcome while keeping patient preferences in mind.

"When done right, the informed

consent process can protect doctors in more ways than one," says Dr. Mathiharan. In India, a country where there is recorded distrust of doctors which has led to violence; rapport and trust must be built by providing detailed and timely information to patients and their relatives. "I prioritise explaining everything to my patients in detail," says Pravin Singarayar, an obstetrician from Sittlingi, in Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu, who serves a tribal population. "I always give them timely updates and I ensure I do it in person. I think it's because of this habit that I have never faced any threat of violence to date," he adds.

### Moral imperative

The informed consent process is a moral imperative – something that holds good even without statistics to justify its existence. Every person deserves to know exactly what is happening to their body and what might happen if they agree to a treatment or procedure. This becomes especially relevant in cases where the loss of life or organs is involved. An example would be severely-ill patients who may have signed a "Do not resuscitate" form either on their own or via their relatives. In these cases, consent taken with inadequate information can lead to an infringement on the patient's right to life.

"I think the important first step is to create awareness among patients that they have a right to this information," says Dr. Mohammad Aslam Ali, a consultant dermatologist in Guwahati. "No one should sign any papers given to them in hospitals unless they have read and understood the contents well. I would suggest patients demand the consent form in their native language or ask family or friends to read it to foster good comprehension. Once patients start making these demands, it's only a matter of time before doctors and hospitals course correct," he adds.

"Some hospitals refuse to give patients their papers or printed copies of test reports. Patients must know that they have a right to their medical information and can demand it."

It is also important for hospitals to carry these forms in local languages. Other steps to increase understanding of information could be the use of image or video-based tools. Several studies demonstrate the success of video-based informed consent tools in helping patients decide what is best for them. The usage of videos can also overcome language barriers and reduce patient anxiety.

(Dr. Christianeze Ratna Kiruba is an internal medicine doctor with a passion for patient rights advocacy. christianezedennis@gmail.com)

### THE GIST

An audit of 100 consent documents from different hospitals revealed that almost all the documents lacked around one-third of the essential medical information they needed

When a doctor faces litigation for negligence or complications, the consent proves that the patient was counselled regarding the complications and consented with full knowledge

Informed consent is a moral imperative. This is especially relevant in cases where loss of life is extremely likely because of the patient's delicate condition

### BIG SHOT



Palestinian ophthalmologist Bilal Rajab Hasnat, watches an internally displaced boy trying on a pair of glasses at his make shift clinic in the town of al-Zawaida in the central Gaza Strip. AFP

## A playbook to handle gestational diabetes better

Ramya Kannan

A new series published in *The Lancet* on gestational diabetes takes a deep dive into the subject to come up with suggestions for greater focus on the pregnancy-related condition, and a shift to a holistic life-course approach in its management.

After a series on menopause in March, *The Lancet* has launched another series that looks at neglected areas of women's health. This time it deals with gestational diabetes, which refers to hyperglycaemia or high blood sugar levels first diagnosed during pregnancy. A common medical disorder in pregnancy, it reportedly has a global prevalence of 14%. The series offers insights and evidence into pathophysiology, screening, management, and prevention, besides suggesting new models of care that could protect both women and their children.

Age, family history of diabetes, and high BMI are major risk factors, so it comes as no surprise that rates are rising alongside a broader crisis of non-communicable diseases, such as obesity and cardiometabolic disorders, among women of childbearing age. Helmed by an editorial, the series talks of the increased complications associated with gestational diabetes its long term impact on the mother and infant, its rising incidence, the need to detect it earlier than is being done currently, modern treatment methodologies, and the need for a lifestyle approach to prevent onset of GDM and complications.



Gestational diabetes is a common medical disorder during pregnancy, it has a global prevalence of 14%. GETTY IMAGES

Complications Gestational diabetes is associated with an increased risk of pregnancy complications, but it also threatens serious long-term complications for both mother and baby. Up to 31% of type 2 diabetes cases in parous women are attributable to gestational diabetes. Babies born to women with gestational diabetes are at increased risk not only of short-term perinatal morbidity and mortality but also of long-term complications, such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and neurodevelopmental disorders. Experts from across the world pitched in as part of the series.

The editorial highlighted, from the research papers in the series, two major barriers to providing appropriate care for these women: first, resources, and second, the isolation of secondary maternal care from primary care, meaning crucial information about a woman's pregnancy and how it might affect their long-term health is lost. But many other factors probably play into this

failure, including a misconceived paternalistic wish to avoid further worrying women, childbearing mostly happening to young and physically well women for whom the long-term risks of non-communicable diseases might seem too distant, and a health-care ecosystem that prioritises the baby's health after birth over that of the mother.

### Glycaemic exposure

The first paper reviews the pathophysiology of glycaemic dysregulation in gestational diabetes pregnancies, and the many maternal, placental, and fetal factors from early to late pregnancy that underlie pregnancy outcomes and programming for the future health of mothers, and offspring exposed to gestational diabetes. The second presents the epidemiology of gestational diabetes (early and late), screening and diagnosis, pregnancy complications, medical and obstetric management, and the health and economic considerations of screening, monitoring, and treating

gestational diabetes. The third paper focuses on transforming the current pregnancy-focused approach to a long-term, life-course perspective on gestational diabetes.

Uma Ram, senior obstetrician and gynaecologist and one of the authors, says it is important to focus on the intergenerational impact of gestational diabetes. The *Lancet* series is helpful in the sense that it is where a call for action emerges.

V. Seshiah a senior diabetologist who is quite a GDM evangelist himself, says he has always recommended early testing of all pregnant women. "We have, in a recent paper, recommended universal screening of all pregnant women during the early weeks of the first trimester. Further, we have proposed a testing strategy that has worked well in India: a two hour postprandial blood sugar level of over 110 mg/dl during the eighth to 10th week of pregnancy can predict the risk of GDM." (ramya.kannan@thehindu.co.in)

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