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English Medium	हिंदी माध्यम
<b>Delhi</b> Karol Bagh   13 July   Weekend Batch Karol Bagh   2 Aug   11:30 AM Mukherjee Nagar   7 Aug   6 PM	करोल बाग   22 जुलाई   सुबह 8 बजे मुखर्जी नगर   31 जुलाई   शाम 6 बजे
<b>Jaipur</b> 9 July   11 AM	8 जुलाई   सुबह 11 बजे
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**INTERVIEW**  
**India, U.S. share goals on Ukraine: Garcetti**  
NEWS » PAGE 12



**NO STEPPING BACK**  
**White House clears the air over Biden's candidacy**  
WORLD » PAGE 16

## Six held for U.P. stampede; no police action against godman

Preacher not named in FIR; police announce a reward of ₹1 lakh for information on Devprakash Madhukar, the main accused; probe teams formed to search for persons who were part of the organising committee of the prayer meeting

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh police arrested six persons, including two women, on Thursday in connection with the stampede at a religious gathering in Hathras that left 121 people dead.

The arrested persons were part of the committee that organised the *satsang* of preacher Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba, who was not named in the first information report (FIR).

The police also announced a reward of ₹1 lakh for information on



**Devastating tragedy:** A forensic expert collecting evidence from the stampede site in Hathras on Wednesday. R.V. MOORTHY

Devprakash Madhukar, the main accused of the incident. He was a follower of Bhole Baba and collected funds for his events, the police said.

Speaking about the arrests, Shalabh Mathur, Inspector-General of Police, Aligarh Range said police teams have been formed to search for persons who were part of the organising committee of the *satsang*, across U.P. and outside.

"Our teams arrested six persons identified as Rahbari Singh Yadav, Bhupendar Singh Yadav, Megh Singh, Manju Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, and Manju

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### IN BRIEF



**Swearing-in row: W.B. Speaker calls special session**

**KOLKATA**  
West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee on Thursday called a special session of the Assembly on Friday and said "everything is not in the hands of the Governor". The move comes amid the deadlock over the swearing-in of two newly elected TMC MLAs. » PAGE 4

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## Hemant Soren sworn in as Jharkhand CM

**Amit Bhelari**  
RANCHI

Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Hemant Soren was sworn in as Jharkhand Chief Minister for the third time on Thursday.

Mr. Soren, who is currently out on bail in a money laundering case, was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan at Raj Bhavan in Ranchi.

**'Work for development'**  
"Despite the political ups and downs, Champai Soren ji was running the go-

## Sea of fans



**Victory lap:** Marine Drive in Mumbai is filled with fans waiting to greet the Indian cricket team ahead of its victory parade after winning the T20 World Cup in Barbados. The team arrived in India on Thursday morning. EMMANUAL YOGINI (REPORT ON PAGE 17)

## Jaishankar meets Wang Yi, says LAC must be respected

**Sahasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

In their first such meeting since the Lok Sabha election, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council meeting on Thursday.

Both sides stressed the importance of "mutual respect" in resolving the boundary issues that have frozen ties between them for the past four years.

Mr. Jaishankar told Mr. Wang that it was important that the "Line of Actual



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. ANI

hour, and was held just before the start of the SCO Summit.

"The two Ministers agreed that the prolongation of the current situation in the border areas is not in the interest of either side. EAM highlighted the need to redouble efforts to achieve complete disengagement from the remaining areas in Eastern Ladakh and restore border peace and tranquillity in order to remove obstacles towards the return of normalcy in bilateral relations," the MEA said.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 12

## Labour Party projected to oust Sunak govt. in U.K. polls

**Sriram Lakshman**  
LONDON

Millions went to the polls in the U.K. on Thursday, to vote for 650 MPs in the House of Commons, with the Labour Party projected to win a sizeable, if not historically large majority of more than 400 seats, according to several poll projections.

When final results are announced Friday morning, the accuracy of the polls and the fate of Rishi Sunak's government will be known.

The 44-year-old British Prime Minister, the first person of Indian descent to hold the position, heads the fifth in a series of Conservative governments that have spanned 14 years. During this period, Britons voted by a small margin to exit the European Union and went through the COVID-19 pandemic with attendant political scandals, including then Prime Minister Boris Johnson breaking lockdown rules.

The Conservative years



Voters leave a polling station in Belfast on Thursday. AFP

## Naidu meets Modi, seeks Central aid

**V. Raghavendra**  
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday and discussed various issues concerning the State.

Mr. Naidu sought the Union government's hand-holding of the State finances in the short term, support in commissioning the Polavaram irrigation project, and comprehensive financial assistance for the construction of the government complex and trunk infrastructure in Amaravati.

**Demand for incentives**  
The Chief Minister also sought incentives for industrial development, consideration of an additional allocation under the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment and support to the backward regions of the State on the lines of the Bundelkhand package, and the develop-



N. Chandrababu Naidu and Narendra Modi. ANI

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### AAP slams BJP over 'silence' on felling of trees in Ridge

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Thursday questioned the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) "silence" over the illegal felling of trees in the Ridge area. Addressing a press conference, senior AAP leader Jasmine Shah said, "Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena and the BJP have been silent ever since the Supreme Court took cognisance of the illegal felling of over 1,100 trees in the Ridge area by officials of the DDA [Delhi Development Authority]."

### 'Cost overruns in Lok Nayak Hospital project well-thought-out scam'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday attacked the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over allegations of corruption in the construction of an additional block at Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Hospital, calling it a "well-thought-out scam". "It is shocking to see that even as the Public Works Department (PWD) and Health Department have totally failed Delhiites, the concerned Ministers are engaged in dirty politics and seem to have

time for everything except improving the performance of their department," said Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, terming the PWD a "hotbed of corruption". AAP declined to respond to The Hindu's requests for a comment. On Tuesday, Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena had asked the Vigilance Department to request the Central Vigilance Commission to conduct an investigation into the "cost overrun" of ₹670 crore in the construction of the additional block.

# Transfer of govt. teachers: Atishi directs Chief Secy. to withdraw order right away

Education Minister says contrary to her orders, a notice was issued on July 2 transferring 5,000 teachers; AAP gov't. highlights 'worrying reports that bribes have been taken to stop the transfers'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Delhi Education Minister Atishi on Thursday said she has directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to immediately withdraw the transfer order of around 5,000 government school teachers that was issued without her directions.



Delhi Education Minister and AAP leader Atishi addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

Addressing a press conference, Ms. Atishi said, "Contrary to my orders, an order was issued on July 2 transferring nearly 5,000 teachers. I have directed the Chief Secretary to withdraw this order. I have also asked him to conduct an inquiry if there has been any corruption or malpractice." A circular titled 'Online requests for transfer of teaching staff of the Directorate of Education' was issued by the Education Department on June 11 which directed all teachers who have served for more than 10 years in one school to

compulsorily apply for a transfer. The order also stated that those who failed to apply would be transferred to any school by the Education Department. The new clause was introduced for the first time this year. The Minister had ordered on July 1 that no teacher should be transferred solely because they have spent more than 10 years in a particular school. On Wednesday, Ms. At-

ishi had issued a notice to the Secretary of Education and the Directorate of Education for "disobeying" the Minister's order, citing Article 239 AA which "gives the Delhi government power to exercise over matters in the Concurrent List". The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has alleged that Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena ordered the transfer of the teachers in order to disrupt the Delhi government's 'education model'.

The L-G office did not respond to queries over the issue. The AAP leader also raised serious concerns about "corruption" in the transfer process.

'Future of children' "There are worrying reports that bribes have been taken to stop the transfers. This is extremely concerning as corruption within the Education Department threatens the future of our children," she said.

The Minister called for an immediate investigation into these allegations and strict action against any officials found guilty of accepting bribes. AAP MLA Dilip Pandey said, "Despite the written instructions of Ms. Atishi, the L-G's office transferred more than 5,000 teachers overnight at the behest of the BJP. Taking cognisance of this matter, she has once again given instructions to the Chief Secretary through a letter."

### 'Mass transfers will impact the process of teaching and learning'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Amid the row over their mandatory transfer, Delhi government school teachers said the new policy does not leave them with an option.

"When three-four teachers are transferred at the same time, it impacts the teaching and learning process. Apart from teaching, they also handle other administrative work. For instance, if a particular teacher has been handling admissions every year, that teacher becomes well-versed in the procedure. Now, we will have to redistribute the work," said the principal of a Delhi government school who did not wish to be named.

Virendra Singh Yadav, president, Delhi All School Teachers' Association of NCT, said the orders are "not in favour of either the students or the teachers". "Over time, students build a bond with their teachers, and now they will have to start from scratch. Personal rapport is important for both teachers and students."

Mr. Yadav added that the move will also cause logistical issues. "Many teachers have been residing close to their schools. Now, some of them will have to travel farther. Several teachers are close to retirement age. They, too, will have to start at a new school from scratch," he said.

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Be it known to all that my client Mr. Dalal Singh Dabas S/o late Sahab Singh, R/o H.No.52, Village Barwala, District-59, entered into an agreement to sell and purchase/Buyanna of Plot no. 768 in Block B & Pocket A-3, measuring 20 sq. mtr. in Sector-36, situated in layout plan of Rohini Residential Scheme, Rohini, Delhi with Mr. Raj Kumar Bakshi S/o Dibaugh Singh, R/o I-6, Kirti, Firez Shah, New Delhi-2 and paid consideration amount of Rs.3 lacs and a self bearing no. CS DJ no.744718 is pending in the Court of Mr. Kishore Kumar, ADJ, North, Rohini Court, New Delhi, public at large is advised not to deal in respect of the said plot with Raj Kumar Bakshi or any of his agent/representative in any manner whatsoever and if anyone so deals shall be doing at his own risk and cost. S.C. Singhal Advocate Chamber: 262, Lawyer's Chambers, Delhi High Court, New Delhi-110003

By Order of the Committee of Management of MADRAS RACE CLUB  
S.NIRMAL PRASAD Secretary  
Place : Chennai  
Date : 27.06.2024

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
MADRAS RACE CLUB  
CIN : U74999TN1922NPL001455  
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Tel. No. 91-44 2235117/2/3/5 & 22350774  
Email Id : [secretary@madrasraceclub.com](mailto:secretary@madrasraceclub.com)

**NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023-24**  
Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the MADRAS RACE CLUB ("The Club") for the year 2023-2024 is scheduled to be held on Friday, 2nd August 2024 at 5.00 P.M. (IST) at the Registered Office of the Club, situated at Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, and also through Video Conference ("VC") / Other Audio Visual Means ("OAVM") to transact the business, as set out in the Notice of the AGM. Instructions for Members intending to attend the AGM at the Venue and vote at the venue or join the Annual General Meeting electronically and vote electronically are detailed in the Notice of the AGM. Notice of the AGM along with the Annual Report 2023-2024 has been sent through electronic mode to those Members whose e-mail addresses are registered with the Club and hard copy has been posted to those who do not have or who have not furnished the e-mail Id. The same will also be available on the Club's website at [www.madrasraceclub.com](http://www.madrasraceclub.com) and on the website of National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL), [www.evoting.nsdl.com](http://www.evoting.nsdl.com) the service providers for assisting such members who wish to participate in the meeting electronically. Club Members are requested to register / update their email address by writing to the Club with details of their membership number and attaching a self-attested copy of PAN Card as identity proof and self-attested copy of any document (viz. Driving Licence, Election Identity Card, Passport) in support of the address of the member at [secretary@madrasraceclub.com](mailto:secretary@madrasraceclub.com) or to [evoting@nsdl.com](mailto:evoting@nsdl.com). The Club has engaged the services of NSDL as the authorised agency for assisting Members in participating in the AGM electronically and for providing e-voting facility. Members can cast their vote online from 10.00 A.M. (IST) on Tuesday, 30th July 2024, till 5.00 P.M. (IST) on Thursday, 1st August 2024. At the end of remote e-voting period, the facility shall be disabled. The Members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the AGM may also attend / participate in the AGM through VC / OAVM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again. Only those members, whose names are recorded in the Register of Members as on the 'cut-of-date' i.e. Thursday, 27th June, 2024 only shall be entitled to vote. In terms of Articles of Association of the Club, no Club Member shall be entitled to vote at or take part in any meeting of the Club until all moneys due to the Club by him have been paid. Hence, Club Members are requested to settle all their dues on or before 5.00 P.M. on Thursday, 25th July, 2024 in order to cast their vote. Queries / grievances, if any, with regard to e-voting, may be addressed to the Secretary, Madras Race Club, through e-mail at [secretary@madrasraceclub.com](mailto:secretary@madrasraceclub.com) OR may please visit Help and FAQs section available at [www.evoting.nsdl.com](http://www.evoting.nsdl.com) or contact No. 022 4886 7000.

By Order of the Committee of Management of MADRAS RACE CLUB  
S.NIRMAL PRASAD Secretary  
Place : Chennai  
Date : 27.06.2024

## OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

**DEATH ANNIVERSARIES**

Those who live uprightly enter a place of peace; they rest on their beds. - Isaiah 57:2

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**DEATH**

**SHRI G. RANGACHARI** (@Kannan), 91 Years Passed away peacefully on 01.07.2024 at his Residence at D-3, Block-5, Jains Green Acres, 91, Dargah Road, Zamin Pallavaram Chennai 600 043. He is survived by his Wife Vasanth Rangachari, Daughters Srividhya Raaghavan, Sripriya, Malavika Venkatesh and Son Vijayaraghavan Rangachari. Contact Numbers 9840938509, 044-22663224.

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**THE HINDU**  
India's National Newspaper

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**Delhi Palam Today**  
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**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
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#TechnologyForSustainableGrowth



# Engineering a sustainable future through resilience, innovation and excellence.



Address by  
**Mr. S. N. Subrahmanyan**  
Chairman & Managing Director

**Dear Shareholders,**

It gives me great pleasure to address you at my first Annual General Meeting as Chairman and Managing Director of the Larsen & Toubro Group. We are at an interesting stage in the development of the Country and the Company alike, and intend to make optimum use of the unfolding opportunities to grow in a sustainable manner.

India today stands tall as an oasis of opportunity amidst global turmoil and supply chain disruptions. The Government's continuous efforts to strengthen the domestic economy through increased capital spending, policy shifts towards improving the ease of doing business, and the creation of a world-class digital infrastructure and payments platform have all contributed to an annual GDP growth rate of at least 7% for the last three years, and over 8% in the year under review. The pursuit of 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) through innovative schemes like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, the Start-Up India scheme, and the National Infrastructure Pipeline, has set a strong foundation to realise a *Viksit Bharat*.

During the year under review, the Company has benefitted from these positive policy interventions, as evidenced from its stellar financial performance.

## 79<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING | JULY 4, 2024

**A Portfolio of Excellence**

The Company's journey has been one of resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment to excellence. The diverse business portfolio comprises:

**1. EPC Projects (Construction & Energy):**  
The Company's expertise in executing large-scale EPC projects is unparalleled. Its indelible stamp of excellence graces iconic bridges, hydrocarbon facilities, large solar fields, and infrastructure across India and beyond. Notable recent achievements include the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), Mumbai Coastal Road Phase 1 and Shree Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya. Internationally, the Company delivered the 1.8 Gwp Sudair Solar PV plant in Saudi Arabia, a gas compression facility in Algeria, and contributed to blue hydrogen infrastructure in The Netherlands, among various other projects.

**2. Hi-Tech Manufacturing (Heavy Engineering and Precision Engineering & Systems):**  
The Company's Heavy Engineering division remains a global leader, supplying bespoke industrial equipment. It is at the forefront of adopting Industry 4.0 techniques, ensuring efficiency and quality. The Precision Engineering & Systems business focuses on indigenous design and has proudly contributed to India's lunar programme through Chandrayaan-3.

**3. Services (IT, Engineering, Digital and Financial):**  
The Company's listed arms continue to play pivotal roles, creating shareholder value:  
- **LTIMindtree:** India's 6<sup>th</sup> largest IT player and 5<sup>th</sup> largest by market capitalisation, bridging physical and digital realms.  
- **L&T Technology Services (LTTS):** India's leading Engineering and Technology Services company, providing cutting-edge ER&D solutions globally.  
- **L&T Finance (LTF):** Promotes financial inclusion by empowering millions with diverse financial products in the retail sector.

The Company's digital ventures, including L&T-SuFin (an integrated B2B marketplace), L&T Cloudfiniti (end-to-end data center and cloud services), L&T Semiconductor Technologies (focussed on fabless chip design) and L&T EduTech (bridging industry-academia skill gaps), showcase the Company's foresight and adaptability.



21.8 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link – India's longest sea bridge

**4. Other Businesses:**  
- **L&T Realty:** Crafts integrated spaces, residential complexes, and commercial hubs. Over 50 million sq.ft. of properties are currently under development. Accolades such as 'Best Realty Brand 2024', among others, affirm its commitment to quality and timely completion.

- **Construction and Mining Machinery:** The Company's in-house Product Development Centre drives cost-effective solutions, with over 40,000 active machines in the market.

- **Others:** A global leader in tyre curing machinery and a valves business operating across 61 countries are sheer testament to the product reliability.

**New Milestones in Growth**

This year, the Company crossed a historic milestone: annual Group Order Inflow surpassed ₹ 3 lakh crore, registering an impressive 31% growth year-on-year. This was achieved on the back of major international order wins in Hydrocarbon and Infrastructure businesses. A large, growing, and diversified Order Book of ₹ 4,75,809 crore as on March 31, 2024, with a growth of 20% over the previous year, provides clear revenue visibility in the medium term. Revenues clocked in at ₹ 2,21,113 crore, while Profit After Tax reached ₹ 13,059 crore, registering 21% and 25% growth respectively.

The Company continues to focus on shareholder value creation by divesting non-core assets, capturing cost efficiencies, and leveraging technology for productivity gains. A strategically diversified business portfolio, geographical diversification, a healthy balance sheet, and a strong order book are definite markers for long-term value creation.

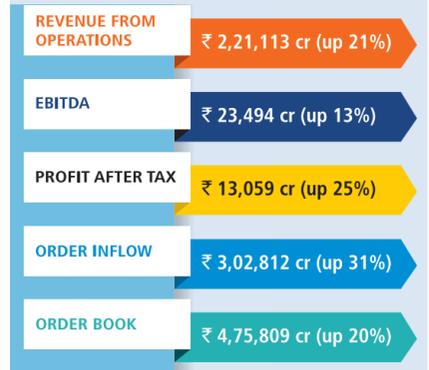
In line with its strategy to grow the core and exit from concessions, the Company successfully divested its 51% stake in L&T Infrastructure Development Projects Limited and monetised a commercial property in the Hyderabad Metro. Improved operations, capital restructuring, support from the State Government and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) monetisation are expected to make the Metro asset value accretive over a period of time.

In FY 2023-24, the Company outperformed the Nifty 50 growth index, achieving a stupendous growth of 77% compared to the index's 29%.



Oil Production Deck Module in Saudi waters

**Group Performance Overview for FY 2023-24**



**Tech-tonic Shifts**

The Company embarked on a journey to leverage technology for sustainable progress well ahead of its global peers. The proactive investment in digital technology and Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) to automate manufacturing processes paid off during the pandemic. As India's leading infrastructure player, the Company was among the first to realise the importance of digitalisation, beginning its digital acceleration journey as early as 2016.



Remote diagnosis and support

Today, the Company leverages a vast array of technologies across its various verticals, including AI, ML, VR/AR, Cloud, Big Data & Analytics, Drones, GPS, RFID & QR Codes, LiDAR, BIM, IIoT, and 3D printing. Adoption of frontier technologies like advanced sensors, embedded software and robotics is in progress. The Company has digitally connected over 15,000 assets across its global projects and manufacturing bases to a

central IIoT platform. All these initiatives enable the Company to make project execution faster, safer, cleaner, economical and more sustainable.

**Tech-celerating Sustainable Progress**

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as a game-changer, and the Company is leveraging its power to enhance its processes across the project life cycle - from tendering to contract management to design, execution, and operation & maintenance. To fuel this innovation, the Company has launched a collaborative platform connecting aspiring data scientists with domain experts and technology champions to develop cutting-edge, future-proof solutions.

**Going Green**

Aligned with its sustainability vision 'For A Better World', the Company has developed strong capability in executing projects for its customers in Clean Energy, Clean Mobility, Water & Sanitation, Green Infra, and other areas. Such projects help in lowering carbon emissions, improving water availability, recycling & reuse of water, scaling up energy efficiency, reducing air pollution, and enhancing resource conservation.

**Green Buildings** – The Company constructs green buildings which are LEED/IGBC/GRIHA-certified. In FY 2023-24, the Company created 14.8 million sq.ft. of Green Buildings infrastructure.

**Clean Mobility** – The Company completed the electrification of more than 3,400 track km of mass transit systems in FY 2023-24.

**Clean Energy** – The Company is involved in building Clean Energy projects, including renewable energy plants, primarily solar and hydro, as well as nuclear power plants. In FY 2023-24, the Company commissioned 2.2 Gwp of solar capacity, 6.2 GW of nuclear power and 3.5 GW of hydel power, with additional capacity under construction at the moment.

During the year under review, the Company constituted a Green Energy Council with globally renowned energy sector experts to provide expertise and strategic guidance on technology trends in green energy.



Green Hydrogen Plant at L&T's A.M. Naik Heavy Engineering Complex in Hazira, Gujarat

**Growing Globally**

In today's VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) world, the key to mitigating geopolitical risk is through geographical diversification. The Company's policy of wider geographical dispersal aids broad-basing the portfolio, yielding positive results, and de-risking exposure to a particular region. At the Group level, apart from the 62% domestic share in the total order book, the Middle East accounts for 35%, while the rest of the world accounts for the balance 3%.



OxO Reactor for BASF Guangdong Integrated Project, China

**Giving Back**

The Company believes in fostering inclusive growth and building long-term relationships with all its stakeholders. Its CSR initiatives across health, education, skill development and water & sanitation have benefitted more than 1.6 million people. The Company has planted 4 million saplings globally and helped build resilience in rural communities through its Integrated Community Development Programme (ICDP).



Health Camp being conducted as part of L&T's CSR activities

**Governance & Ethics**

The Company is committed to the highest ethical standards in all business dealings, fostering transparency and accountability throughout the organisation. A robust governance framework ensures compliance with regulations and global best practices including adherence to international standards of Human Rights and Fair Business Practices.

**Creating Safer Workplaces**

Safety remains a paramount concern for the leadership team, reflected in the Company's 'Mission Zero Harm' principle and the 'L.I.F.E.' (Live Injury-Free Everyday) framework. Enhanced supervision, more frequent safety briefings, extensive training (with AR/VR technology) and the use of robotics for hazardous operations are some of the initiatives that have further bolstered our safety performance.

**People Power**

The Company's success is attributable to the dedication, adaptability and accomplishments of every member of Team L&T. People policies revolve around onboarding the right talent, providing a conducive work environment, nurturing talent, offering opportunities for learning and self-development, empowering collaboration and innovation, recognising and rewarding achievements, and such. These policies have enabled the Company to be rated as a Great Place to Work (GPTW) for the second consecutive year.

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

The Company's transformation into a tech-driven conglomerate has improved its Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) quotient. Exclusive career-assisting schemes for females and women-friendly facilities in offices are moving the Company towards achieving the Lakshya target of women constituting 10% of the workforce by FY 2025-26.



Celebrating Women Power at L&T

**In Conclusion**

Today, the Company stands tall in the midst of challenges, armed with strategic foresight, technological prowess, and an unyielding commitment to excellence. The future is bright, with the promise of sustained growth, innovation and value creation for all stakeholders.

I would like to thank our employees, our customers, supply chain partners and the Government for their contributions, directly and indirectly, to our growth. I also thank my fellow Board members for their invaluable support in guiding the Company through volatile times when there are multiple variables at play. My special thanks to you – my dear shareholders – for the trust you have reposed in us. You remain an invaluable pillar of strength, and I look forward to your continued support in our journey towards achieving higher levels of excellence.

For over eight decades, L&T has served as a cornerstone of India's infrastructure and industrial development, continuously pushing boundaries to ensure that the Nation remains at the forefront of global progress.

It is this very dedication to excellence that has earned the Company a reputation of a nation-builder, instrumental in shaping the landscape of a new, modern and aspiring India.

**L&T BUILDS THE THINGS THAT MAKE INDIA PROUD.**



## IN BRIEF



## Security of Maratha activist Jarange-Patil stepped up

The security of Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil has been increased with the addition of four armed personnel, Maharashtra Minister Shambhuraj Desai informed the Maharashtra Assembly on Thursday. Speaking about allegations of a drone being used for surveillance of Mr. Jarange-Patil's home, he said the police had visited Antarwali Sarati in Jalna district. Three teams have been formed by the Jalna Superintendent of Police to probe the case, the Minister said. The issue of drone surveillance was raised by Leader of the Opposition Vijay Wadettwar on Tuesday. PTI

## HC reserves verdict on Afzal Ansari's plea against sentence

The Allahabad High Court on Thursday reserved its judgment on a criminal appeal filed by Ghazipur MP Afzal Ansari challenging his four years' sentence by a trial court in a Gangsters Act case linked to the 2005 murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai. Along with Mr. Ansari's plea, the High Court also heard petitions filed by the Uttar Pradesh government and Rai's son, Piyush Kumar Rai, seeking enhancement of Mr. Ansari's sentence. Justice Sanjay Kumar Singh reserved his verdict after hearing both sides. If the High Court upholds the trial court order, Mr. Ansari will lose his membership of Parliament. PTI

## CPI(M) Central Committee reviews poll debacle, says party failed to counter Hindutva politics in Kerala

Sobhana K. Nair  
NEW DELHI

Introspecting the 2024 Lok Sabha election results, the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s highest decision-making body, the Central Committee, in a review noted that in Kerala, where the party could only win a single seat, there has been an "erosion" in its "traditional base in several constituencies to the BJP".

The panel meeting was held for three days from June 28 in Delhi. The review underlined that the party did not pay sufficient attention to counter "Hindutva politics".

Former Minister for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development K. Radhakrishnan had become the saving grace for the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) in an election swept by the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the State. His victory over UDF incumbent Ramya Haridas,



**Taking a close look:** Out of the 20 Lok Sabha seats in Kerala, the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front could win only one. H. VIBHU

with a margin of 20,111 votes, in the Alathur constituency made him the lone LDF candidate to represent Kerala in the 18<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.

## 'Weakening of links'

It also pointed out that there was a gap in the party's own pre-poll estimate and actual results, illustrating "weakening of the party's live links with people".

The panel also criticised the "growing instances of corruption in panchayats,

## LS poll over, NC off the blocks for Assembly poll with structural rejig plan

Two-day meeting deliberates on improving outreach, collating suggestions for party's manifesto, and creation of new organisational posts; NC had won two out of the three LS seats in the Valley

Peerzada Ashiq  
SRINAGAR

The National Conference's (NC) two-day marathon meeting in Srinagar, the first since the party won two out of three Lok Sabha seats in the Valley in the recently concluded Lok Sabha election, deliberated upon its manifesto for the upcoming Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir, structural changes to give a fillip to the party's public outreach, and the issue of jailed youth.

J&K is likely to see its first Assembly poll in September this year, according to the timeline fixed by the Supreme Court, after the erstwhile State's special status was scrapped in 2019. The last Assembly election was held in 2014.

Around 60 leaders from across J&K exchanged ideas with the top leadership of the party's working committee, including party president Farooq Abdul-



National Conference leaders Omar Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah at the party meeting in Srinagar on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lah and vice president Omar Abdullah. The party has a multi-tier system, with district-level delegates, district-level leadership, and the central leadership.

The NC had led in 34 out of the 54 Assembly segments in the three Lok Sabha constituencies it contested, according to its data. J&K has 90 Assembly segments, with 36 of them in the Jammu and Udhampur Lok Sabha constituencies.

The NC's manifesto committee, tasked with building a fresh relationship with the people, is headed by Abdul Rahim Rather, who authored the party's 'autonomy report' in 1999.

NC's Srinagar MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi is collating suggestions on public issues and aspirations online in a rare initiative. These will be included in the party's manifesto, which will be finalised within 45 days, NC sources

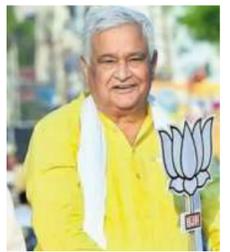
said. The party is also in the process of bringing about structural changes and amendments to its constitution to enhance its public outreach, the first such effort in three decades. The NC bore the brunt of militancy in the 1990s, and its top leadership left J&K in the wake of raging militancy.

## Jailed youth

Party sources told *The Hindu* that the structural changes, likely to be rolled out soon, will include the creation of new party posts. They are aimed at "making the party more dynamic, robust, and more accommodative".

Senior leaders as well as the newly elected MPs discussed the means and ways to ensure that jailed youth, especially those arrested after August 5, 2019, are shifted to Kashmir from jails elsewhere in the first phase, "followed by campaigns for their release", sources said.

## Kirodi Lal Meena keeps his word, quits as Minister

The Hindu Bureau  
JAIPUR

Kirodi Lal Meena's resignation is yet to be accepted.

Keeping his vow to step down if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost any of the seven Lok Sabha seats under his responsibility, Rajasthan Minister Kirodi Lal Meena, 72, resigned from the State Cabinet on Thursday. While the resignation is yet to be accepted, the BJP high command has summoned Mr. Meena to New Delhi on Friday in an apparent bid to sort out the issue.

Mr. Meena holds the Agriculture, Rural Development, Disaster Management and Relief, and Public Grievances portfolios as Cabinet Minister. He refused speculation over any differences with Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, and said he would explain the reasons for putting in his papers to the party leadership.

Of the seven seats, BJP's candidates were defeated in Dausa, Bharatpur, Karauli-Dholpur, and Tonk-Sawai Madhopur in the results declared on June 4.

Dausa is Mr. Meena's native place, which he has represented once as a Lok Sabha MP.

He was in the reckoning for the Chief Minister's post after the BJP's victory in the 2023 Assembly election, but the party high command selected Mr. Sharma, a first-time MLA, for the position.

## 'No resentment'

The septuagenarian BJP leader said he had "no resentment" with the party organisation or Mr. Sharma, and had opted to step down as a Minister because of his public vow. He had earlier said during the elections that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had assigned him seven seats in the State, on which he had worked hard.

The BJP won 14 of Rajasthan's 25 seats in the Lok Sabha election.

## Swearing-in row: W.B. Speaker calls special Assembly session; TMC MLAs-elect continue sit-in

Shrabana Chatterjee  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee on Thursday called a special session of the House on Friday and said "everything is not in the hands of the Governor".

The Speaker's move comes amid the ongoing deadlock over the swearing-in ceremony of two newly elected Trinamool Congress MLAs.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Banerjee said the Business Advisory Committee meeting has been scheduled for Friday noon and that the tenure of the session will be decided then. The special session is set to begin at 2 p.m.

"If someone thinks that we are helpless, then he or she is wrong. The Assembly is not helpless, and everything is not in the hands of the Governor. You can't



Biman Banerjee

in the Assembly. The MLAs continued their sit-in on Thursday with placards that read, "We are waiting for the Governor".

The two MLAs have not assumed their roles in the Assembly as their formal swearing-in has been delayed. The Speaker had previously sought President Droupadi Murmu's intervention in the matter.

## 'Governor's ego battle'

"The Governor is deliberately creating an impasse. He has turned it into an ego battle. This matter should be resolved so that the MLAs can take oath," Mr. Banerjee said.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had previously commented on the matter and said women "do not feel safe" at Raj Bhavan and hence the Governor's offer to conduct the oath-taking at his residence had been rejected.

## After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya declines 'mandir' tag for Ayushman health centres

Rahul Karmakar  
GUWAHATI

After Mizoram and Nagaland, Meghalaya has refused to rename the health and wellness centres in the State as Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. About 75% of the population in Meghalaya follows Christianity. The percentage of Christians in Mizoram and Nagaland is about 90%.

"We decided not to issue any notification to change the names of the health and wellness centres after receiving the advisory from the Centre [in November 2023]. Since health is a State subject, we have the right not to do as

the Centre says," Meghalaya's Health and Family Welfare Minister Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh told presspersons in the State's capital, Shillong.

Ms. Lyngdoh is a senior leader of the Conrad K. Sangma-led National People's Party, which heads the coalition government in Meghalaya. The BJP is a minor partner in this government.

Less than a year ago, the Union Health Ministry decided to rename its flagship Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres as Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) with the tagline 'Arogyam param dhanam' (Health is the

greatest wealth). There are 1.6 lakh such centres across the country.

## 'Hidden agenda'

Regional political parties in Meghalaya sniffed a "hidden agenda" of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre behind the renaming of the health and wellness centres.

"Why, then, should a government-run centre bear the name of a Hindu place of worship?" Titosstarwell Chyne, the working president of the United Democratic Party, said. The Voice of the People Party also said the bid reflected a 'Hindutva' design.

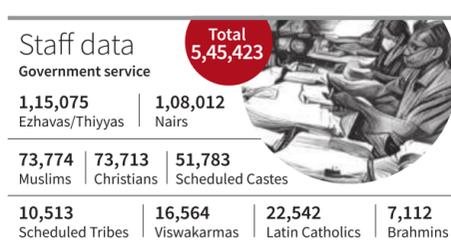
## Ezhavas, Nairs account for 41% of govt. staff in Kerala

K. S. Sudhi  
KOCHI

Members of the Ezhava and Nair communities, the two major Hindu communities of Kerala, together account for about 41% of government employees in the State, with the former emerging as the single-largest community in the service.

The caste data on employment, prepared by the Kerala State Commission for Backward Classes, reveal that 1,15,075 Ezhava and 1,08,012 Nair community members are employed in government service. The representation of Muslims and Christians is 73,774 and 73,713, respectively. The total number of government employees stands at 5,45,423.

Ezhavas account for nearly 23% of Kerala's pop-



Only major classes/communities are included in the infographic  
Source: Kerala State Commission for Backward Classes

ulation, Muslims 26%, Christians 18%, and Nairs 15%.

## Row over 'appeasement'

The data attain significance in the wake of allegations that the minority communities stand to gain from the 'appeasement policies' pursued by the ruling Left Democratic Front and the United Democratic Front.

Sree Narayana Dharma

Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan recently stirred a controversy by stating that both fronts are appeasing minorities. He also stated that the Ezhava community had abandoned the LDF in the Lok Sabha election in protest against the appeasement of minorities.

The statement, which invited sharp criticism from various Muslim or-

ganisations, led to the resignation of Hussain Madavoor, leader of the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen, from the post of vice-chairperson of the Navodhana Samrakshana Samithi (Renaissance Protection Forum), a collective of various religious organisations supported by the State government, which has Mr. Natesan as its chairperson.

The members of Other Backward Classes, which include Ezhavas, Muslims, Viswakarmas, Latin and Anglo-Indians, among others, together account for 2,85,335 jobs. The number of employees in the general category is found to be 1,96,837, which is out of the purview of any caste-based reservation.

Responding to the data prepared for filing a reply in the State Assembly, Mr.

Natesan said he flagged the issue of the recent allocation of most Rajya Sabha seats to the minority communities. While Muslims got five and Christians two seats, the majority community was given just two seats. No Ezhava was nominated by either the LDF or the UDF, he said.

However, Mr. Madavoor said the government should clear the air regarding Mr. Natesan's allegations. Mr. Natesan should also substantiate his arguments with authentic data.

The number of Muslims in Parliament should have been 74 against the present 24, considering the population. The community is yet to get its due in several key posts, including that of the Vice-Chancellors of universities and Chief Secretary, Mr. Madavoor said.



# समस्त झारखण्ड एवं समस्त देशवासियों को



# हल जोहार

सत्यमेव जयते!

प्रिय झारखण्डवासियों,  
आपके अटूट समर्थन और विश्वास के लिए हम आभारी हैं।  
आपके भरोसे पर खरा उतरने का निरंतर प्रयास पूर्व की भांति जारी  
रहेगा। हम पुनः एक नए युग की शुरुआत कर रहे हैं,  
एक ऐसा युग जहाँ विकास और समावेशिता साथ साथ चलेंगे।

श्री हेमंत सोरेन  
मुख्यमंत्री, झारखण्ड

सूचना एवं जनसंपर्क विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार

## SPOTLIGHT



The road leading to the house of the woman who was flogged in public at a village in Chopra block, Uttar Dinajpur district, West Bengal. DEBASISH BHADURI

# Victims and survivors, silenced

A video of a couple being flogged at a kangaroo court in Chopra, the death by suicide of a woman after being beaten up by a similar gathering at Fulbari, and a series of mob attacks have put the focus on a culture of violence that underlies human relationships in West Bengal. **Shiv Sahay Singh** travels to these areas to talk to a woman paralysed by fear and the family of another, guilted into taking her own life

*Trigger warning: the following article has references to violence and suicide. Please avoid reading if you feel distressed by the subjects.*

"I do not know who beat me up," Rubina (name changed to protect identity) says, irritated at a television journalist who repeatedly asks her to identify the aggressor. The flash of the camera lights up the dark room, revealing a corrugated ceiling and red walls of a structure made of aluminium sheets. She clasps her hands and moves her feet nervously on the bed. Around her are discarded bulbs and, incongruously, new utensils. The camera light shines on her face covered with a red and grey dupatta as she faces a barrage of questions about the assault, allegedly by local Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Tajmul Islam alias JCB. The incident is said to have taken place at a kangaroo court in Chopra block, Uttar Dinajpur district, West Bengal, in the last week of June. A viral video of the incident, running a little over a minute, showed the woman along with a man, Rafiq (name changed), being mercilessly beaten up in a market at a village in Chopra. The crowd, mostly consisting of men, gathered in a circle, watching the fracas, but not intervening to stop the violence. The woman is seen not resisting the attacks, even though she writhed in pain. The duo, allegedly in an extramarital relationship, lay helplessly on the street.

About 50 km north of Chopra is Fulbari in Jalpaiguri district. Here, on June 29, Sabita Barman, 38, allegedly took her life. She had been in a relationship with a man outside her marriage. Tapas Barman, her husband, says she was beaten up by locals who had gathered outside their home when the couple had tried to return home.

Sabita, who worked as a nursing attendant, had left home for a few days and asked her husband to come and pick her up from her parents' place. "On our way back, locals said she cannot return home like that," says Tapas. "Our neighbours, Swapna and her husband Barjen Adhikari, had threatened to attack and burn down our house if I allowed my wife to enter."

Contrary to the claims by the Siliguri Police Commissionerate that "there was no incident of public assault or mob outrage", Tapas points to the place his wife was allegedly assaulted just a few metres away from their home. Four persons, including the Adhikari couple, who are associated with the ruling TMC, have been arrested by the New Jalpaiguri police for abetment to suicide.

Rubina and Swapna have been silenced by kangaroo courts; fear and guilt gashed deep into their lives.

## Shock and horror

Days after, Rubina refuses to talk about the violence. Just as the crowd had voyeuristically gathered a week ago, it comes again, this time surrounding her house, even entering the room where mediapersons are gathered.



The woman also did commit a mistake, leaving her husband and children. She 'became corrupt' and was indulging in activities that society does not permit

**HAMIDUL RAHAMAN**  
Trinamool Congress MLA

"You do not know who beat you up? The whole State knows who the person is," a reporter persists. The woman is silent. "Are you under any pressure? The person has been arrested. What makes you afraid?" Again, silence.

She breaks her silence at a question on whether she required medical help. "They conducted a medical [examination] at Islampur Hospital and gave me some medicines," she says. She does not say whether she is in physical pain or discomfort. Hours before the journalists converged, she had refused to meet Governor C.V. Ananda Bose, who had travelled from New Delhi to Bagdogra in Siliguri, about 50 km from Chopra. "The victim wants to be left alone, and I respect her right to do so," the Governor had said.

A journalist asks if she would like to meet Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, who has a strained political relationship with the Governor. Rubina mutters, "Whatever had to happen has happened. Now what?"

A couple of days after the incident, she released a video to local journalists saying she had filed a complaint at the local police station against those who had made the video and forwarded it across social media platforms.

At the village in Chopra, while hundreds of residents had gathered to witness the beatings, nobody is now willing to talk about the incident or even say where or when it happened. The women disappear inside their homes when asked about the incident. The men claim they were not around. The air is tense; every outsider is looked at with suspicion. A large police contingent is posted at the local market, next to a mosque, and leaves only after the evening prayers.

Chopra is located close to the India-Bangladesh border and tucked away about 20 km from the picturesque landscape of small tea gardens, and pineapple and jute farms. There are no industries in this Muslim-majority area. Men either work in agriculture or migrate to work as labourers in other parts of the country.

Like certain other parts of the State, the region has witnessed political violence. A Communist Party of India (Marxist) worker, Mansur Alam,

23, was killed at Chopra during the panchayat polls held in July last year.

Several leaders from the Opposition parties have compared the incident to the alleged atrocities at Sandeshkhali, where people, including a woman, had alleged torture and sexual assault by a local TMC leader, Sheikh Shahjahan, earlier this year. However, unlike Sandeshkhali, where the woman had come out in protest, nobody from Chopra is willing to stand by the victims, speak about the incident, or protest against those who held the kangaroo court.

Hours after the video of the attack went viral on June 30, officials at Islampur police district lodged a *suo motu* case and arrested Islam. The accused has been booked under several charges, including attempt to murder and outraging the modesty of a woman.

When Islam was produced before a local court, the public prosecutor said there were 12 cases pending against him, including one in connection with the murder of Mansur.

This was not the first time that Islam has held a kangaroo court and tortured a couple for allegedly having extramarital relations. Videos being circulated on social media show a couple with hands tied, and the accused moving around them with a baton in his hand. However, no person in the video has been identified and nobody has come forward to lodge a police complaint.

A day after the video went viral, Hamidul Rahman, the local TMC legislator, raised questions on the character of Rubina. "The woman also did commit a mistake, leaving her husband and children. She 'became corrupt' and was indulging in activities that society does not permit," the Chopra MLA said, even though he admitted that the 'punishment' was extreme.

## Shame and death

Utam, 20, Sabita's older son, says his mother was the family's primary breadwinner, ensuring that her two children secured an education. "It all happened so quickly. She could not take the humiliation of the assault. We took her to the hospital, but could not save her," Tapas says. Jasoda, Sabita's mother-in-law, says the younger son tried to record the assault on his mother, but locals forced her and the boy inside the house.

The neighbourhood in Bakhravita village, not far from New Jalpaiguri railway station, consists primarily of Rajbanshis, a Scheduled Caste community. The houses look better than the ones in Chopra, but the roads have turned into a series of puddles after the monsoon showers.

People here are willing to speak, unlike in Chopra, and say what happened to Sabita should not have taken place. An Integrated Child Development Services worker, Protima Das, who grew up in the neighbourhood, says neighbours should stop interfering in other people's lives. "If they feel something is wrong, they should involve the police," she says.

## Mob morality

Incidents of people taking the law into their own hands are not limited to Chopra and Islampur; they have been reported in several parts of the State. The common thread in all these incidents of mob violence is that the victims were poor.

On June 28, Irshad Alam, 37, a TV mechanic, was beaten to death in Kolkata's Bowbazar area. According to the police, he was tortured with cricket bats and sticks on suspicion of mobile theft at a hostel meant for students of reserved categories. The post-mortem report revealed that he had died of internal bleeding. Fourteen people, mostly students and boarders of Udayan Hostel, located on Nirmal Chunder Street, were arrested. Irshad, who lived in a one-room tenement at the nearby Belgachia slum, has left behind two children, who have barely spoken since their father's death; his wife wants justice.

The next day, a similar incident occurred at

Bidhannagar on the north-eastern fringes of the city. Prasen Mondal, 22, died after being thrashed by a mob on a similar suspicion of stealing a mobile phone. Three persons were arrested in connection with the case.

On June 30, Sourabh Sau, 23, succumbed to injuries at Jhargram district hospital after being beaten up by a mob on June 22, the police said. He was found injured on the road by locals. The victim's family alleged that he had been beaten up and assaulted by a group of men engaged by a contractor. They were allegedly enraged by allegations that Sau had attempted to steal parts of an earth mover parked on the roadside.

The allegation against 23-year-old Biswajit Manna from Tarakeswar was that he had stolen ₹50,000 from the house of a local businessman. A group of people dragged him out of his house in the early hours of July 1 and beat him up. After the attackers left, Manna fell unconscious and was declared dead.

Municipal Affairs and Urban Development Minister and Mayor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation Firhad Hakim expressed concerns over such attacks and said "mass hysteria can only be countered by mass counselling".

Feeling the heat of back-to-back lynchings, the State government announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh for such deaths and a job to a family member of the deceased as a home guard in the State police. "Police authorities have been advised to exercise maximum vigil and take strong lawful actions. All sections of people should also remain vigilant," former Chief Secretary and Adviser to the Chief Minister Alapan Bandyopadhyay said.

Five years ago, the State Assembly had passed the West Bengal (Prevention of Lynching) Bill, 2019, which was aimed at preventing mob lynching. It included compensation for victims and death sentence as the maximum penalty for offenders. Speaker Biman Banerjee says the Bill has been awaiting the Governor's assent since August 2019.

Bose, who took charge as Governor in November 2023, says Raj Bhavan cannot be blamed for the delay. "The Governor had raised questions about several aspects of the Bill. An explanation was also sought from the State government. The Governor said that the State government had not yet given that explanation. And hence the delay," a statement from Raj Bhavan said.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which has recently replaced the Indian Penal Code, has notably for the first time introduced capital punishment for the offence of mob lynching, apart from the offence being made punishable with seven years of imprisonment or life imprisonment.

Subha Protim Roy Chowdhury, who is associated with AAMRA, a study group focusing on conflict and peace studies, says in the past there have been communal overtones to lynchings, especially those associated with cattle. "However, in the recent incidents, there seems to be nothing of that sort, but a mob frenzy that cannot be tackled only by stronger laws," he says.

Meanwhile, at the village in Chopra, Rafiq has come forward to say that he and Rubina are still together. "We want to live together as a couple," he says, his partner by his side. They continue to live in the block despite the stigma and hostility. "We cannot think and plan much when it comes to love," Rubina says.

If you are in distress, please reach out to these 24x7 helplines: KIRAN 1800-599-0019 or Aasra 9820466726.



The survivor of the Chopra violence at her home. DEBASISH BHADURI



# Shruti the storyteller

**Shruti Haasan doesn't see herself as politically aligned, but she is eager to give voice to women's rights on any platform**

**Smriti S**  
smriti.s@thehindu.co.in

In the vibrant realm of entertainment, where talent meets perseverance, Shruti Haasan, singer, composer, and actor, stands as an example of artistic versatility and social consciousness. From captivating audiences with her soulful melodies to leaving a mark on the silver screen, her journey attests to her twin focus on personal growth and professional achievement.

On a bustling Saturday afternoon suffused with anticipation, Shruti walks into the office of *The Hindu* in Chennai, brimming with excitement as a host of journalists wait to shoot: questions first, and selfies later.

As soon as she enters the brightly-lit hall, she wastes little time in holding forth on her latest song album *Inimel* under the banner of Raaj Kamal Films, which she both composed and conceptualised. The lyrics are penned by her father, actor

Kamal Haasan, and the album stars Lokesh Kanagaraj alongside her. Shruti says this marks her latest original composition after *Unnai Pol Oruvan* in 2009, and that she was excited to collaborate with Raaj Kamal Films. "It was a moment of excitement and creatively challenging to be with my dad," she says.

A musician at heart before entering cinema, the actor-singer highlights how she channels everything in her life through music. "I had no intention of joining cinema, but cinema has always been around me, and I am a fan of cinema. It's two really different parallels that run. And it's two different parts of my mind that I use in two different parts of my artistic soul. So it's very different."

Beyond her musical passion, Shruti discusses her diverse roles in both independent and commercial films. "For me, it's about finding a balance," she remarks thoughtfully. "I never had a problem being part of big ticket films because, who doesn't want to be part of a film or a story that works?"

There are films where you are there for three hours and it doesn't work, and there are films where you are there for 10 minutes and it works for you, so it's really a balancing act. For me, a perfect balance is really a commercial film in which I have value."

**From Bollywood to Hollywood**  
Asked about her debut thriller Hollywood film directed by Daphne Schmon, *The Eye*, Shruti shares her experiences of navigating through different film industries, which she is accustomed to. "My big breaks came through the Telugu industry, and I always say that.

**I had no intention of joining cinema, but cinema has always been around me, and I am a fan of cinema. It's two really different parallels that run**

SHRUTI HAASAN

**A balancing act** Shruti Haasan.  
JOHAN SATHYADAS

It was a language I didn't speak. Today, of course, I do. So it was the same kind of mindset while starting an English film as well."

Her entry into *The Eye* was particularly empowering because of a lot of firsts that marked out the film, from it being an independent English film to her working with the first female-led team; producer, writer, and director.

As the conversation turns to her experiences at prestigious events such as the Cannes film festival, where she has been twice in the years 2017 and 2023, Shruti expresses a blend of admiration and concern. "It's too much pressure. And what I found super disappointing this time at Cannes is that it was so much more about the clothes and the shoes, and a lot of people didn't watch the movies. I feel we must not forget that it is a film festival, where art is celebrated."

**Voicing up social issues**  
Beyond the glamour and accolades, Shruti recalls how she uses different platforms to champion causes close to her heart. "I am not very politically aligned, but if there are certain things in society around me that I care about, I choose to voice, such as menstrual health, mental health, and women's rights, be it any platform."

She also stresses how important it is to have conversations around gender parity in the Indian movie industry. "We are working towards bridging the gaps; I think the distance is quite far and wide." She adds, "The day we stop saying words like female-centric, then we've won something."

**Navigating social media**  
In an era dominated by digital interaction, responding to a question from the audience on how she filters out the negativity online, Shruti says that social media gives her the opportunity to put across her narrative in the most authentic way.

Looking forward, Shruti shares how she wants to veer towards storytelling, be it through music, video, poetry or lyrics, which is untapped, which is the part of the feminine psyche, relationships, and all of the in-betweens that we choose to avoid. "I see myself as a storyteller," she says, hinting at aspirations beyond acting and music.

## Street food with a twist

**From fermented potato dough pizzas to one pot rice meals, Dos by Tres attempts to recreate street food from across the world**



**Delectable medley** Dos by Tres aims at presenting street food from all over the world; (below) the Basque cheesecake SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**Geetika Sachdev**

When I walk into Dos by Tres on a weeknight, the newly opened restaurant in the capital's upscale Lodhi Colony is bursting at the seams. It is hardly surprising because its co-founders – chefs Jatin Mallick and Julia Carmen Desai – have built a tribe of loyalists with the award-winning Tres in the same neighbourhood, over the last decade.

With Dos, their second concept, the duo has moved away from quintessential fine dining to present street food from all over the world, with a twist. The decor aligns with this thought: a blend of the old and new, with brown-red brick walls coexisting with modern artwork. "The menu attempts to elevate familiar dishes that belong to different cultures."

**Start with small plates**

I decide to dive into its vast menu with a few small plates. However, Jatin insists that their beverage menu is worth a try. The current selection does not include alcoholic drinks, but they are expected to have their bar license in a month. There is still much to choose from – spritzers to smoothies, mocktails to iced teas, and cold-pressed juices; the options are focussed on fresh and locally available ingredients.

Since I have a soft spot for mangoes, I try the Spicy Smooth Raspados, a slushy mocktail that brings together the sweetness of mangoes and the tang of oranges, with the spicy kick of jalapenos. Dos also has wellness-oriented beverages for fitness-conscious folk. Popular picks here include the green shake with baby spinach, avocado, kale and maple, and the lentil smoothie with banana, mango, red lentils, coconut milk and agave syrup.

The meal begins with familiar flavours of Goan chorizo stuffed in an arayes, a pita or flatbread popular as street food in the Middle East. It is stuffed with spiced Goan pork sausage.

Next up is a taco that was far from conventional. Chef Jatin has created a whole

wheat *poi* (a traditional Goan bread), which is flattened to resemble this Latin-American dish. It is further enhanced with different flavours like *kasundi* (Bengali variety of mustard sauce) or chipotle. I opt for the Fish Taco with bits of crisp fish, green salsa for that extra zing, and chipotle. A pile of lettuce adds much-needed crunch to the dish. "I believe that we have a lot of produce available, it's only that chefs have to start using them. Plus, it's also about pairing it with the right thing. We've played with ingredients that are available in our ecosystem," adds Jatin.

Another example of their innovation is their rice selection, which celebrates the world's love for the grain, from the Portuguese arroz rice, the Chorizo fried rice, and Egyptian and Thai interpretations of the same.

**Fermented dough**

But what takes the cake at Dos are its fermented potato dough pizzas. Chef Jatin says, "The dough has 50% flour and 50% potatoes.

These are relatively healthier since we ferment them. It also gives the dough a different texture."

Leave some room for dessert because you will want to try everything that is on offer. The pull-me-up mango dessert with coconut rum tiramisu is bright and boozy. I also sample the sticky lemon honey buttered toast with vanilla soft serve and stone fruit compote. In my opinion, the flavours do not work as well together, though the toast and soft serve taste delicious separately.

Dos is a revelation to those who enjoy street food in an elevated format. Come here with a group of friends during the day, or on a date when the space has a high-energy vibe. If possible, come in a large group so that you can try as many dishes as possible.

If not, it gives you enough reasons to come back.

At 9 & 10, Fourth Avenue Road, Main Market, Block 8, Lodi Colony; 11am to 11pm. Cost for two (without alcohol): ₹2,500+ tax.

## STEP OUT



**Bollywood rewind**

Photographer JH Thakker, known for his mastery of light and shadow, evokes a sense of nostalgia and reverence with his collection of black-and-white photographs of legendary stars of yesteryears. Complementing the evocatively striking images, the exhibition titled *A Bollywood Retro* organised by the Kiran Nadar Museum

of Art also has vintage film posters complementing the evocatively striking images.

At the Skybridge connecting Nexus Select City Walk and the DLF South Court Mall, Saket; Till July 14; 10am to 11pm

**Unity in diversity**

Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Debadhara Delhi is organising the ninth edition of its Bharat Utsav series that brings together all dance forms: Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, and Kathak on one stage.

At CD Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre, 40 Max Mueller Marg; July 6 and 7; 6.30pm; Entry is free, seating on first-come-first-served basis



**Music concert**

Andhra Cultural & Welfare Society is presenting two evenings of Carnatic musical concert with whistle wizard Komaravolu Sivaprasad from Hyderabad and on saxophone will be Janardhan from Chennai

At Godavari auditorium, Andhra Association Building, Lodhi Road; July 6 and 7; 4.30pm

**Shan Gupta and Ridhima Thareja**

The skateboarders of Delhi-NCR have found a turf to practise their skills on – the Mandi House metro station! Randomly 30 to 40 skaters assemble with their flipboards in front of the metro gate and glide effortlessly on the long paved platform. Some of them pull off professional stunts, while some come for pure fun and practise; few also come to learn.

"People come here from all over the city and I love teaching newcomers; I myself learned watching others," says Shashwat Sunil, one of the founding members of the group called Mandi Monkeys, that was formed in 2022.

Delhi does not have designated skating zones. The skaters come together as a community and have some weekend fun either at Deer Park in Hauz Khas or Kartavya Path. Mandi House metro has suddenly become a popular and accessible skateboarding destination.

When Shashwat started off here first with a skateboard borrowed from a friend, about half-a-dozen others joined him as and when they found time. "Within a few months, people started gathering, showing interest, asking questions and joining and the group began to grow," says Shashwat.



**Learning with fun**

Shashwat Sunil, co-founder of Mandi Monkeys, and the group of skateboarders who assemble daily at Mandi House metro station. SHIV KUMAR PUSHKAR

## Skating in the concrete jungle

**The Mandi House metro station has become an unexpected hotspot where skaters gather to glide on their flipboards for fun every evening**

"Most of us try out whatever we find or learn on YouTube," says photographer Rahul Shakarwal, who takes time off from his shoots to explore the nuances of skating.

**Finding their space**  
He laments the lack of coaching and equipment but

feels happy that at least the community of skaters comes together to fill the void of an organised skate school in Delhi.

Shashwat recalls how in the early days, there would be a regular brush with the law enforcement personnel on duty at the metro station.

"But now there is a mutual understanding between us; they don't bother us anymore and rather enjoy watching us do tricks with the skateboard," he says.

Adiba Satya, Delhi University student, says he was going to NSD to watch a play with his mother early this year when he first spotted the skaters.

"I talked to Shashwat *bhaiya* and started coming here to learn skateboarding," says the 19-year-old, who wishes to get better at the sport.

Every evening around 6, the pavement outside Gate No.2 of Mandi House metro station gets

crowded with skaters and onlookers. The fun sessions usually continue seamlessly till 9pm. Mandi House is a prominent hub of multiple art forms, including theatre, exhibitions, dance and music programmes.

**Cultural hub**

"It has always been a space for self-expression and we the Mandi Monkey Skaters are also trying to express ourselves through our stunts and tricks," says Shashwat.

"For me, skating is liberating. I find it easier to do it here with the community," says Amandeep Singh, a stand-up comic who joined last year. He was introduced to the place by a friend.

"Skaters as young as 11 years come with their siblings; there are young students and professionals who take time out everyday and add to the joy of skating here," he says.

The Mandi Monkey skaters also compete with fellow skating communities from across the country, such as the Hilltop Skatepark in Bhopal. It is a friendly rivalry that helps maintain camaraderie among the community members.

"Friendly intercity events also take place periodically and among us we also have Shivam Balhara, a seasoned skater who has won a silver medal in Men's Park Skateboarding in the 36th National Games," says Shashwat with much pride.



## Dangerous precedent

Shielding Presidents from answering for crimes subverts rule of law

The majority ruling by the United States Supreme Court that the President has either absolute or presumptive immunity from criminal prosecution raises disconcerting questions about the supremacy of the rule of law in the country. In a ruling based mainly on the doctrine of separation of powers and the need to insulate the Presidency from the fear of future prosecutions, and not the text of the U.S. Constitution, the court, dominated by conservative justices, by 6:3 majority has ruled in favour of presidential immunity. The verdict does not decide whether former President Donald J. Trump will enjoy immunity from prosecution for allegedly trying to interfere with or alter the outcome of the November 2020 presidential elections that he lost to Joe Biden. Instead, it lays down a threshold test for any intended prosecution of a President to see whether the act complained of involved the exercise of a core constitutional duty, or was an official or unofficial act. In respect of a President's core constitutional duties, the immunity is absolute; for other official acts, he enjoys presumptive immunity, that is, he is presumed to be immune unless rebutted by facts; and for unofficial or private acts, there is no immunity at all. For official acts, any prosecution is permissible only if it does not intrude into the power and authority of the executive.

The majority has remanded issues that arise in the prosecution of Mr. Trump for his attempts to influence the electoral outcome, culminating in the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, to the trial court for analysis based on this ruling. The dissenting views speak with moral clarity when they question the claim that only immunity from criminal prosecution can enable a President to function in an unhesitating and bold manner. While it is valid to argue that the President should be free from intrusive probes and fear of trivial prosecution, it is inconceivable that such a powerful office should come with little accountability and the freedom to violate criminal law. Critics of the verdict see great peril for democracy in its implications. As the dissent asks, can a President take a bribe in lieu of a pardon, or authorise a rival's assassination? The majority wants to protect the Presidency from any intrusion in the name of criminal prosecution, but what it fails to see is that Mr. Trump's actions may have been destructive of his successor's Presidency. While there is a passing mention of the possibility that he may have been acting in his capacity as a candidate or a party leader in some instances, it is astonishing that the verdict allows the use of the presidency as a shield even in matters that solely concern the election process.

## Grave concern

The risk of international spread of wild type-1 polio cases from Pakistan is great

The ambitious goal of eradicating wild-type poliovirus type-1 (WPV1) by 2026 appears to have become tougher. WPV1, which is endemic only in Pakistan and Afghanistan, is showing signs of a resurgence since 2023. With Afghanistan and Pakistan reporting six WPV1 cases each in 2023 – there were two cases in Afghanistan and 20 cases in Pakistan in 2022 – the total incidence of type-1 cases in both countries in 2023 might appear to have nearly halved. But with six cases in Afghanistan and five cases in Pakistan already this year, there appears to be an uptick. If this continues, the total cases being reported from the two countries might be close to or even surpass the 2022 numbers. The concern about WPV1 is not limited to the number of cases in children. The circulation of the virus in the environment is seen to be rising, and, most importantly, after a gap of two years, positive environmental samples have been increasingly collected in Pakistan, in 2023 and till early June this year, from cities which have been historical reservoirs for the virus. Last year, 125 positive environmental samples were collected from 28 districts in Pakistan. Of these, 119 belonged to a genetic cluster (YB3A), which suggests that these were imported from Afghanistan. By June 1 this year, there have been 153 positive environmental samples from 39 districts. As of April 8, 2024, 34 positive environmental samples were collected from Afghanistan.

According to the World Health Organization, the presence of positive environmental samples in "epidemiologically critical areas and historical reservoirs" such as Karachi, Quetta and the Peshawar-Khyber blocks in Pakistan, and Kandahar in Afghanistan, represents a significant risk to the gains made in the past. Rising positive environmental samples are a reflection of polio campaigns not really achieving their desired coverage; fake finger marking sans vaccination is a persisting problem. Though children in Pakistan's cities are largely immunised, there is a heightened risk of the virus striking any unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated children – in 2023, two of the six cases were from Karachi city. The situation in Pakistan appears worse than it is in Afghanistan with the actual spread of WPV1 seen "predominantly in Afghanistan in 2022 now being detected in Pakistan in 2023 and 2024". There is also the grave risk of international spread from Pakistan, particularly to Afghanistan. With over 0.5 million Afghan refugees forced to leave Pakistan, and an estimated 0.8 million to be evicted soon, there is an increased risk of cross-border spread of the virus. There is a large pool of unvaccinated and under-immunised children in southern Afghanistan, increasing the risk that returning refugees can pose.

Computer literacy is essential in today's world as critical services such as banking, health care and various government services have become digital. Computer literacy implies the knowledge and the ability to use computers and technology efficiently. It ensures that individuals can access and use these services effectively, enhancing their quality of life. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of computer and Internet access, from ordering groceries and online education to managing banking and health-care services. Recognising this, the Indian government launched the Digital India campaign in 2015 to transform the country into a digitally empowered society. Moreover, computer education is increasingly being integrated into the formal education system – in schools from an early age. Additionally, numerous skill development and vocational training programmes are focusing on enhancing computer literacy among youth and adults, mainly targeting underprivileged and marginalised communities to bridge the digital divide.

The recently released NSS 78th round of the Multiple Indicator Survey (conducted in 2020-21) is a household survey that provides individual-level information on computer literacy. Computer literacy, defined as the ability to use a computer, stands at 24.7% among individuals aged 15 years and above.

This marks an increase from 18.4% in 2017-18 to 24.7% in 2020-21 overall. In rural areas, it is an increase from 11.1% to 18.1%, while in urban areas, it was from 34.7% to 39.6%. These figures are cause for concern and cast a shadow over the nation's digital aspirations. Unless there are serious measures to universalise digital literacy, rural India's population, which is nearly 70%, will face significant disadvantages. More importantly, given the government's aim to provide various public services through digital technology, a significant portion of the population will remain excluded.

### Unequal literacy across age groups

Expectedly, the proportion of computer-literate individuals varies across various age groups in India. The survey reveals that computer literacy diminishes with age, with higher rates observed among younger demographics. This trend, common in societal contexts, reflects the disparity in computer education accessibility between recent and older age cohorts, often referred to as a "cohort effect" or "generation effect" in social sciences. Hence, the overall computer literacy rate of 24.7% exhibits significant inequality across age cohorts. It peaks among individuals aged 20-24 years, reaching 45.9%, and declines to its lowest point among the oldest age group of 65-69 years, at 4.4%. Even



**Yachaspati Shukla**

Assistant Professor at the Sardar Patel Institute of Economic and Social Research (SPEISR)



**Santosh Kumar Dash**

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA)

among the youngest age cohorts, computer literacy has not reached 50%. Looking at the increasing spread of computer technology in every aspect of life, a larger chunk of the population will be excluded in the modern development journey.

Given that individuals aged 20-39 years are typically in the midst of their careers or job searching, representing a middle-aged population, it is noteworthy that their computer literacy rate stands at just 34.8%. Further, there is significant variation in computer literacy for this particular age group across the various States of India. Our analysis of computer literacy rates among individuals aged 20-39 years across States shows a striking 55.1 percentage point gap between Kerala (72.7%), and Assam, where only 17.6% possess computer skills in this age group. Economically disadvantaged States such as Assam (17.6%), Bihar (20.4%), Madhya Pradesh (21%), Jharkhand (21.2%), Uttar Pradesh (22.9%), Odisha (25.1%), Chhattisgarh (26%), and Rajasthan (27.6%) lag behind, with less than 30% proficiency in computer operation. Given that computer literacy is pivotal to the social and economic development of States, the lower rates in economically backward States exacerbate their disadvantage in benefiting from modern development. A failure to address this divide will widen the development gap across Indian States. Bridging the digital divide and fostering inclusive growth necessitates sustained efforts by government, private sector, and civil society stakeholders.

### Understanding India's modest progress

One reason could be that many schools and colleges across India lack the necessary infrastructure and qualified teachers to impart adequate computer training. This shortfall contributes to significant deficiencies in computer literacy among young students and new graduates, which could constrain their employment opportunities. Although computer education is a part of the school curriculum, there are significant gaps in access and instructional standards, highlighting the need to prioritise computer literacy within the education system. Among older age groups, computer illiteracy could be attributed to a lack of motivation to learn or due to limited access to learning resources. It is a common observation that older demographics tend to exhibit less enthusiasm in embracing new technologies.

Computer illiteracy in today's digital society can severely restrict an individual's opportunities and experiences. It leads to limited job prospects, social isolation, financial exclusion from online transactions and services, and restricted access to vast information resources. As Artificial Intelligence advances, employers seek individuals not only familiar with computers but also

equipped with the capability to execute complex tasks. Thus, learning how to use a computer and the Internet can help employees develop skills that employers are looking for. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey (2014-15) found that adults without computer experience are more often unemployed, with a 52.5% employment rate, compared to 72.7% for those with basic computer skills. In a 2017 study, "Do Computer Skills Affect Worker Employment? An Empirical Study from CPS Surveys", economist Gang Peng finds that computer skills enhance employability and worker productivity. In a separate investigation, Preston-Lee Govindasamy in South Africa validated a positive correlation between computer literacy, employment probability, and earnings.

Further, computer literacy exacerbates socio-economic inequalities by creating a digital divide and a skill gap, leading to unequal job market opportunities. Those with better computer skills can leverage technology for personal and professional development, while those lacking these skills face barriers in accessing essential services, participating in the digital economy, and advancing their careers, thus perpetuating economic disparities.

### Schools, older population as focus areas

While India has made some progress in computer literacy, the outreach and outcomes of this mission remain limited. Further, the data show that there is significant disparity in both the level and distribution of computer literacy across States. The existence of a wide digital divide between economically prosperous and disadvantaged States will hinder inclusive growth and development opportunities for large segments of the population.

Thus, schools should equip students with computer skills that will allow them to fully participate in our rapidly changing economies. School education should ensure that all graduating students possess computer literacy skills, as this is crucial to bridge the digital divide. The government should allocate resources towards the training of computer personnel and ensure sufficient staffing levels. Additionally, for the older population outside the formal education system, targeted programmes are essential. These should involve various institutions, including local governing bodies such as panchayats and non-governmental organisations, to effectively reach and empower older individuals with computer literacy skills. Finally, the government should also conduct a thorough review of such computer literacy and develop strategies to achieve higher literacy and reduce disparities in the coming years.

With a clear plan to run various public services with technology, a significant portion of the country's population needs to be able to cross the digital divide

# The shape of a five-year climate agenda for India

As the new government settles in, what it does to scale up climate action will affect every Ministry, new and old, and every sector, big and small. Some of its choices would be pivotal to how India structures its economic path in a sustainable way, positions itself as the voice of the Global South at the right tables, and fights for climate finance and justice over the next five years.

### India's transformation

Over the last decade, India has shown significant climate intent and progress on many fronts. It has moved on from being a hesitant participant reacting to developments in the global climate discourse to being a bold leader shaping narratives and institutions. First, it has laid the foundation for global institutions such as the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and the Global Biofuels Alliance, as well as shaped the Green Development Pact under its G-20 presidency last year. Second, for the first time, India has started talking about bolder and more ambitious emission mitigation targets. The 2070 net-zero target and ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are milestones. With the net-zero announcement, India has acknowledged the criticality of absolute emission reductions over the near-term relative emissions-intensity-based targets. The net-zero goal has changed the debate domestically with various actors, policymakers and the private sector. Third, sustainability-linked domestic economic policies are no longer on the margins. The creation of an Indian emissions carbon trading scheme, an institution that should operate for at least 30-40 years, is a case in point.

In the next five years, the government must accelerate and show the world that economic development can be sustainable, too. India should follow the mantra of 'go higher, go wider,



**Vaibhav Chaturvedi**

a Senior Fellow at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and leads its low carbon economy and carbon markets research

go deeper' to align its climate leadership with economic prowess.

### A plan sheet for India

'Go higher' relates to India's global leadership. The country could, sooner or later, host important international climate summits. If it were to host the United Nations Conference of Parties in 2028, it would need to be as successful as the G-20 Presidency. In global negotiations, four years is not that far. Does India want 'the world agrees to no new investment in oil and gas after 2030' as part of the decision text? Does it want a big commitment on adaptation finance so that developing countries can shield themselves against increasing heatwaves, storms, floods and droughts? It takes at least four to five years to achieve consensus on contentious issues. Deciding on what could potentially be the big wins in 2028 and socialising these across countries to stitch alliances and allay concerns must start right away. Alongside, India should continue doubling down on the narrative of equity in international forums, and create leadership space for itself in global institutions that can deliver climate finance.

'Go wider' means India has to adopt and strongly communicate sectoral emission reduction targets that go beyond the power sector. India has achieved significant progress in the power sector and will continue to do so to keep pace with its international non-fossil share-related and domestic renewable energy capacity targets.

The next step is to broaden the target to other sectors. For instance, it could be related to the private mobility space, giving a clear target for zero-carbon two- and four-wheelers. This is not just an urban India project. It will help rural India become mobile, drive jobs in clean energy and sustainability, and promote economic growth. As the last decade has shown, credible policy goals

have been powerful signals and forced relevant industries and stakeholders to act. The NDC for 2035, due to be submitted next year, can be an opportunity for going wider with India's energy transition targets.

### State-level plans are important

Finally, going deeper implies that sub-national climate action and resilience must come to the fore in this term of the government. Some shoots of this are already visible. The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) is working across many States in India to support their net-zero plans through long-term climate and energy modelling. For instance, we collaborated with Tamil Nadu and Bihar for their recently-released plans for a transition towards a net-zero future. The government should think about creating a Centre-State coordination group, incentivising State-level climate actions through the Sixteenth Finance Commission, promoting a deeper integration of scientific modelling capabilities in policymaking, and facilitating a unified data measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) architecture at the State level. Given India's federal structure, this recommendation does not mean centralising climate actions, but ensuring that State-level actions are better coordinated without compromising their autonomy. This is possible only if the process goes beyond States individually trying to understand and respond to the climate crisis, and the Centre comes in as an active facilitator.

The new government should aim to take India's global climate leadership to the next level in its new term. It should look ahead for at least the next four to five years, and not just a year at a time. On most international tables now, India has a seat. It must now demonstrate prowess.

*The views expressed are personal*

The new government should aim to take India's global climate leadership to the next level with a 'higher, wider, deeper' plan

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Jarring

We cannot bring back the dead, but the least we could have done was to grieve for those who lost their precious lives ("Hathras stampede toll hits 121; organiser pins blame on 'anti-social elements'" (July 4). The large-scale T20 World Cup celebrations at this moment are cause for introspection. Have we lost sensitivity and compassion

towards our own countrymen? Could not the victory celebrations have been low key?

**Balasubramaniam Pavani,**  
Secunderabad

### Railways and safety

There have been many train accidents in India in the near past. The recent one in which a goods train collided with an express train near West Bengal's New

Jalpaiguri is gruesome. When Lalu Prasad Yadav was the Union Minister for Railways, accidents were very rare. Further, he was able to ensure that the Railways became a good and profit-making entity. He never hiked passenger fares except for a small hike in goods train utility. Moving to the issue of safety, the protective system of automatic brakes, known as

the Kavach system, seems to be the most effective solution. It is unfortunate that such a safety system was not available in the recent accident. It is sad that the Railways which

manages one of the largest rail systems in the world no longer has a separate Budget. The allocation for the Railways is measly now.

**M.L. Raghavan,**  
Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu

### Corrections & Clarifications

An incorrect solution grid was published for The Hindu Crossword No. 14217 (July 4, 2024, all editions). The correct solution grid can be accessed at <https://newsth.live/14217>

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300; E-mail: [readerseditor@thehindu.co.in](mailto:readerseditor@thehindu.co.in)

**Parliament functioning** In Parliament recently, some in the Opposition complained that their microphones were switched off. The Speaker and the Chairman were quick to say that they had no hand in it. Given that this is a brand new building, should there not be an inquiry into how the microphones failed?

**S. Venkataraman,**  
Bengaluru

# Should India review its Myanmar policy in view of the humanitarian crisis?



**Rajiv Bhatia**

is a Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House and a former Ambassador



**Nandita Haksar**

is a human rights lawyer

**PARLEY**

**T**he conflict between ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and the military junta in Myanmar has created a serious humanitarian crisis, which the United Nations Security Council took up for discussion on July 3. Some experts on Myanmar have called for India to review its policy and establish channels with the EAOs to help the affected civilians. Should India review its Myanmar policy in view of the humanitarian crisis? Rajiv Bhatia and Nandita Haksar discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Kallol Bhattacharjee. Edited excerpts:

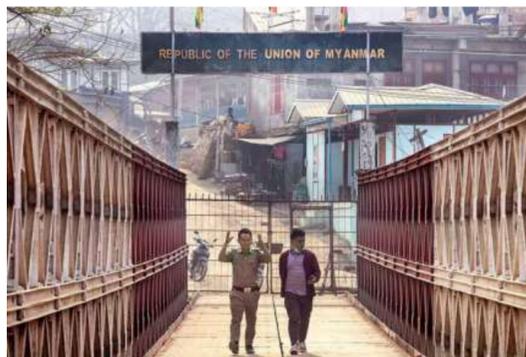
**Why does India's policy towards Myanmar require course correction?**

**Nandita Haksar:** Since October 2023, the ethnic armed groups and the PDF (People's Defence Force) in Myanmar have been coordinated in their effort to resist the military junta. These groups have been fighting the junta for many years, but this is the first time that they have been coordinated and have been able to hold at least 45% of the territory in Myanmar. In this context, many people have called for a rethink (of India's policy) and said that we must have some dialogue with these EAOs because of two reasons. First, the conflict is directly affecting India – there is an influx of refugees here. Second, the EAOs are being supported by China. At the same time, China has good relations with the military junta. Apart from this, many of these resistance groups have actually taken control of all the trading routes that fall on the India-Myanmar, Myanmar-China, and Thailand-Myanmar border.

**Are the EAOs so powerful that they deserve to be recognised by state actors such as India?**

**Rajiv Bhatia:** Essentially, India's traditional policy towards Myanmar has had two main facets: one, to develop good cordial relations with the military junta and second, to keep supporting democratic forces and ensure the strengthening of democracy.

But in the last three years, Myanmar has changed beyond recognition. The military has not been able to impose its will. The people have rebelled against the military, but they have also not been able to prevail. In short, there is a strong military, political, diplomatic stalemate in Myanmar. That, I think, is the most forceful argument for some kind of a policy review and course correction. The second is that India's fundamental objective in Myanmar is to develop bilateral relations in all domains and make sure



An Indian police officer and an Indian man walk on a bridge across the Tiau river along the India-Myanmar border in Champhai village in Mizoram. AP

that Myanmar plays a useful role in its own 'Act East' policy. And the third is to have some kind of a balance between Indian and Chinese influences in Myanmar because that is essential for our national interest.

The situation in Myanmar has become difficult. About half of country it is still under military rule and control, but the other half is considerably fragmented. I think the (Indian) government should consult national-level experts and scholars – people who have a clear view on the history and complexity of Myanmar; and neighbours such as Thailand, Bangladesh, Laos, and eventually even China, to ensure some kind of stability. To have stability in Myanmar is in the collective interest of the neighbourhood.

**How compelling is the humanitarian situation in Myanmar to merit a review of the traditional policy?**

**NH:** What Ambassador Bhatia said is that the situation is in a flux, so we cannot change course overnight. One way to test the waters is to start providing humanitarian assistance, at least in the border areas between India and Myanmar. India is directly affected, so we have a right to express our concern. The people in Myanmar don't have access to water, sanitary napkins, and anesthesia. Many young people are injured and require surgery to get their legs or arms amputated, but they have no access to medical facilities. Some of them have been able to cross over to Mizoram and go to Delhi from there but they are few in number. So, it would be well worth our while to explore ways in which we could offer real humanitarian assistance to the people and obtain Myanmar's goodwill that way.

In the past, we have not done that. It is true that India has been supporting the democracy movement. It is true that in the past, the National League for Democracy was allowed to



One way to test the waters is to start providing humanitarian assistance, at least in the border areas between India and Myanmar.

Nandita Haksar

open an office in Delhi. It is also true that the National Unity Government was allowed to open an office in Delhi, but it was not allowed to operate openly. Providing humanitarian assistance is the most non-controversial way of intervening in this situation. And then we can negotiate with the military rulers about rebuilding villages which have been bombed and which people cannot return to.

**RB:** It is, of course, a complicated situation. In my view, there is still a legitimate government there, even though it does not control all the territory. So, if you are going to interfere in Myanmar's internal affairs, in areas which are not under the government's control, they are not going to like it. Therefore, to address that problem, it is very important for our authorities to talk to the government in Naypyidaw and explain that it is in our traditional mutual interest for the people of Myanmar to be assisted if their own government cannot help them. It makes sense for India's humanitarian image.

**Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had recently said that there is an international plan by some countries to create a Christian state in a part of Myanmar. Do such comments also highlight a requirement for India to closely engage with all sections of the Myanmar chess board?**

**RB:** When a major neighbour begins to [become] fragmented, dangers of this kind could assume a clearer shape. She may have her own reasons to say what she said, although here in India we do not particularly see the creation of a Christian state within Myanmar. But what we do see is a kind of a Balkanisation. This is not in the interest of the people of Myanmar or in the interest of neighbours. That is why India has been closely associated with the Track 1.5 dialogue, which was initiated by Thailand, and in the Track 2 dialogue among scholars of the region, which is called the Bangkok process.

**NH:** I have been reading various blog posts and Facebook posts from the Northeast of the idea of a Kuki state which would include parts of Myanmar. That is why Ms. Hasina talked about it, because it was directly linked to her country and parts of India. This idea of a larger Kuki state has a direct impact on the Northeast. There

are already some Kuki underground groups that are trying to control all the routes that border Manipur with this intention.

**Ambassador Bhatia was referring to dialogue between India and Myanmar. But there is also the requirement of starting dialogue between the NUG and the military rulers.**

**NH:** As of now, from the little I know about the NUG, they are thinking not so much about reconciliation with the army or the military junta – I don't think that is possible – but about the kind of federal union they want. Conversations are going on within the NUG about a charter on the kind of alliances they could have, so that they can have a federal structure which keeps the whole of Myanmar as it is today. I think we have an interest in that because if there is Balkanisation, it will have a direct impact on India. That is one area of dialogue. As far as dialogue with the military junta [is concerned], I don't think they are thinking about that. But there are some moves which I have been told have been made by certain Western powers of trying to achieve some reconciliation. That is something which I think the armed groups and the PDF and civil society would resist. But yes, there should at least be dialogue on the kind of federal structure they could have. In that dialogue, India can play a role because that dialogue is also taking place within India's borders.

**What would be that the one piece of advice that you would like to give the newly elected Indian government? What should it do to avoid greater calamity in the bordering areas with Myanmar?**

**RB:** The advice is fairly self-evident. On the one hand, our people are trying to be in close touch with the military government. We have invested in this relationship over two decades, so that has to be. At the same time, we have sufficient leverage with the military to convey to them that their own people are suffering and the instability in Myanmar is having a negative impact across the board and on a major neighbour such as India and therefore the two countries should keep exchanging views on how we can address the humanitarian situation. At the level of people, at the level of communities, and at the level of the governments, we have to convey our deep interest in the good health, stability, and prosperity of Myanmar.



To listen to the full interview Scan the code or go to the link [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com)

**NOTEBOOK**

## Chronicling parliamentary proceedings over time

There have been many obvious and some imperceptible changes in Parliament

Sandeep Phukan

**T**he first session of the 18th Lok Sabha was also the first session when the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) took over security of the Parliament complex. The agency, which is more used to guarding airports and key installations such as refineries, has replaced the Parliamentary Security Staff after a security breach last December. Dressed in dark trousers and contrasting light shirts, the CISF personnel were courteous and thorough with their airport-style frisking.

The security ring is not the only visible difference. The benches in the new Lok Sabha chamber are now more evenly occupied by members of the ruling National Democratic Alliance and the INDIA bloc. More than half the members (52%) are first-timers. There is an officially designated Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha after a decade. A combative Rahul Gandhi, occupying that chair, has marshalled the Opposition members in directing protests against the government, be it over the Manipur situation or the NEET exam paper leaks. Predictably, the decibel levels have been higher than in the previous two Lok Sabhas.

Many MPs of the ruling alliance have said that the scenes of Opposition MPs sloganeering while Prime Minister Narendra Modi was giving his reply to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address to Parliament were unprecedented.

Not quite. Even with less fire power, this Opposition has done this earlier. So has the Bharatiya Janata Party when it was in the Opposition. I remember Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was barely audible in the Lok Sabha while introducing his Council of Ministers in 2004. There were constant protests from the BJP-led Opposition over the issue of inducting "tainted ministers." They focused especially on Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad Yadav for his role in the Bihar fodder scam.

The biggest change, of course, has been the building itself as parliamentary proceedings have shifted from the old circular edifice with round pillars to the newly designed triangle-shaped building last September. The old building is now called the Samvidhan Sadan – the place where the Constituent Assembly drafted, debated, and gave us our Constitution. For many journalists covering parliamentary proceedings, the old building meant easy access to MPs and ministers alike; in the new building, we are still trying to figure out the layout, including the path that leads to the press gallery.

The statue of Mahatma Gandhi that used to be opposite the main entrance to the old Parliament building has now been moved to the newly landscaped Prerna Sthal along with the statues of other icons such as B.R. Ambedkar. The original location of the Gandhi statue used to be the place where the Opposition would assemble for any kind of protest.

Another long-standing tradition that is fading is the practice of Parliamentary Affairs Ministers holding informal briefings with reporters to discuss government business and back-channel negotiations with the Opposition. These off-record briefings were often used to convey the government's position on issues that may have led to a stalemate.

Finally, reporting has not been the same post-COVID-19. Many of the curbs seen during the pandemic, such as restricting the number of journalists who could enter Parliament during sessions, continues even now. The annual passes of accredited journalists, allowing them a free entry to Parliament round the year, have become inoperative during sessions. Now, even those who hold annual passes are required to have special passes for the session. Every political party should realise that reporters who report landmark legislation are the nation's first chroniclers of history.

[sandeep.phukan@thehindu.co.in](mailto:sandeep.phukan@thehindu.co.in)

**PICTURE OF THE WEEK**

### Falling like a house of cards



A bridge in Siwan district, Bihar, collapses. Ten incidents of bridge collapse have been reported in Bihar's Siwan, Saran, Madhubani, Araria, East Champaran and Kishanganj districts in over a fortnight. A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Bihar government to undertake a structural audit and set up an expert committee to identify bridges that can be either strengthened or demolished based on the findings. PTI

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**



FIFTY YEARS AGO JULY 5, 1974

### Imported farm pest destroyed in Delhi

New Delhi, July 4: Millions of threadlike worms from Australia that have never been recorded in India arrived last month at New Delhi airport in 13 huge crates. If these worms had escaped they would have infested the

Indian soil, multiplied into billions in each acre of land, stunted crops and in the long run, played havoc with Indian agriculture. The worms, together with the exotic plants that harboured them, were burned and destroyed at the Delhi electric crematorium. Nevertheless, this manner in which the worm-loaded shipment came, and was handled in violation of international and domestic quarantine rules has highlighted how easily Indian agriculture could be affected, or even sabotaged.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JULY 5, 1924

### Heavy rains at Jamshedpur

Jamshedpur, July 1: Heavy rains are being witnessed throughout the week. The weather is threatening and it seems the downpour will continue for a few days. Waters are coming down the hills and the rivers are getting full. Three cases of lightning have since been reported in Tinplate, G Town and L Town.

# Text & Context

THE HINDU

**NEWS IN NUMBERS**

**SIM cards blocked by Pakistan to encourage tax payment**

**2.1** lakh. Pakistan has blocked the SIM cards of users who have not filed tax returns in a bid to widen the revenue bracket. Only 5.2 million people of the over 240 million population filed tax returns in 2022. AFP

**Share of daily deaths in 10 Indian cities due to pollution**

**7.2** in per cent. On average, over 7% of all daily deaths in 10 of the most polluted cities in India including Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, were linked to PM2.5 levels higher than WHO guidelines for safe exposure. PTI

**The rise in cargo traffic across major Indian ports in June**

**6.8** in per cent. Cargo traffic across 12 major Indian ports rose to 69.08 million tonnes (MT) in June from 64.69 MT in the year-ago period, with 10 ports showing positive growth. PTI

**Average share of votes won by Lok Sabha winners this year**

**50.58** in per cent. There was a decrease of 2% in the average votes won by the winners of Lok Sabha elections in 2024 as compared to the last general elections. PTI

**Growth in coal sector among eight key infra sectors in May**

**10.2** in per cent. The coal sector has had the highest growth, following the electricity industry among the eight core industries for May 2024. PTI  
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## The lack of leadership at TISS

Why did over 100 staff members at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences receive termination letters, which after two days were withdrawn? Is there a leadership void at the premier social sciences institute? How has this affected students as well as the staff?

**EXPLAINER**

**Maitri Porecha**

**The story so far:**

Over a 100 staff members of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) were in for a shock, after they received termination letters on June 28, and were asked to not report to work come July. Within two days of this development, they were told that the termination letters had been withdrawn and that they could continue working as the Tata Education Trust (TET), which funds their salaries, had now assured to make funds available to support their salaries.

**What happened?**

A month before the termination letters, up to 55 teachers and 60 non-teaching staff had an inkling that their jobs could be in trouble, because even as the academic year of 2023-24 was winding up in April, there was no clarity from TET on the renewal of funding of their contractual positions. "Some of these staff has been working with TISS for up to fifteen years. Since the last two to three months we have been writing emails to pro-VC Mr. Shankar Das, who is a deputy to the current VC [Vice Chancellor] Manoj Tiwari. We received no reply or clarity from Mr. Das on the situation," a senior faculty member said citing anonymity. TISS is largely funded by the University Grants Commission, but staff salaries, certain courses and funds for maintenance are funded by the TET.

**What has been happening at TISS?**

From 2004 onwards, TISS had widened its scope of work, and from close to 15 programmes including Masters' and Diplomas, it expanded its offering to over 55 programmes including dual degrees and foreign university collaborations. "Under the directorship of late Prof. S. Parsuraman, TISS was flourishing, with students undertaking enormous field



**In limbo:** The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai. FILE PHOTO

work under the research guidance of teachers," said a TISS senior professor, requesting anonymity. Mr. Parsuraman was the longest serving director of TISS from 2004 to 2018. However, trouble started brewing in TISS from 2016 onwards, when it decided to stop student aid to those belonging to marginalised communities in all of its four campuses in Mumbai, Tuljapur, Hyderabad and Guwahati. "It has been a downward spiral from then on," the professor added. After Mr. Parsuraman's tenure, Prof. Shalini Bharath, a public health researcher who has extensively worked on HIV access issues served as a director for five years. In 2023, the UGC regulations were changed, which brought appointments in

TISS under the central government's purview, as over 50% of its funding is from the Centre. "After Prof. Bharath retired, the director of Indian Institute of Management (Mumbai) Manoj Tiwari, took up the additional charge of an acting director as well as Vice Chancellor, until a full time director is appointed. He was supposed to have interim charge for six months, but his term was extended by another six months after delays were faced in appointing a Director," another professor said. "A social science research institute like TISS should be led by a director who has a relevant background in social sciences. Mr. Tiwari is trained in engineering and management, and it is an incongruity that he is heading the institute."

**How has a lack of leadership affected the institute?**

After the tweak of the UGC regulations, administrative bodies of TISS were also supposed to undergo an overhaul. Sources at TISS say that in a classic case of 'mismanagement,' these bodies have not yet been made fully operational. After the central government took over the TISS administration, the erstwhile 'Governing Board,' the highest decision making body of the institute, earlier headed by a nominee of the Tata Group, S. Ramadorai who was also CEO of Tata Consultancy Services, and included two to three faculty members as well as an equal number of external members, stood dissolved. The government decided that this would be replaced by an 'Executive Council,' headed by the VC. "It has been over nine months, but the new council is yet to come into full operation. We are hearing that the Executive Council may have been formulated but it is not yet officially notified. With the top decision making body of the institute being in a limbo, it is not an over reach to say that decisions are being taken in a centralised and in an arbitrary way," a professor quoted above said.

**How has this affected students?**

After the executive council, the academic council is the second-most important body in TISS. "The academic council is vital to all semester activities in the institute. What is disheartening is that the academic council is yet to convene to approve results for major programmes including Masters, PhD, Diplomas and Certificate courses, thus leaving the students in a lurch," the professor said. While the students were supposed to receive their results in May, this has now been delayed by three months, and their convocation has been pushed to August. "The delay has affected the future of over thousand students who graduate out of TISS every year, and it affects their future plans of studying abroad or pursuing careers as they have not been awarded their degrees," said the professor.

**THE GIST**

- ▼ Over a 100 staff members of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) were in for a shock, after they received termination letters on June 28, and were asked to not report to work come July.
- ▼ In 2023, the UGC regulations were changed, which brought appointments in TISS under the central government's purview, as over 50% of its funding is from the Centre.
- ▼ While the students were supposed to receive their results in May, this has now been delayed by three months, and their convocation has been pushed to August.

## What went wrong with the Hajj pilgrimage this year?

How do unauthorised pilgrims enter Saudi Arabia at the time of Hajj? Have such tragedies happened before?

**Ziya Us Salam**

**The story so far:**

Hajj, a gathering of nearly two million Muslim pilgrims, which falls in the last month of the Islamic calendar, has been in news again. More than 1,300 casualties were reported due to extreme heat in Saudi Arabia at this time of the year. Most casualties were reported from Arafat, where the pilgrims pause on their way to Muzdalfa. Arafat is the place where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his farewell sermon to 1,44,000 pilgrims in 632 A.D. This vigil at Arafat is an essential part of the pilgrimage without which the Hajj is considered invalid. Many casualties took place as the pilgrims moved from Arafat to Mina in the scorching heat.

**What is Hajj?**

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. This pilgrimage to Mecca is an essential part of the faith and any person who is economically and physically sound has to

undertake the trip once in their lifetime. Prophet Muhammad is said to have undertaken this pilgrimage shortly before breathing his last in 632 AD. The Hajj journey follows the lunar calendar. Accordingly, it falls about 11 days earlier every year. This year's pilgrimage started at the conclusion of the second week of June. For the upcoming couple of years, the pilgrimage will be undertaken in harsh weather with temperature exceeding 50 degrees Celsius.

**What happened this year?**

The Saudi authorities reserve a fixed quota for all major countries, depending on the Muslim population, for issue of Hajj visas. It helps to plan the stay and movement of pilgrims in the desert state. The authorities issued Hajj visas to a little more than 18 lakh people but the Hajj was undertaken by over two million pilgrims. This means that around 2 lakh people were unauthorised entrants. The Saudi authorities insisted that most pilgrims with valid Hajj visas were able to

complete the Hajj rituals with the best possible facilities, and there were few deaths beyond natural causes of old age or illness. According to Saudi Health Minister Fahad bin Abdulrahman Al-Jalal, some 83% of the 1,301 fatalities were unauthorised pilgrims who undertook the journey without requisite precautions at this time of extreme summer temperatures.

**Who are 'unauthorised' pilgrims?**

The unauthorised, non-documented pilgrims often come over from neighbouring countries of Jordan, Egypt and Iraq on a visit visa a little before the Hajj season begins. Some are also blue collar workers from India and Pakistan who while having a valid work visa, are not entitled to undertake the pilgrimage without proper permission and documentation. The non-documented visitors are usually economically too weak to bear the cost of the pilgrimage through the official route which takes at least 3,000 dollars. Hence, they often take

recourse to agents who offer them the journey for half the cost. The agents take the money in advance and often disappear after these men and women land in Saudi Arabia, leaving them in the lurch. The visit visa holders are not allowed entry into Mecca at the time of Hajj. So, these visitors/pilgrims often undertake arduous routes through the desert to circumvent officials.

While those who take the approved route are provided with all possible facilities by the host country, including transportation on air-conditioned vehicles with constant supply of water and medical facilities, illegal entrants are left under the blazing sun with temperatures often crossing 50 degrees Celsius. Many walk on their own from Arafat to Mina, a distance of around 15 kilometres. Unlike others, they have no healthcare facilities to fall back on. Also, most pilgrims in this category are old, having saved every penny for years for this journey. Hajj has always been a high-risk journey. Besides the spread of communicable diseases due to the intermingling of millions, there were major tragedies in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2003. Many of these were avoidable incidents as they resulted from stampede caused by pilgrims taking a non-specified route or going in the opposite direction, in ignorance of Hajj rituals. Since then, Saudi authorities have widened the pathways, adding new floors to the Haram in Mecca to enable the pilgrims to complete the journey peacefully.

**THE GIST**

- ▼ Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam. This pilgrimage to Mecca is an essential part of the faith and any person who is economically and physically sound has to undertake the trip once in a lifetime.
- ▼ The Saudi authorities insisted that most pilgrims with valid Hajj visas were able to complete the Hajj rituals with the best possible facilities, and there were few deaths beyond natural causes of old age or illness.
- ▼ The unauthorised, non-documented pilgrims often come over from neighbouring countries of Jordan, Egypt and Iraq on a visit visa a little before the Hajj season begins.

IN THE LIMELIGHT

# On Gods and godmen in popular Hindi cinema

Popular cinema provides abounding social and cultural logic for engagement with religious ideas. The question is whether popular cinema has the space available for critical relations with gods and godmen

Dev Nath Pathak

The month of June 2024 was rife with news about the recently released Yash Raj film production, *Maharaj*, directed by Siddharth Malhotra. According to many critics it was another badly made film in spite of a power-packed performance by actor Jaideep Ahlawat. The film, however, grabbed our eyeballs for two reasons. One is that the film, based on a historical 1862 Maharaj libel case, was a criticism of blind faith. The protagonist Karshandas Mulji, played by the debutant Jaunaid Khan, is a social reformer and journalist who challenged the religious conservatism of the godman, Maharaj, played by Ahlawat. Secondly, the film courted legal and social controversy as a case of offence to religious sentiment was filed in the Gujarat High Court which eventually ruled in favour of the film.

India has been witness to many such cases against popular films dealing with issues related to the dominant religion, that is, Hinduism. One can quickly recall some of the films that met with such upheavals, for example *PK* (Raju Hirani, 2014) and *OMG* (Amit Rai, 2023). The cardinal question is whether popular cinema has the space available for humanistic and critical relations with gods and godmen.

### Hindu mythology in cinema

Many scholars of cinema such as Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Ravi Vasudevan, Aruna Vasudev, and Madhava Prasad have critically discussed the locus standi of early cinema in India. In the light of such discussion, there dawns an understanding that humanised relationships with gods and godmen is not new to cinema. Mythological tales were central to silent cinema. In the era of the film maker Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (1817-1944), popularly known as Dadasaheb Phalke, there were films such as *Satyavan Savitri* (1914), *Satyavadi Raja Harishchandra* (1917), and *Kaliya Mardan* (1919). These films were not merely about devotional surrender but also about humans' personalisation of religion and spirituality. The trend continued even after cinema got sound after the first talkie film *Alam Ara* (1931). Vijay Bhatt's famous film *Ram Rajya* (1943) also had Mahatma Gandhi in the audience in spite of his reservations about the medium of cinema. Moreover, there were many films that offered criticism of dominant Hindu values. Franz Osten's *Achhut Kanya* (1936) is always remembered as a historical milestone. The film ridiculed the godmen who were custodians of discriminatory Brahmanical values.

Chidananda Dasgupta, the film critic and historian, who was a co-founder of the Calcutta Film Society with the legendary film maker and Oscar awardee Satyajit Ray, had written about cinema's tryst with mythological gods. Though more known for his translations of the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Manik Bandopadhyaya, and Jibananda Das, Dasgupta's critical reading of early cinema is significant. In his book *Seeing is Believing* published by Penguin he made the romance between early popular Hindi cinema and Hindu mythology



Cult classic: Indian artist Ranjit Dahiya works on a mural of Amitabh Bachchan from his film *Deewar* in Mumbai in 2012. AFP

dramatically vivid. The stories of gods, goddesses, and monsters that Hindu believers had only heard in the oral tradition became available for visual-sensorial experiences in the first decade of modern cinema in India. Seeing gods alive on screen meant that they were available for a relationship with mortals. The earthy mortals were bound to apply their social and cultural logic in the newly forged relationship with the divine. Perceived through the prism of human emotions, gods and goddesses became available for friendly associations. In addition to evoking devotion and surrender, the gods also inspired humans to raise questions and put the divine through uncanny trials in these mythological films.

Thus Hindi cinema has consistently tried to free gods and spirituality from the clutches of godmen and dominant values even while restoring faith.

### Critical engagement

A film scholar such as Rachel Dwyer has put many such films under the label of Hindi socials. Such films were not to be anti-religious, but they do tend to trigger a critical engagement with religious notions. Two examples from the past is worth recalling. One was a film directed by Kidar Nath Sharma based on a famous novel by the Hindi littérateur Bhagwati Charan Varma titled *Chitralkha*. The film by the same title was made twice by Sharma in 1941 and in 1964. The film is about a courtesan Chitralkha and the

spiritual guru Kumargiri. The latter seeks to free a prince named Beejgupt from the enchantment of the courtesan. The 1941 version had Miss Mehtab playing the role of Chitralkha while Meena Kumari essayed the same role in the latter version. Another significant trivia about the 1941 version is that it met with objection from the Censor Board for a bathing scene of the actress Mehtab. There was however no controversy regarding the most crucial depiction, that is, the sexual downfall of the saintly spiritual guru, Kumargiri. The cinematic narrative unfolds a philosophical debate between the beautiful courtesan and a morally upright saint. Conceding defeat, the courtesan follows the footprints of the guru and joins the path of spiritual upliftment through penance. However, the guru falls for Chitralkha and realises the weakness of a dehumanising morality and other worldly spirituality.

The songs in both versions of *Chitralkha* presented a disarming criticism of dominant religious notions. In the 1941 version, the playback singer Ramdulari sang some of the most potent lyrics penned by Kidar Sharma, and composed by musician Jhande Khan who was trained in Indian classical music. The title of the song is self-explanatory, *tum jao bade bhagwan bane* (pretentious godliness, go away). Likewise, the 1964 version had innumerable songs penned by the legendary poet Sahir Ludhianvi sung by Lata Mangeshkar against the musical composition of Roshan. One of the songs derides the guru saying, *sansar se bhage firte ho bhagwan ko tum kya paoge* (what god will you find, for, you are on a run away from the world).

Another film seeking to liberate god and godliness from the clutches of godmen and societal dominance is I. S. Johar directed *Nastik* (1954). A commercially successful film, *Nastik* had a song sung by Kavi Pradeep to the tune of musician C. Ramachandran that summed up the temperament of the whole film. The song in the nasal voice of the singer can still be heard in the nooks and corners of India, which says *dekh tere sansar ki halat kya ho bhagwan* (see what your world has come to, God). The film was set against the backdrop of the violence of Partition in India revealing the depth of social fissures. The protagonist Anil turns to atheism and is a sworn enemy of the priest, the custodian of religious virtues. The film had an acrimonious relationship between the protagonist who is an anti-hero and god.

At last, seldom could one forget a gem of popular Hindi cinema directed by Yashraj Chopra in 1975, *Deewar* (The Wall). The quintessential angry young man named Vijay was essayed by Amitabh Bachchan. The film depicted the India of the 1970s which was rife with social and political frustration that enabled the character of Vijay to maintain an unusual relationship with god. He was an agnostic who had never entered a temple before except in the climax of the film. This is an iconic scene that is hitherto etched in collective memory. Upon his mother's accident, Vijay enters the temple to deliver a critical monologue in front of the idol of lord Shiva. It is not blind faith which made a mortal character Vijay talk to Shiva. Both seemed to be in eternal dialogue with each other. In the relationship between Vijay and lord Shiva one got to see varied emotions such as anger, fear, contempt, and most importantly, love and devotion.

Suffice to say that popular cinema provides abounding social and cultural logic for engagement with religious ideas. With or without protests, such relationships and engagements shall thrive.

Dev Nath Pathak is Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, South Asian University.



### FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

“Keel over (S. N. Azad, New Delhi).”  
“Keel over” means ‘to turn over or fall down.’  
*He was walking along with me. Suddenly, he keeled over.*  
“Mysophobia’ (A. S. Das, Cuttack).”  
“Mysophobia’ means ‘morbid fear of contamination.’  
*She suffers from mysophobia.*  
The ‘y’ in the word is pronounced like the ‘y’ in ‘my.’  
“Never-never (Mohd. J. Khan, Hyderabad).”  
“The idiom is ‘on the never-never’. It means ‘on the hire purchase system’. This is a colloquial expression used mainly in British English.

*I bought the washing machine on the never-never.*  
“Meaning of the word ‘chutzpah’ (J. Balasubramaniam, Madras).”  
“This is American slang. A person with ‘chutzpah’ is a brash, self-confident person. This supreme self-confidence often makes him/her appear extremely offensive or rude, and results in his/her hurting the sensibilities of others.

*Venkat has stolen Rs. 50,000 from the company. Now he is applying to the company for a loan to pay the money back. That takes chutzpah.*  
*Rama was less talented than Lalitha. She made up the difference in chutzpah.*  
In the book *The Joys of Yiddish*, Leo Rosten writes: “Chutzpah is that quality enshrined in a man who, having killed his mother and father, throws himself on the mercy of the court because he is an orphan.” The word is Yiddish in origin and is spelt in different ways – chutzpa, chutzpah and chuzpa. The ch is pronounced ‘h’ as in ‘hot,’ ‘have’ and ‘hand.’ The ‘u’ is pronounced like the ‘u’ in ‘pull’ and full; ‘tz’ is pronounced like the ‘ts’ in words like ‘bits,’ ‘sits’ and ‘bats.’ The ‘a’ in ‘pah’ is pronounced like the ‘a’ in ‘China’ and the final ‘h’ is silent. So the word is pronounced ‘hutspa.’ Some pronounce the ‘u’ in the word like the ‘oo’ in ‘fool.’

“Hunger after (S. Sumati, Kozhikode).”  
“You hunger after something when you have an uncontrollable desire to have it; you do everything possible to achieve it. “I can’t understand his hunger after fame.” ‘Hunger for’ means the same as ‘hunger after.’”

“Lord Venkateswara blesses the pilgrims to each back home early – from 11th June 92, Narayanadri Express reaches Secunderabad at 08-05 a.m.” – SCR Advertisement in a newspaper (Submitted by R. Ramachandra Rao, Hyderabad).”  
*Published in The Hindu on August 4, 1992.*

## THE DAILY QUIZ

### A quiz on events and personalities connected with July 5

V. V. Ramanan

- QUESTION 1**  
On this date in 1686, which path-breaking book written in Latin by a science genius was authorised by the noted diarist Samuel Pepys who was the then president of the Royal Society?
- QUESTION 2**  
Which country in the Maghreb region of North Africa got its Independence from Spain on July 5 in 1962.
- QUESTION 3**  
Which legendary crooner's debut single

- ‘That’s All Right’ was recorded on July 5, 1954?
- QUESTION 4**  
Who created history and how by winning the Gentleman’s Singles title at Wimbledon on this date 49 years ago?
- QUESTION 5**  
What type of animal was Dolly that achieved the distinction of being the first mammal to be cloned from an adult somatic cell?
- QUESTION 6**  
Name the online giant, initially supposed to be ‘Cadabara’ and ‘Relentless’, which was founded on July 5?



Visual question: This is the currency of which South American country that celebrates its Independence Day on July 5. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

- Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:**
- The reason why the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia rings 13 times every July 4. **Ans: As an honour to the 13 original States**
  - The distinction Edward Rutledge has among the 56 signatories. **Ans: At 26, he was the youngest person to sign the Declaration of Independence**
  - The English monarch who ruled the colonies when independence was established and the European capital where the treaty was signed. **Ans: George III and Paris**
  - The department store that has sponsored the July 4 fireworks ever since 1976. **Ans: Macy's**
  - This engraving ‘July IV MDCCCLXXVI’ can be seen here. **Ans: Statue of Liberty**
  - This person is said to have remarked after doing this: “The British ministry can read that name without spectacles; let them double their reward.” **Ans: John Hancock when asked why he put a huge signature (the biggest on the document)**
  - The year in which July 4 was declared a national holiday in the U.S. **Ans: 1870**
  - Visual. Name this U.S. President. **Ans: Calvin Coolidge**
  - Early Birds:** Ashraf Basha Yakub| Tamal Biswas| Md Sarfaraj Nawab| Jyot Prakash| M. Suresh Kumar

Please send in your answers to [dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in)

## Word of the day

**Imperative:**  
a mood that expresses an intention to influence the listener's behaviour; some duty that is essential and urgent; requiring attention or action

**Synonym:** important

**Usage:** *It was imperative that he act as naturally as possible.*

**Pronunciation:** bit.ly/imperativepro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ɪmˈpeɪ.ə.tɪv/

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

## Six arrested for U.P. stampede

He further said that police and administrative officials reached at the stampede site soon after getting information and all assistance was provided to those in need. He also said that apart from the ₹1 lakh reward, a non-bailable warrant will be issued against Mr. Madhukar.

Mr. Mathur said that all 121 bodies have been identified and handed over to the families after completion of required formalities and post-mortem.

When asked if the preacher, said to be a former policeman whose real name is Suraj Pal, would be interrogated in the case, the official said that interrogation will be done if required during the course of investigation. "We got to know about a criminal case lodged against the preacher in Agra. There was acquittal in that case. We are trying to find out if there are previous criminal cases against him and his followers in different States and cities. We will keep interrogating and arresting people as and when new names and information crop up," Mr. Mathur said.

The official ended the press conference amid questions about the police neither arresting nor interrogating Bhole Baba even though he was the main speaker of the event.

## Hemant Soren sworn in as Jharkhand CM

Mr. Hemant Soren claimed that a conspiracy had been hatched to oust him from the State's top post. "I was forced to step down from the post of Chief Minister after a conspiracy was hatched against me. They could not digest the fact that a tribal was leading the state. I have always struggled in my life and tried my level best to work for the people of Jharkhand," he posted on X before the oath-taking ceremony. "Once again, I am coming to serve you."

Champa Soren, who resigned as Chief Minister on Wednesday, paving the way for his predecessor to return to the post, was present at the event and congratulated the new Chief Minister. Mr. Hemant Soren's father and party supremo Shibu Soren, mother Rupi Soren, wife Kalpana Murmu Soren, and other leaders of the ruling alliance were also present.

Mr. Hemant Soren had resigned from the post in January, shortly before his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, after which Mr. Champa Soren was made the Chief Minister. The Jharkhand High Court granted him bail on June 28.

## LAC must be respected, Jaishankar tells Wang

The two Ministers were meeting for the third time in the past 12 months, and have made a push for complete disengagement and the resolution of the military border stand-off since April 2020.

However, talks between border commanders and defence officials in the meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) have thus far yielded no further breakthrough, which hinges on the Chinese position at the Demchok and Depsang sectors.

In a separate readout of the meeting, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it was important to find the "correct way".

"We must adhere to positive thinking, on the one hand properly handle and control the situation in the border area, on the other hand actively resume normal exchanges, promote each other and meet each other half way," a translated version of the MFA statement read.

Speaking at the SCO Council of the Heads of State, Mr. Jaishankar read out Mr. Modi's address in his absence, reiterating the SCO's "respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity" as a basis for its foreign policies.

## Labour Party projected to oust Sunak govt.

"Vote Conservative to stop the Labour supermajority which would mean higher taxes for a generation," Mr. Sunak said on X, posting a photograph of himself and Ms. Murty on their way to a polling station.

In the last stretch of the campaign, Mr. Sunak has repeatedly accused Mr. Starmer and the Labour government of wanting to increase taxes. "You name it, they will tax it," he had said in a tense final debate with Mr. Starmer on June 26. Conservative politicians have also presented the election as a foregone conclusion, often using the term supermajority. Mr. Starmer had responded accusing the Tories of attempting to "dissuade" people from voting.

The Liberal Democrats, who performed strongly in May's local elections, are hoping to make third place in the new Parliament, with some polls projecting over 60 seats for them. The other parties in the fray include the Scottish National Party, the Green Party and the nativist and Eurosceptic party, Reform U.K.

The country's monarch, King Charles III, who was in Scotland on Thursday is expected to return to London to appoint the next Prime Minister during the course of Friday.

## 'India, U.S. share goals to prevent Ukraine conflict from spreading'

The two nations have held talks on what they can do together to hold Russia to account, says U.S. Ambassador warning Indian companies against violating global sanctions on Moscow; he says India is an important strategic partner of the U.S.

Dinakar Peri  
Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the United States has had continuous communications with India about what the two can do "together" to hold Russia "to account", U.S. Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said on Thursday. India and the U.S. share the goals of "preventing this conflict from spreading, promoting stability in the Middle East, and efforts to establish a future Palestinian state", he said in an email interview to *The Hindu*.

Welcoming India's support in providing humanitarian assistance for the people of Ukraine, Mr. Garcetti said that the U.S. appreciated the strength of the strategic partnership with India to "coordinate and exchange perspectives" on such challenges.

"Since the first days of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have had continuous communication with our Indian counterparts about what we can do together to hold



U.S. Ambassador Eric Garcetti says the two nations have an 'ambitious' agenda to expand cooperation. FILE PHOTO

Russia to account and impose consequences for its war of conquest," Mr. Garcetti said, ahead of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit scheduled to be held from July 9 to 11.

Incidentally, on the eve of the NATO summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Russia on July 8 and 9 for the 22nd annual summit between the two countries.

"Going forward, we want to make sure that Ukraine is a success, that it stands strongly on its own feet militarily, economically, democratically, and that's exactly what we're

enabling Ukraine to do," the U.S. envoy added.

Last week, in an interview to *The Hindu Business Line*, Mr. Garcetti had said that the U.S., together with dozens of allies, is standing up against the idea that one country should be able to take the land of another by brute force. "Let me hope that India will continue to recognise that principle and work with us to identify those companies that are fuelling the Russian war machine that has taken tens of thousands of lives," he had said.

Stating that India cares deeply about the people of Ukraine and has long-standing ties with the

country, while also noting that India has a close relationship with the people and government of Russia, Mr. Garcetti hoped that India could continue to play a "constructive role" towards peace. At the same time, he also cautioned that any Indian companies that violate global sanctions "will have to be aware of the consequences they face in the international market."

## Ambitious agenda

The U.S. Ambassador termed India as an important strategic partner of the U.S., noting that the two nations are pursuing an "ambitious" agenda to expand their cooperation in several areas. "We're working together on world-shaping initiatives that extend from the depths of the seabed to the furthest reaches of the stars," Mr. Garcetti said.

Quoting U.S. President Joe Biden, who had said that the U.S. and India share one of the "most consequential" relationships in the world, Mr. Garcetti said, "When we work together, our might is multiplicative - it's not just the

## Army chief reviews 'prevailing security dynamics' in Jammu

The Hindu Bureau  
JAMMU

General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), discussed the "prevailing security dynamics in the region" in a high-level joint security review meeting on the second day of his tour of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

The meeting, held at Nagrota and chaired by General Dwivedi, was attended by the top Army officers of the Northern Command, the White Knight Corps, the Chinar Corps and the Rising Star Corps, an Army spokesperson said.

The Army chief was also briefed by the J&K Director-General of Police, the Additional Director-General



Safety watch: The Chief of the Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, during his visit to the forward locations in Poonch. PTI

of the Central Reserve Police Force, the heads of intelligence agencies, and representatives of security forces from the Union Territory.

"The deliberations focused on the prevailing security dynamics in the region," the spokesperson

said, adding that the security review underscored the imperative of "synergy and seamless coordination" between all armed forces and security agencies to maintain peace and stability in the region.

This series of review meetings by the Chief of

the Army Staff comes in the wake of increased militancy in Jammu, which has seen five terror attacks this year. Nine pilgrims, four militants, and a CRPF jawan were left dead in these attacks.

## Increased militancy

The focus areas of the visit remained the Pir Panjal valley, where the militant footprint has increased this year, according to official sources.

On Wednesday, General Dwivedi visited the District Police Headquarters in Poonch. "During the visit, General Dwivedi familiarised himself with the workings of the district police and the general area of Poonch," the spokesperson said.

## Imphal residents slam PM's speech, demand 'tangible things' for peace

Abhinav Lakshman  
IMPHAL

Residents across Imphal on Thursday reacted sharply to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks on the ethnic violence in Manipur with many terming the speech "inconsequential" and several others insisting that Mr. Modi's claims of normalcy returning, albeit slowly, in the State were "lies".

At the Khwairamband Market here, Ima R.K. Radheshana, 77, a vendor, asked, "Without doing anything at all, how will peace come?" She said "tangible things" need to be done to bring peace to the conflict-ridden State, but no such steps seem to have been taken so far.

Manipur has been strife-torn ever since the ethnic conflict between the valley-based Meitei people and the hills-based Scheduled Tribe Kuki-Zo broke out in May last year. The



Burnt to ashes: Construction materials set on fire during the ethnic violence in Imphal East district. FILE PHOTO

violence has killed more than 220 people, injured thousands of others and internally displaced over 50,000.

In his most-detailed remarks on the issue yet, the Prime Minister on Wednesday told the Rajya Sabha that efforts were on to bring peace in the State and that "social tensions" in the State were deep-rooted.

Mr. Modi's remarks came weeks after Jiribam

erupted in violence on June 6, taking the ethnic conflict to a district that had so far remained largely unaffected owing to efforts of the local police and security forces.

Reacting to Mr. Modi's remarks, residents across Imphal expressed deep anguish and anger. Onil Kshetrimayum, a human rights activist, said, "There is no difference between what he said last year and today. It is the same lip service

and the same lack of seriousness to handle the situation."

Most other residents said the Prime Minister was forced to address the issue because of the speech given in Parliament a day ago by the Congress's Lok Sabha member from Inner Manipur, A. Bimol Akoijam. They said Mr. Modi spoke on the Manipur violence last year too when videos of a Meitei mob assaulting and parading naked Kuki-Zo women created outrage.

Jeevanlata Panjoubam, 52, a shop owner in Than-gal Bazaar, said, "Last year too, he waited for too long and only spoke when the video of the Kuki women went viral. That clearly showed that he was seeing the issue from a biased point of view."

She said the Prime Minister should visit the State if he thinks it is slowly coming back to "normalcy" and see for himself.

## Congress demands a White Paper on Agnipath scheme

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Amid the controversy over compensation to Agniveers who died in the line of duty, the Congress on Thursday demanded a "White Paper" on the Agnipath recruitment scheme for the armed forces.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, the Congress's ex-servicemen department chief, Colonel Rohit Chaudhry (retired), said the White Paper was essential for the country to know the ground situation.

Mr. Chaudhry said the family of "Agniveer" Ajay Singh from Ludhiana has got only ₹48 lakh from the Centre, while the Punjab government gave ₹1 crore. Another ₹50 lakh was insurance money from a private bank.

His remarks followed a clarification from the Army that the kin of Singh, who lost his life in the line of duty, had already been given ₹98.39 lakh of the due amount. The total amount would be ₹1.65 crore approximately.

The clarification came after Rahul Gandhi shared a video on X late on Wednesday, and alleged that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had "lied" in Parliament about the issue of compensation and demanded an apology for it. Mr. Gandhi also played a clip of the slain Agniveer's father, saying no assistance had been received.

"In Parliament, the Defence Minister gave incom-

## New criminal laws will help ease of living, says Meghwal

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Law and Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal on Thursday said the new criminal laws would expedite delivery of justice and save crucial time of all stakeholders spent on litigation.

At an investiture ceremony organised by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) at its academy in Ghaziabad near here, Mr. Meghwal presented the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service and the Indian Police Medal for Meritorious Service to 39 CBI officials.

The Union Minister said the new criminal laws - being implemented from July 1, 2024 - would bring in "ease of living" for the citizens in a major way.

They would expedite delivery of justice and save crucial time of all the stakeholders spent on litigation, which would in turn prove highly productive for the nation.

The Union Minister said the reforms and improvements in the judicial process would also contribute to the goal of making India the third largest economy in the world in the coming years.

## To quell Agniveer controversy, BJP fields Bhadauria

NEW DELHI

Facing criticism from the Opposition on the issue of compensation to the family of Agniveer Ajay Singh, who laid down his life in the line of duty, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday fielded Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria (retired) to quell the controversy. The retired Air Chief Marshal, who joined the BJP ahead of the recent Lok Sabha election, said that the Army had said that the process would be completed at the earliest. He also said that the Army should not be dragged into politics.

plete information to the country, which created an atmosphere of doubt. As the main Opposition, it is our responsibility to raise the issue of discrimination being carried out with the Army and Agniveers. Rahul Gandhi says there should be no discrimination with the soldiers and martyrs of the country. This is not just a matter of martyred Agniveer Ajay Singh, but of the 13 Agniveers who have been martyred so far," Mr. Chaudhry said.

He said the government should bring a "White Paper" on the Agnipath scheme, the discrimination between Agniveers and regular soldiers and the assistance amount to be given to the families of "martyrs".



## APPEAL

Kumari Lavanya Patel daughter of Yugal Kishor Patel 4 years admitted in Mazumdar Shaw Medical Centre, is suffering from Thalassemia Major. The only curative treatment is bone marrow transplant. The cost of transplant at this hospital is approximately Rs. 21,50,000/-.

Please send donation however small and save the girl. Cheque/D.D/M.O. favouring Save Poor Lives A/c Lavanya Patel, Our Account Details: S/B Account No. 20000913487, State Bank of India, R.A. Puram, and IFSC CODE: SBIN0001855, you can donate through Google

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# PM's speech had misleading, wrong statements: MP

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Manickam Tagore on Thursday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to point out "factually incorrect, inaccurate and misleading statements" made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP MP Anurag Thakur in the House.

Mr. Tagore, sources said, called on Mr. Birla and urged him to invoke provisions of Direction 115 (I) over their statements.

He flagged the statements made by Mr. Modi in his reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address. He cited Mr. Modi's statement that the Congress made a "false" promise of giving ₹8,500 per month to women.

He challenged the Prime Minister's claim that the Congress vote share had gone down in 16 States in which it contested alone.

Terming Mr. Modi's re-

marks that "no bulletproof jackets [were provided] for the Army during the Congress's time" as "grossly misleading, the MP wrote, "There was a shortage of jackets, not that jackets were not there."

Challenging the claim that the Congress did not give fighter jets to the Army, he said, "We had Jaguar, MiG 29, SU-30, Mirage 2000."

He alleged inaccuracies in Mr. Thakur's July 1 speech. Noting that that the BJP MP had claimed that the Army was not given arms and fighter jets when the Congress ruled the country, he wrote, "We had Jaguar, MiG 29, SU-30, Mirage 2000... We had nuclear bombs, missiles like Agni, Prithvi, Aakash, Nag, Trishul and later Brahmos." Challenging remarks that Prime Minister Modi has not taken a single holiday, he asked, "Which category of leave is taken for election campaigns?"

# Cong. will not ally with AAP in Haryana, Delhi polls: Ramesh

Party general secretary says it will contest as part of INDIA in the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections; he adds there is no one formula the bloc will follow for the State elections

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

There does not appear to be much scope for an alliance between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for the Assembly elections in Haryana and Delhi, but the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will fight elections together in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Thursday.

In an interview with PTI, Mr. Ramesh said there was no one formula INDIA would follow for the State elections. The bloc will fight together in States where Congress leaders and other alliance partners agree to such an understanding, he said.

"There is no INDIA janbandhan in Punjab. In Ha-



We are going to be aggressive... we want a debate, we want a discussion but we will not be allowed to be bulldozed like the way we have been over the last 10 years

JAIRAM RAMESH  
Congress general secretary

ryana, we had given one seat to the AAP in the Lok Sabha election but I don't think that INDIA janbandhan will be there for Assembly election. In Delhi, the AAP itself has said that the INDIA janbandhan will not be there for the Assembly election," Mr. Ramesh said.

The Congress and the AAP had fought the Lok Sabha election together in Delhi, while they contested separately in Punjab.

Mr. Ramesh said, "In the context of West Bengal al-

so, I had said that the INDIA bloc is for Lok Sabha election but in States where the circumstances are such that our leaders of the State and leaders of our alliance partners want, the alliance will remain. In Maharashtra, the alliance will be there with the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SCP). In Jharkhand, we have an alliance with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha."

Last month, the AAP's Delhi State convener, Gopal Rai, had said his party's alliance with the Congress

was only for the Lok Sabha election, and hinted that the ruling party would go solo in next year's Assembly election.

'United in Parliament' Mr. Ramesh said the INDIA bloc partners were united in Parliament and augmented by the Biju Janata Dal in the Rajya Sabha.

"The YSRCP has its compulsions. Their soul is with INDIA but their body is with Mr. Narendra Modi. We are going to be aggressive, we are going to be proactive, we want a debate, we want a discussion but we will not be allowed to be bulldozed like the way we have been over the past 10 years," Mr. Ramesh said.

Jharkhand, Haryana, and Maharashtra are slated to go to the polls later this year, while the Assembly election in Delhi will be held early next year.

## IN BRIEF



### Rajnath, Australian Minister discuss closer collaboration

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a telephone conversation with Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles on Thursday. The discussions focused on closer collaboration between the two countries in the Indo-Pacific. "We reviewed a range of issues pertaining to defence cooperation and discussed closer collaboration between India and Australia in the Indo-Pacific," Mr. Singh said on X. Both Ministers noted the transformative progress in defence cooperation under the comprehensive strategic partnership and appreciated the momentum achieved in the ties.

### Rahul Gandhi likely to visit Ahmedabad tomorrow

Days after the Gujarat Congress headquarters was vandalised by Bajrang Dal activists and clashes broke out between the BJP and the Congress workers here, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi is likely to visit Ahmedabad on Saturday to meet the party workers. Five Congress workers had been arrested following clashes over Mr. Gandhi's speech in Parliament against the BJP and the RSS, said State party president Shaktisinh Gohil. On Thursday, the city police filed another FIR naming several BJP workers who were allegedly involved in the clashes at the Congress office.

### NHRC team meets woman beaten up in public in Chopra

A National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) team visited Chopra in Uttar Dinajpur of West Bengal on Thursday and met the woman survivor of the recent flogging incident. The four-member team led by a senior officer visited the area for a spot enquiry, an NHRC official said. The prime accused in the case, Tajimul Islam, alias JCB, was arrested by the police on June 30, hours after the video of the public flogging went viral. Tajimul is considered close to the Trinamool. The NHRC on July 1 issued a press statement, saying the agency had taken suo motu cognisance of the reported beating of a couple in full public view.

# 'BJD continues to be equidistant from NDA, INDIA bloc'

Sobhana K. Nair  
NEW DELHI

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) continues to be "equidistant from the NDA and the INDIA bloc," its parliamentary party leader Sasmit Patra said in an interview with The Hindu. He insisted that there be no confusion about the party's stand, and the INDIA bloc could not appropriate the Opposition space. Each political party was free to adopt its independent position, he said.

Coming at the back of a bitter election campaign between the BJP and the

BJD in Odisha, where the latter could not win a single Lok Sabha seat and the 24-year rule of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik ended, the BJD walked out of the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday during the Prime Minister's address.

The party had also joined the INDIA protest in the House on June 28 on the NEET and NET controversy.

Mr. Patra said that most observers were missing out on the nuance, that the BJD walked out before the INDIA bloc staged a walkout protesting against the Centre's indifference to va-



Sasmit Patra

rious demands made by Odisha.

"We continue to be equidistant from both the NDA and the INDIA bloc. Let there be no confusion in anyone's mind. As far as our parliamentary strategy

is concerned, earlier too we extended issue-based support keeping in mind the larger interest of the nation, irrespective of whichever government is in power," he said.

Mr. Patra also pointed out that while the BJD protested against three farm laws because it felt that these were detrimental to farmers' interests, it supported the government in the case of the Citizenship Amendment Act Bill based on its merit.

#### Artificial binary

The BJD leader protested against the artificial binary

being drawn in Parliament. "There is a misconception that Opposition means INDIA bloc alone. Let's not appropriate Opposition as the INDIA bloc. There are different Opposition parties. Why is there pressure that Parliament should run on binary. Can't there be different stances of different political parties," Mr. Patra asked, giving examples of the TDP and the JD (U) — both the parties have been demanding special category status for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, respectively, a stance not shared by the BJP.

Mr. Patra hoped that the

government would not harden its heart and allow for debates instead of opting for adjournments in the upcoming Budget session. He called the government's decision not to heed to the Opposition's demand for a debate on NEET as a lost opportunity.

"Why is the government not willing to come and debate the issue? It would have been a good opportunity for the government to actually come before people to say that we have nothing to hide instead of browbeating. It has only scored a self-goal," Mr. Patra said.

# Chhattisgarh govt. targeting Satnamis, says Bhim Army chief

Shubhomoy Sikdar  
RAIPUR

Addressing a rally in Chhattisgarh's Bhatgaon on Thursday, Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad, questioned the police action following last month's Balodabazar arson incident as he accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of committing atrocities on Satnamis, a promi-

nent Dalit community of the State.

Mr. Azad's arrival in the State comes nearly three weeks after unrest and violence erupted over the desecration of Satnami community's sacred Jaitkham pillars in Chhattisgarh Balodabazar district.

Demanding a CBI probe into the matter, he raised questions over the conspiracy behind the incident it-

self — which saw the District Superintendent of Police's office being burnt down — and claimed that the police had been arresting innocent people in connection with the case, including some of his Bhim Army colleagues.

"A judicial probe has already been ordered and the panel has sought three months for its probe. But action is being taken

against the people of Satnami community selectively as they are being arrested, tortured and harassed," he claimed.

He alleged that the government and the Opposition [Congress] were together in suppressing the Dalit community.

"If you have the courage to do justice, then get a CBI inquiry done, and if not, then we will accept that

the ruling party and the Opposition have joined forces to destroy us and our sect, which will never happen. Satnamis were, are and will remain," he said.

Mr. Azad, who submitted a memorandum demanding a CBI probe to the Chhattisgarh Governor earlier, also threatened an agitation if his demands were not met.

# Delhi HC seeks NIA's response on PFI leader Salam's interim bail plea

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked the National Investigation Agency to give its response on a plea for interim bail filed by the Popular Front of India (PFI) leader O.M.A. Salam, arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Pre-

vention) Act.

The court passed the direction on an appeal by Mr. Salam against a trial court order denying him relief. It asked the NIA to file its response within two weeks and listed the matter for hearing on July 25.

Mr. Salam's counsel sought two weeks' interim bail on the ground that his

daughter had died in April and his wife was in a "depressive state".

He was arrested by the NIA during a crackdown on the banned organisation in 2022. The NIA has alleged that the accused persons had been "conducting camps to indoctrinate and train their cadres for terrorist activities".

**MAHATRANSCO** (LOCAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)  
SRM e-Tender No. T-2423/MSETCL/CO/Projects/TP/Pre-Tender (RFx No. 6000001200)  
MSETCL invites offers by SRM e-tendering in TWO bid system (Techno-Commercial Bid and Price Bid) from the eligible registered bidders for the following work as detailed below.  
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Interested bidders may obtain further information available on the website. <https://srmetender.mahatransco.in>  
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Sd/-  
Chief Engineer (Projects), MSETCL

**V.O. CHIDAMBARANAR PORT AUTHORITY**  
General Administration Department  
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GAD-EST10ESTC(EST)/8/2023-GADs/DS(4389) Date: 05.07.2024  
V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority invites applications for the following:-  
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Sl. No.	Name of the Position	No. of Positions	Discipline /Fields	Consolidated monthly remuneration
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3.	Professional Intern	3		Rs. 30,000/-
<b>Total</b>				<b>6</b>

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AT/PO-SANKARA, SUNDARGARH-770020, E-mail address-serw\_sundargarh@yahoo.com  
No.Tender Online – RWCCESNG-04 of 2024-25, Letter No.1469 /Dtd.02.07.2024  
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1. Type of the Work : Buildings (DMF)
2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
3. Time of Completion : As specified in the column-5 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
5. Estimated Cost : As specified in the column-4 of the Annexure
6. Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of Seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh	RWCCESNG-04 of 2024-25	15.07.2024 11:00 AM	05.08.2024 5:00 PM	03.08.2024 5:00 PM	06.08.2024 11:00 AM	Will be intimated separately

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)  
Chief Engineer (Design & Quality Control)  
Chief Construction Engineer (I/C), Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh.  
OIPR-25133/11/0006/2425

**GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN**  
**SUPERINTENDENT, MATHURADAS MATHUR HOSPITAL, JODHPUR**  
(Attached with Dr. S.N. Medical College Jodhpur)  
Tel No.:- 0291-2438655 E-mail:- mdmh.tender@gmail.com  
No.-11349 Date : 28/06/24  
**E-TENDER NOTICE No. 01(2024-25)**

Online Bids are invited from eligible bidders i.e. Manufacturer/Authorized Distributors/Dealers to provide various Items & Services at Mathura Das Mathur Hospital Jodhpur attached to Dr. S.N. Medical College Jodhpur as per tender conditions. Tenders are to be submitted duly digitally signed in electronic format only on website <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>. The tender documents may be downloaded from above mentioned website. The tender document may also be seen on <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>.

Item No.	Particulars	Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lakhs)	UBN NO	Bid Document Download & Submission end at 03:00PM on Date mention below	Technical Bid Opening at 01:30 PM Mention below
1.	PROVIDE JOB BASS HIGHLY SKILLED, SKILLED, UNSKILLED AND SEMI SKILLED LABOUR WORK (2YEARS)	3051.00	SMC2425SLRC00014	22/07/2024	23/07/2024
2.	SUPPLY OF ECHO MACHINE (2 YEARS)	50.00	SMC2425GLRC00015	22/07/2024	23/07/2024

Superintendent  
Mathura Das Mathur Hospital  
Jodhpur  
DIPRC/5234/2024

**भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, अंतरिक्ष विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPACE**  
विक्रम साराभाई अंतरिक्ष केंद्र / VIKRAM SARABHAI SPACE CENTRE  
निर्माण एवं अनुरक्षण गृह / CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP  
तिरुवनंतपुरम / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 22 / (फोन नं. / Ph. No. 0471 - 2564568 / 5689 / 4537 / 4545).  
**ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करते हुए संक्षिप्त सूचना / BRIEF NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER**  
भारत के राष्ट्रपति की ओर से, निम्नलिखित कार्यों के लिए ई-टेंडरिंग द्वारा ऑनलाइन मद-दर निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।  
On behalf of the President of India, online item-rate tenders are invited through E-tendering for the following work.  
1. टर्कस, वीएसएससी तृतीया में टैरिओएमडी के लिए परिवहन कॉम्प्लेक्स ( भारी वाहन अनुरक्षण वे) का निर्माण ( स्विचल तथा पॉरच कार्य) / Construction of Transport Complex (Heavy Vehicle Maintenance bay) for TMD at TERLS, VSSC, Thumba (Civil & PH works) / NT No. VSSG/CMG/CP/1/07/2024-25 Dt. 03.07.2024 (पी.ए.सी. ₹ 465.00 लाख/Lakhs)  
डाउनलोड करने की अवधि/Period for downloading: दिनांक 04.07.2024, 16.00 बजे/hrs से/From दिनांक 18.07.2024, 23.00 बजे/hrs तक/upto  
योग्यता मानदंड तथा अन्य शर्तों को पाने के लिए इच्छुक निविदाकार ई-निविदा आमंत्रित करते हुए विस्तृत सूचना (ई-सारांश) का अलोकन करें, जिसे [www.tenderwizard.in/isro](http://www.tenderwizard.in/isro) or [www.isro.gov.in](http://www.isro.gov.in) से डाउनलोड किया जा सकता है। Interested tenderers may please refer detailed Notice Inviting E-Tender (E-NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details, which can be downloaded from website [www.tenderwizard.in/isro](http://www.tenderwizard.in/isro) or [www.isro.gov.in](http://www.isro.gov.in). Sd/- गृह निदेशक / Group Director, सौम्यजी, वीएसएससी / CMG, VSSC

**CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION,**  
**CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR**  
E-Tender Notice 2024-2025  
Tender Notice  
E-Tender in B-1 form for the following work invited by Municipal Administrator, Municipal Corporation, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (Phone No. 0240-233536-40) from Government Registered Contractors / Companies / Firms of Appropriate Category.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount Rs.
1	Construction of C.C. Road at Various Places Under Scheme "Development of Basic Amenities in CSMC Area (Under Govt. Fund) Package E-1.	2,37,87,894.00
2	Construction of C.C. Road at Various Places Under Scheme "Development of Basic Amenities in CSMC Area (Under Govt. Fund) Package E-2.	2,38,47,149.00
3	Construction of C.C. Road at Various Places Under Scheme "Development of Basic Amenities in CSMC Area (Under Govt. Fund) Package W-1.	2,43,16,788.00
4	Construction of C.C. Road at Various Places Under Scheme "Development of Basic Amenities in CSMC Area (Under Govt. Fund) Package W-2.	2,42,95,448.00

Details regarding the tender for the said works will be available on <http://mahatenders.gov.in> From. Dt. 04/07/2024. Administrator, Municipal Corporation, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar reserves all the rights to reject / cancel any or all tenders without assigning any reason.  
Sd/-  
City Engineer  
CSMC, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

## IN BRIEF



## Plea in SC seeks structural audit of all bridges in Bihar

A lawyer has moved the Supreme Court, highlighting over 10 separate incidents of bridge collapses across Bihar since 2022, while seeking a structural audit of recently completed, under-construction and old bridges in the State. The petition, filed by advocate Brajesh Singh, urged the top court to set up an expert committee to identify unsafe bridges in the State. "The total flood-affected area in the State is 68,800 sq. km which is 73.06% of its total geographical area... Hence, such routine accrual of incidents of falling bridges in Bihar is more disastrous as the lives of people at large are at stake," the petition said.

## Gangster Subodh Singh remanded in CID custody

Bihar-based gangster Subodh Singh, accused of being involved in multiple crimes across West Bengal, was remanded in the custody of the West Bengal Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for 14 days on Wednesday, till July 17. He has been suspected of running a criminal network from inside Patna's Beur jail, and is accused in a slew of criminal cases in West Bengal, including heists, extortion, as well as the alleged murder of BJP youth leader Manish Shukla in 2020. Singh's alleged accomplice Roshan was also brought to West Bengal from Patna's Beur jail and produced in a Barrackpore court on Thursday. The court remanded him in 14 days of police custody.

## Gangster Abu Salem moved to Nashik Central Prison

Gangster Abu Salem, the main accused in the 1993 Mumbai blast case, was transferred from the Talaja Central Prison to Nashik Central Prison on Thursday before his plea in the Bombay High Court could be heard. Salem had approached the High Court challenging an order of a Special Court that had rejected his petition against his transfer from Talaja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai to the Nashik Central Prison. His plea had cited threat to life if he is transferred to another prison. Prison authorities have said that Talaja Prison is in disrepair and needed urgent repairs and hence the transfer was required.

## Dead snake found in mid-day meal in Maharashtra's Sangli

After reports of a tiny dead snake found in a packet distributed under the mid-day meal scheme in western Maharashtra's Sangli district, Congress leader and former State Minister Vishwajeet Kadam raised the issue in the Assembly on Thursday during the monsoon session and demanded a detailed probe. The parent of a child in ananganwadi in Sangli had taken the food packet home on Monday and found the snake upon opening it. Mr. Kadam, who represents the Palus-Kadegaon constituency, said, "We are playing with the lives of children and mothers, the government must take cognisance of such a dire situation and punish whoever is guilty."

## Assam floods: 6 more dead as toll since May mounts to 52

At least seven districts of Arunachal Pradesh cut off due to landslips; eight persons, including two children, killed in rain-induced landslips and floods in Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

At least six persons, including two children, drowned on Thursday, taking the death toll in two waves of floods in Assam since May to 52.

Officials of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said the water levels of the Brahmaputra and other rivers dipped marginally on Thursday, but the flood situation continued to be grim with 21.13 lakh forced to abandon their homes.

More than 39,300 people from the flood-hit areas have taken shelter across 247 relief camps. "Western Assam's Dhubri and northern Assam's Darrang are the worst affected districts where 6.49 lakh and 1.9 lakh people have been displaced," an ASDMA spokesperson said.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the breaching of at least eight strategic embankments worsened the flood situation, which was caused largely by heavy rainfall in Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan.

The impact has been felt in the 1,307.49 sq. km Kaziranga National Park and



Villagers with their cattle and belongings move to safety in Kamrup district of Assam on Thursday. ANI

Tiger Reserve where the floodwaters killed 31 animals – 30 hog deer and one otter pup.

Forest guards, however, rescued 82 animals, a two-month-old rhino among them. "The situation, however, improved in the last 24 hours with 95 of the 233 anti-poaching camps now under water up to 5 feet. The number of camps inundated on Wednesday was 179," a park official said.

Heavy rainfall also caused havoc in other northeastern States. Officials in Arunachal Pradesh

said at least seven districts in the central and eastern parts of the State had been cut off due to landslides caused by flash floods. The affected districts include Lohit, Changlang, Anjap, and East Siang.

During the last 48 hours, eight persons, including two children, were killed in rain-induced landslides and floods in Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

## Relief measures

The Chief Minister on Thursday said the State's flood situation was "under control" but everything de-

pendent on the weather conditions during the next few days.

The affected people are being provided relief and plans are being drawn up for their rehabilitation along with the repair of damaged infrastructure, he said.

"The situation is under control but everything depends on the weather. If there is no further rain in Arunachal Pradesh and South Tibet, the situation will improve, but it might worsen if there is more rainfall," Mr. Sarma stated. (With PTI inputs)

## 50 NEET candidates move Supreme Court against re-test

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Over 50 candidates have moved the Supreme Court to stop the Centre and the National Testing Agency from taking any steps to cancel the undergraduate National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG), 2024 which was riddled with allegations of paper leaks and other irregularities.

The NEET-UG, held on May 5, is facing a whirlwind of controversy with the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) arresting several persons.

The petitioners said legal action should be taken against the perpetrators of foul play, but that should not affect students who have worked hard for several years for the test.

## 'Infringement of RTE'

"It would not only be unreasonable and harsh for the honest and hardworking students but also would lead to the infringement of the Right to Education and therefore violative of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution," the petition said.

Medical aspirants have to pass NEET to get admissions in colleges across the country. NEET-UG 2024 was held across 4,750

**The fresh petition has been filed days before a top court Bench is scheduled to hear the NEET case on July 8**

centres on May 5 and around 24 lakh candidates appeared in the exam.

## Many petitions

The fresh plea by 56 students has been filed days before a top court Bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud is scheduled to hear the NEET case on July 8. Over 25 separate petitions seeking relief, which includes re-test, would be heard by the three-judge Bench.

These petitioners have alleged irregularities such as students receiving different marks on their scorecards compared with their OMR sheets; unprecedented inflation of cut-off and average marks resulting in an unprecedented 67 candidates achieving a perfect score of 720/720; six of these toppers coming from the same exam centre in Haryana; students having scored 718 and 719 marks, which is "statistically questionable"; and no disclosure of criteria adopted for grant of compensatory marks for loss of time.

## NCERT textbooks delay issue: Minister holds review meeting

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan held a detailed review meeting on the progress of textbook development with senior Ministry officials on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary, School Education and Literacy, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Director and Chairperson of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

The meeting comes a day after *The Hindu* reported that students of Class 6 have been left without textbooks as there has been a substantial delay in receiving the new science, maths and social sciences books from the National Syllabus

and Textbook Committee (NSTC) by the NCERT. Even as schools reopened for the new academic year in July, students of Class 6 do not have access to textbooks for the three subjects.

An official statement from the Education Ministry said that for the academic year 2024-25, new and engaging textbooks would be introduced for Classes 3 and 6. "Textbook development work is in the final phase and nine textbooks for grades three and six are already available. The remaining eight will be available very soon," the statement said.

Mr. Pradhan also reviewed the capacity building undertaken for the teachers of Classes 3 and 6 who will use these new textbooks.

## Brahmaputra's lone female gharial's long wait for a mate could end soon

Rahul Karmakar  
GUWAHATI

A lone female gharial has temporarily overshadowed the one-horned rhino in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in eastern Assam.

Wildlife officials and specialists are not sure how this gharial came to inhabit a stretch of the Brahmaputra within the national park. But they are certain that the reptile, presumed to be an adult by its size, is the key to repopulating the river with gharials.

Distinguished from other crocodilians by its elongated snout, the gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) was believed to have been wiped out from the Brahmaputra river system during the 1950s, though there were claims of sightings in



A comeback: Gharials were believed to have been wiped out from the Brahmaputra river system during 1950s. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the 1990s. The female gharial was first spotted in 2021 within the Biswanath Wildlife Division of the 1,307.49-sq. km Kaziranga.

The gharial, now 2.55 metres in length, was recorded twice, 500 metres apart, in one of the three priority habitats chosen during a 10-day survey of aquatic reptiles along the Brahmaputra in January.

Teams of the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation

"sandbar with a shoreline water depth of 4.5 metres".

"We do not know much about gharials in the Brahmaputra but we do know that this female has been lonely for more than three years and is close to the size of an adult ready to breed," Sushmita Kar, TSAFI's project director in the northeast, told *The Hindu*.

One of the 10 recommendations in the report was the "high-priority" reintroduction of gharials in the Brahmaputra.

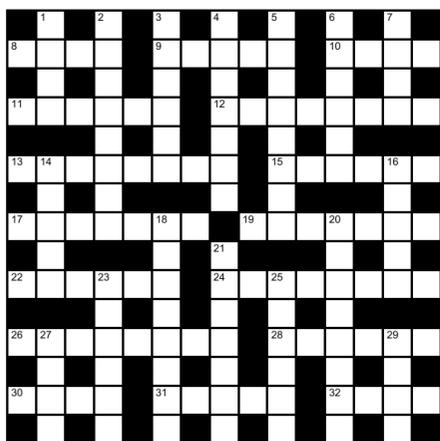
Kaziranga's Director Sonali Ghosh said the tiger reserve had the right conditions for a gharial breeding programme.

If the reintroduction proposal is approved, the reptiles are likely to be brought from the Kukrail gharial breeding centre near Lucknow.

## THE CROSSWORD + 14219

(set by Incognito)

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



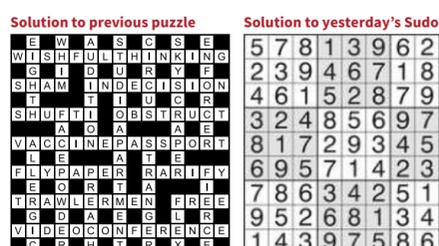
- 17 Kelvin leaves wickerwork containers containing small dogs (7)  
19 Bird disturbed pile near container (7)  
22 Commanding officer gets approval to initiate expense for starters and biscuits (6)  
24 No! Canada can discard one container disturbing snake (8)  
26 Game requiring path having permit (8)  
28 Flier wrongly let another flier (6)  
30 Eye problem? Pen letter! (4)  
31 Short NCO changes gears (5)  
32 Royal Air Force model for rudimentary boat (4)
- Down**
- 1 Cry "Whiskey" and become sick (4)  
2 Infringements of boundary markers (8)  
3 Perhaps burn saint having a lot of paper (6)  
4 Small magazine covers John playing Chinese game (3-4)  
5 Wrongly nicks ear to get treatment for dermis (8)  
6 One stopping nuisance at bar ordered to protect 7 (6)  
7 Nothing for Japanese fighter (4)  
14 A plot devised for a philosopher (5)  
16 German lady starting to discover hoax (5)  
18 Essay: "Cure is expensive at first" (8)  
20 Moving mortise? Yes, that's rigid geometric transformation (8)  
21 Forced Irish Republican Army to produce wine (7)  
23 King and queen give shelter to sick assassin (6)  
25 Drunk MBA went ahead and walked slowly (6)  
27 Selects optional practical training scheme for beginners (4)  
29 Went away from port (4)

- Across**
- 8 After losing sense initially, flashback is 50% (4)  
9 Cart returning on king's path (5)  
10 Drink with first flier from 28, right? (4)  
11 Claim aluminium limb excels in the beginning (6)  
12 Rolls joint to cover "Peacemaker" Colt in meeting place (8)  
13 Astronaut paces about before meeting administrative NASA heads (8)  
15 A doctor with one foot's aimlessly floating (6)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

FAITH  
Satsang, a great blessing

Whenever a *satsang* happens, it is a great blessing for the attendees. Adi Sankara says, "*satsangatve nissangatvam, nissangatve nirmohatvam, nirmohatve nischalatattvam, nischalatatve jivanmukti*" (through the company of the wise there comes non-attachment, freedom from delusion, resulting in self knowledge)." And also emphasises this when she says, "*Koodi irundhu kulirdhelor*" (experiencing God). Listening to discourses on God is in itself a huge blessing, said Damal S. Ramakrishnan in a discourse.

Sage Suka informs King Parikshit, who is cursed with death within seven days' time, that listening to the learned expositions on Bhagawan is a rare blessing, adding that only those whose ancestors in the last seven generations had performed dharmic deeds are likely to be blessed with being part of a *satsang*. Yudhishtira, the epitome of dharma, spent time with Krishna, but was not blessed enough to be in a *satsang* with Him. Similarly, Arjuna. However, Parikshit was blessed, says Suka, who proceeds to discourse on Bhagavatham, instructing the king on God, His approachability, His sporting test of bhaktas and His attainability. Do not the Gopikas sing, "*Sravana Mangalam sreemata hitam*"? (Krishna, you will give us darshan, you will come running to us when we listen to your history)."

**IN BRIEF**



**LIC raises shareholding in IDFC First Bank to 2.68%**

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) said its shareholding in IDFC First Bank increased after the insurer acquired 18,60,34,900 shares at ₹80.63 apiece in a private placement offer by the lender. From 0.20% of the pre-issue paid-up capital, the shareholding has increased to 2.68% of the post issue paid-up capital of the bank, LIC said in a filing on Thursday. In terms of number of shares, the holding has increased from a little more than 1.42 crore to more than 20.02 crore.

**Dr. Reddy's, Sun Pharma recalling a drug each in U.S.**

Dr. Reddy's is recalling 13,752 bottles of insomnia drug Eszopiclone Tablets, USP Img CIV, manufactured at Bachupally in Hyderabad from the U.S. market. Failed impurities/degradation specifications is the reason, the U.S. FDA said. Sun Pharma is recalling 2,088 vials of cancer drug Decitabine for Injection 50mg per vial. The FDA cited deviation in manufacturing standards: 'out of specification for total aerobic microbial count test for unfiltered bulk decitabine'.

**Shriram Life Insurance unveils deferred annuity plan**

Shriram Life Insurance has introduced an 'affordable' annuity plan that balances long-term savings growth with insurance protection. Individuals aged 40-75 can purchase Shriram Life Deferred Annuity Plan, which offers tax benefits and steady retirement income. The minimum premium starts at ₹60,000 a year. If the death of the annuitant occurs when the policy is in force, the death benefit, i.e. 125% of the purchase price, will be paid to the nominees, the insurer said.

**Muthoot Finance selected for FATF report**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Muthoot Finance said it was the only Indian NBFC to be selected for The Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) Mutual Evaluation report 2023-24. "This selection from FATF is a significant achievement for us and is testimony to Muthoot Finance's legacy as a trusted brand not just in India, but globally," Muthoot Finance MD George Alexander said. FATF is a global agency formed in 1989 to develop policies to combat money laundering, terrorism financing and several other significant threats to soundness of the global financial system.

**Port congestion, container dearth, freight cost hit exports**

**M. Soundariya Preetha**  
COIMBATORE

The recent delays facing exporters on account of port congestion, container shortage and rising freight cost are impacting exports. "I have 4-5 containers (of tea) ready," said Dipak Shah, President, The South India Tea Exporters Association. "But, containers are available only after 10 days or so. Many of us have year-long contracts at agreed freight rates. But, the rates have shot up. Shipping time has doubled because of congestion at transhipment ports." President of Tiruppur Exporters Association K.M. Subramanian said a 40-foot-high cube container from Thoothukudi to New York used to cost \$4,260 in



**Rough seas:** Some buyers have started demanding airlifting goods and the costs have seen a 20-25% surge, says Subramanian. AFP

May. On July 1, it was \$7,360, he added. **Airlifting goods** With congestion at major transhipment ports, several vessels are skipping some of these ports. At least one mother vessel used to operate from Colombo to the U.S. every week. Now, it is twice a

month. So, some buyers are asking for airlifting goods and the costs have seen a 20-25% surge. S. Mahesh Kumar, a coir exporter, said the Indian government should talk to the shipping lines and ensure adequate space for Indian goods in the vessels as China is said to be using most of the space.

**As sugar stocks rise, ISMA calls for the lifting of export curbs**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
COIMBATORE

The Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) estimates the current sugar season to end in September with a stock of 91 lakh tonnes.



**Idle inventory** ISMA in a statement said the sugar marketing season (October to September) every year ends with about 55 lakh tonnes. But this year, it is likely to be higher by 36 lakh tonnes. This "can potentially lead to additional costs for millers on account of idle inventory," it said. The opening stock in October last year was

about 56 lakh tonnes and expected domestic consumption for the current season is about 285 lakh tonnes. "ISMA has urged the government to reconsider permitting export of surplus sugar after due consideration of domestic demand and supply. The government has

raised Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for 2024-2025 sugar season by ₹25 per quintal to ₹340 per quintal. This will hike the cane cost and the cost of sugar production and the mills will have to pay for cane supplies within 14 days.

**Ethanol blending** Deepak Ballani, Director General, ISMA, said, "Allowing exports would not only ensure a comfortable stock for domestic consumption and sustain the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP) but also contribute to maintaining the financial liquidity of sugar mills, enabling timely payments to farmers."

**'Partnering with top Indian institutes on decarbonisation R&D'**

**Mini Tejaswi**  
BENGALURU

Under its academic partnership, Open Innovation, Shell, the London-based oil and gas major says it has partnered with top Indian educational institutions to push deep research in various areas including decarbonisation to support its global energy transition.

**'Fostering innovation'** Ajay Mehta, VP and Chief Engineer R&D, Shell India told *The Hindu*, "These partnerships aim to foster innovation and accelerate decarbonisation efforts in the energy sector to sup-

**'FMCG likely to see revenue growth of 7-9% in FY25'**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector is expected to see revenue grow 7-9% in FY25, riding on higher volume growth, and supported by an expected revival in rural demand and steady urban demand, Crisil Ratings said in a report. This follows 5-7% growth in FY24. "Product realisations are expected to grow in low single digits with marginal rise in prices of key raw materials for the food and beverages segment. That said, key raw material prices for personal care and home care segments are seen to be stable," the rating agency said.

**Industry Ministry pushes for lower duties on input imports**

Current high tariffs on inputs for items used in electronics, other sectors seen as nullifying gains from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme vis-a-vis competitors like China and Vietnam

**Vikas Dhoot**  
NEW DELHI



**Added push:** The Confederation of Indian Industry too mooted lower duties on electronic components. FILE PHOTO

The Commerce and Industry Ministry has made a pitch for reducing high tariffs on the import of inputs for electronics and other sectors, responding to industry concerns that tariff-induced costs will nullify gains from the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme vis-a-vis rivals like China and Vietnam. However, there is no proposal to reconsider the restrictions placed on Fo-

reign Direct Investment (FDI) flows from countries sharing land borders with India through Press Note 3,

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIT) Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said to

**GST is still far from simple: former CEA Subramanian**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Revenues from the seven-year old Goods and Services Tax (GST) had not lived up to expectations, having attained pre-GST levels only now, and the goal of a 'Good and Simple Tax' remained elusive, former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian averred, terming the lack of critical data such as refunds a challenge. Blaming the poor revenue performance to a "rate-cutting spree" by the GST Council between late 2017 and 2019, the economist said both the Centre

**You should just have one cess rate, one standard rate and one low rate, says the former CEA**

and States were complicit. "The focus was on collections, because refunds were not published and we were looking at the wrong number.. had the refunds data been published, we would have been much more careful about rate cuts," he reckoned. "In February, the government started releasing net GST collection numbers and has now stopped

publishing it again. Because we are not getting refunds data, we are under the impression that revenues are doing very well," Mr. Subramanian said on Thursday at a seminar on seven years of GST hosted by the Centre for Social and Economic Progress.

**'Monstrous structure'** Terming the multiple cess rates and the GST rate structure 'monstrous', he mooted the need to try and simplify the GST rates as much as possible. "You should just have one cess rate, one standard rate and one low rate," the former CEA stressed.

a query from *The Hindu*. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), in a recent report on electronics production, said the FDI curbs had outlived their utility, and urged their reconsideration with "adequate guardrails". The CII had also mooted lower duties on components. "The DPIT view is that duty inversion and the high import tariffs on inputs will need to be phased out, not only for electronics but perhaps on other sectors as well," Mr. Singh stressed.

**'Divesting 49% CPSE stakes can yield ₹11.5 lakh cr.'**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

At current market capitalisation, the Centre can raise ₹11.5 lakh crore from disinvestment of Central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) while retaining a majority stake in them, Care Edge Ratings said in a report. However, the rating agency doesn't expect a hard push on disinvestment as there is no urgency to do so as the fiscal situation is comfortable with strong non-tax receipts such as dividends from the RBI and CPSEs. "We believe the government will stick to the 2024-25 [Interim Budget] target of miscellaneous capital receipts, which includes divestment, of ₹500 billion," it said, adding Shipping Corporation of India's divestment 'looks likely' in FY25. CARE Edge economists calculated the divestment potential by analysing the data of 59 major listed CPSEs and 15 public sector banks and insurance firms where the government holds more than 51% stake. The estimate is a little more than twice the total divestment of ₹5.2 lakh crore made since 2014. "Of this, CPSEs could contribute about ₹5 lakh crore, while PSBs and insurance firms adding ₹6.5 lakh crore," Care Edge said, identifying Indian Railway Finance Corporation, Hindustan Aeronautics, Coal India and ONGC as the top companies in terms of "divestment potential mathematically."

**LIC ropes in A.T. Kearney for agency revamp**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
HYDERABAD

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) said it had roped in strategy consulting firm A.T. Kearney for agency transformation project.

Besides a review of the existing agency framework of LIC, the project will involve revamping the agency operations at the branch, division and zonal levels with an aim to establish global best practices, the insurer, which has about 14 lakh agents, said on Thursday.

**MARKETS**

**MARKET WATCH**

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	80,050	0.07
US Dollar	83.50	-0.01
Gold	73,080	0.73
Brent oil	87.57	1.47

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	3144.25	-46.70
Adani Ports	1503.65	-7.00
Apollo Hosp.	6225.05	32.35
Asian Paints	2934.90	0.35
Axis Bank	1280.90	-0.90
Bajaj Auto	9460.85	38.45
Bajaj Finserv	1585.70	-8.45
Bajaj Finance	7107.05	-151.75
Bharti Airtel	1423.05	3.20
BPCL	303.00	-3.60
Britannia Ind.	5426.25	-22.85
Cipla	1480.75	-4.00
Coal India	489.55	-4.60
Divis Lab	4544.05	-15.10
Dr Reddy's Lab	6479.35	53.45
Eicher Motors	4689.50	-2.80
Grasim Ind.	2734.85	-7.50
HCL Tech	1522.35	-41.35
HDFC Bank	1727.15	-41.50
HDFC Life	603.95	-7.80
Hero MotoCorp	5558.35	-21.40
Hindalco	691.85	0.20
Hind Unilever	2495.95	-14.40
IICI Bank	1233.00	31.40
IndusInd Bank	1442.85	-12.65
Infosys	1650.65	23.25
ITC	429.05	0.75
JSW Steel	944.35	-6.05
Kotak Bank	1833.85	23.15
L&T	3573.30	-41.05
LTI Mindtree Ltd.	5459.50	-6.90
M&M	2902.80	24.85
Maruti Suzuki	12089.60	-34.05
NestleIndia	2545.15	-6.35
NTPC	372.95	-0.30
ONGC	277.05	2.35
PowerGrid Corp.	335.00	-1.15
Reliance Ind.	3108.05	3.20
SBI Life	1507.75	11.40
State Bank	839.30	-0.65
Shriram Finance Ltd.	2833.75	-16.70
Sun Pharma	1557.90	23.95
Tata Consumer Product	1135.20	-11.15
Tata Motors	998.20	22.55
Tata Steel	176.29	-0.08
TCS	4020.95	55.70
Tech Mahindra	1459.15	-20.65
Titan	3336.00	-24.25
UltraTech Cement	11760.05	-112.05
Wipro	530.70	-8.30

**EXCHANGE RATES**

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 04

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	83.29	83.61
Euro	89.96	90.31
British Pound	106.27	106.68
Japanese Yen (100)	51.70	51.90
Chinese Yuan	11.46	11.50
Swiss Franc	92.50	92.86
Singapore Dollar	61.63	61.87
Canadian Dollar	61.13	61.39
Malaysian Ringgit	17.68	17.76
Australian Dollar	56.04	56.25

Source: Indian Bank

**'Housing sales rose 11% in Jan.-June'**

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

Indian real estate market remained buoyant in January-June this year, with housing sales hitting a 11-year high at 1.73 lakh units

and office demand at a record 34.7 million sq.ft. across eight major cities, according to Knight Frank. On an annual basis, housing sales rose 11% to 1,73,241 units while leasing of office space grew 33% to

34.7 million sq.ft. during January-June this year across eight major cities. Knight Frank India CMD Shishir Bajjal noted that premium housing formed 34% of all sales in the first half of 2024.



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Samajh kar

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MANILA Philippines hopes to sign key defence agreement with Japan



The Philippines' military chief said on Thursday he hoped a key defence pact with Japan allowing for the deployment of troops on each other's territory will be signed next week.

MELBOURNE Pro-Palestinian protesters breach security at Australia's Parliament



Pro-Palestinian protesters breached security at Australia's Parliament House to unfurl banners from the roof on Thursday as a senator quit the government over its direction on the Gaza war.

PARIS French far-right leader Le Pen says absolute majority possible



The French far right National Rally (RN) is still capable of winning an absolute majority in Parliament, three-time presidential candidate Marine Le Pen said on Thursday.

MOSCOW Taliban 'our allies' in fighting terror as they control Afghanistan: Putin



Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that the Taliban, a banned group in Russia, are Moscow's "allies" in fighting terrorism because they are in control of Afghanistan.

Limit Labour's power, Sunak tells voters

Labour leader Starmer, tipped to be the next Prime Minister, says Britain's future is on the ballot, adding that 'change will only happen if you vote for it'; in a message to his voters, PM Rishi Sunak says the country could wake up to a Labour supermajority, ready to wield their unchecked power

Agence France-Presse Associated Press LONDON

Britain's Opposition Labour party is poised to win a landslide ending nearly a decade-and-a-half of Conservative rule, according to opinion polls. The first national ballot since Boris Johnson won the Tories a decisive victory in 2019 follows PM Rishi Sunak's surprise call to hold an election six months earlier than required.

six-week campaign pointing to a heavy defeat for his right-wing party. That would almost certainly put Labour leader Keir Starmer, 61, in Downing Street, as leader of the largest party in parliament. But Starmer was taking nothing for granted as he urged voters not to stay at home. "Britain's future is on the ballot," he said. "But change will only happen if you vote for it."



Deciding factor: Labour Party leader Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria outside a polling station in London on Thursday.

venues such as pubs and even a ship. Mr. Sunak was among the early birds, casting his ballot at his Richmond and Northallerton constituency in Yorkshire, northern England. Mr. Starmer voted around two hours later in his north London seat,

shortly before Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey. Results from the U.K.'s 650 constituencies trickle in overnight, with the winning party expected to hit 326 seats - the threshold for a parliamentary majority - as dawn breaks Friday. In a message to voters on Wednesday, Mr. Sunak said, "if the polls are to be believed, the country could wake up tomorrow to a Labour supermajority ready to wield their unchecked power." He urged voters to back the Conservatives to limit Labour's power. "I appreciate people have frustrations with our party," Mr. Sunak conceded on Wednesday. "But tomorrow's vote... is a vote about the future."

Biden is not quitting race: White House

Agence France-Presse WASHINGTON

Joe Biden is "absolutely not" pulling out of the U.S. presidential race, his spokesperson said on Wednesday, as pressure mounted following his disastrous debate performance against Donald Trump. Panic has gripped the Democratic Party in the wake of last week's TV debate, and internal rumblings about finding a replacement candidate before November's election have been amplified by polls showing Mr. Trump extending his lead. The New York Times and CNN reported that Mr. Bi-



den, 81, had acknowledged to a key ally that his reelection bid was on the line if he failed to quickly reassure the public that he was still up to the job. White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre rejected those reports outright, insisting Mr. Biden has no intention of withdrawing.

Taking control



An air tanker drops retardant behind a home while battling the Toll Fire near Calistoga, California. An extended heat wave blanketing Northern California has resulted in red flag fire warnings and power shutoffs.

Hezbollah fires over 200 rockets into Israel

Associated Press BEIRUT

The Lebanese Hezbollah group said it launched over 200 rockets on Thursday at several military bases in Israel in retaliation for a strike that killed one of its senior commanders. The attack by the Iran-backed militant group was one of the largest in the months-long conflict along the Lebanon-Israel border, with tensions escalating in recent weeks. The Israeli military said "numerous projectiles and suspicious aerial targets" had entered its territory from Lebanon, many of which it said were intercepted. There were no immediate reports of casualties. It said about 200 "projectiles" were launched toward

Israel had killed Mohammad Naameh Nasser, who headed one of Hezbollah's three regional divisions

the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and over 20 drones into Israeli territory, but that it had intercepted some of them. Israel after Hezbollah's attack struck various towns in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military said it struck Hezbollah's "military structures" in the southern border towns of Ramyah and Houla. Israel on Wednesday acknowledged that it had killed Mohammad Naameh Nasser, who headed one of Hezbollah's three regional divisions in southern Lebanon, a day earlier.

'Genocidal violence looming in Myanmar'

Agence France-Presse GENEVA

Myanmar's Rakhine State is facing a terrifying situation similar to the run up to "genocidal violence" eight years ago against the persecuted Rohingya minority, a UN expert warned on Thursday. Speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Thomas Andrews, the special rapporteur on the situation in Myanmar, voiced deep alarm at recent events in the western region. "The situation in Rakhine State, where the junta is rapidly losing territory to the Arakan Army, is terrifying," Mr. Andrews said. "For Rohingya people - oppressed, scapegoated, exploited, and stuck between warring parties - the situation carries echoes of the lead-up to genocidal violence in 2016 and 2017." Clashes have rocked Rak-



hine State since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November. That ended a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021 after a short-lived experiment with democracy. Mr. Andrews, an independent expert appointed by the rights council who does not speak on behalf of the UN, said the military had been conscripting "thousands of Rohingya youth and mobilising them against the Arakan Army".

Netflix show creator convicted by Saudi Arabia anti-terrorism court

Agence France-Presse RIVADH

Saudi TV creator Abdulaziz Almuzaini, whose animated Netflix show has made waves for breaking social taboos, said he had been convicted by an anti-terrorism court, prompting condemnation from rights advocates. The kingdom's Specialised Criminal Court, established in 2008 to try suspects accused of terrorism, "issued against me [a sentence of] 13 years, followed by a 13-year travel ban", Mr. Almuzaini said in a video posted online last week that was subsequently deleted. In a second video posted this week, which is still available on X, Mr. Almuzaini filmed himself inside a car, saying: "I am banned from travelling" out of Saudi Arabia. Saudi officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thurs-



day, and there was no word of Mr. Almuzaini - who was not available for comment - having been incarcerated. His satirical show "Masameer County", billed as "a humorous view on a changing Saudi", debuted in 2021. Episodes tackled topics such as disputes among tribes and Islamic militancy, and even featured oblique references to homosexuality, a potential capital crime in Saudi Arabia. The Wall Street Journal on Thursday reported that court

documents in the case referred to online posts by Mr. Almuzaini which "ridiculed Arab regimes... or voiced support for women's rights". Mr. Almuzaini said in the since-deleted video that the court accused him of promoting homosexuality and militancy. He also said that he was forced to close his company, Myrkott Animation Studio. The video included a direct appeal to Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who became first in line to the throne in 2017 and has overseen sweeping social and economic reforms. "I believe that we are in a country ruled by a rational family, and if one of its citizens is subjected to injustice, I have faith that my voice reaching His Highness the crown prince will correct some of what happened to me," Mr. Almuzaini said.

DIRECTORATE OF ECONOMICS & STATISTICS, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR CORRIGENDUM - 2 No.3678, dtd.04.07.2024

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA e-Procurement Notice for PM-JANMAN, Batch-II, PMGSY works

COCHIN PORT कोचिन पत्तन प्राधिकरण Cochin Port Authority Cochin - 682 009 Kerala

Odisha Rural Development & Marketing Society (ORMAS) REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) Hiring of services of Technical Support Agency (TSA) for providing techno-managerial supports in project management of Skill Development Program of ORMAS, Odisha

**REWARDING EXCELLENCE**

**Victorious team presented with cheque for ₹125 crore**



REUTERS

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) office-bearers presented the T20 World Cup-winning Indian team with a cheque of ₹125 crore during the felicitation function at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday. The team was showered with confetti as it received the award amidst loud cheers from the crowd.

**CATALYST**

**Bumrah says the victory has given the motivation to do it again**



REUTERS

Jasprit Bumrah felt it was great to return to Wankhede. "This ground is really special in my life. As an under-19 kid, I came here to play cricket and what I saw today, I will never forget that. Our aim is to take Indian cricket forward. This win gives us the motivation to go ahead and do it again."

**FITTING FAREWELL**

**Fantastic note to sign off, says departing coach Dravid**



BCCI

Head coach Rahul Dravid stated winning the T20 World Cup was a fitting note to end his stint. "This is a fantastic note to sign off on. I am going to miss all this love. What we have been seeing today and what I have heard since the win shows how India makes cricket brilliant," said Dravid.

**COMING IN HANDY**

**Umbrellas save the day amidst Mumbai rains**



REUTERS

The sea of blue turned into a sea of black, at least twice, at the Wankhede Stadium. It wasn't a result of any protest but was due to the string of umbrellas that opened after a sudden cloudburst. Unlike major games, the spectators were allowed to carry props and it helped their cause!

# Passionate fans flock to cheer the champion outfit

A humongous crowd, braving wet weather and traffic snarls, lines up along Marine Drive to hail with gusto the gaily decorated bus ferrying Rohit and his men to the Wankhede Stadium

**CRICKET**

**Amol Karhadkar**  
MUMBAI

Being patient, be it for delayed or disrupted local train service or due to traffic snarls, is so ingrained in the life of a Mumbaikar that he or she doesn't mind when it's often misrepresented or glorified as the 'Spirit of Mumbai.'

On Thursday, a majority of those who were stuck in terrible traffic jam would not have minded it.

After all, it was for cricket, another passion of a Mumbaikar as Rohit Sharma's victorious batch of 2024 "brought the metropolis to a standstill" in a style similar to Mahendra Singh Dhoni's men famously did 17 years ago.

While 'Dhoni's Dashers' 25-km long bus parade in 2007 had attracted lakh of fans, Thursday saw an enormous crowd concentrated in the two-kilometre radius around the Wankhede Stadium.

**Delayed**

The squad's arrival from New Delhi, after meeting the Prime Minister, was delayed by almost two hours and by the time the team bus got out of the Mumbai airport, the evening traffic had peaked.

It led to a commotion



**Victory drive:** The Indian team's cavalcade winds its way through a sea of fans enthusiastically capturing the moment with their mobile phones. EMMANUAL YOGINI

and a corridor being created for the bus.

**Early birds**

At the other end of the Maximium City, the fans had thronged in and around the Wankhede Stadium more than six hours before the expected start of the victory parade.

While it was an-

nounced that the Wankhede gates would open at 4 p.m., huge queues outside the various gates meant the security forces had to advance the opening to around 3.30 p.m.

With little arrangements in place, it led to a crowding at every staircase entrance.

Though a grievous incident was averted, soon af-

ter the gates were locked, abandoned footwear were witnessed at various staircases.

But once they were inside, the spectators were kept entertained by a DJ.

Meanwhile, on the Marine Drive, the police struggled to manage a huge crowd, estimated to be over two lakh.

But once the victory pa-

rade - with a 1.7km distance to cover - finally started at 7.38 p.m., the wait through a heated afternoon and a wet evening was worth it as the fans went wild with cheers for India's second T20 World Cup trophy.

And when the cavalcade entered the Wankhede two hours hence, the 25,000-plus turnout

at the 'Big W' that had sat patiently, with little to eat or drink, rejoiced along with the Men in Blue.

**Worth the wait**

On this day, a 17-year-wait for a T20 World Cup seemed nothing for ardent cricket fans in comparison to a six to eight-hour ordeal to celebrate with their cricketing stars!

## Fans were more desperate for the trophy than us: Rohit



**Good times:** Rohit having fun with Suryakumar, Pant, Jaiswal, Samson, Dube, and others at the Wankhede Stadium. PTI

**Amol Karhadkar**  
MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma, India's T20 World Cup-winning captain, thanked all the fans for supporting the team during its campaign.

"On behalf of my team and the BCCI, I would like to thank the fans! Ever since we have reached India, we have seen how much it means to them. For the last 11 years, they have wanted the trophy back in India," said Rohit while addressing a packed Wankhede Stadium.

"As much desperation we had to win the trophy, the fans had it a bit more. This team is special and I

am lucky to have had the chance to captain this unit."

Virat Kohli compared the 2011 ODI World Cup win with the recent triumph. "When we won the World Cup in 2011, there were a lot of tears among the seniors and I couldn't understand. I was young and we had won the World Cup," said Kohli.

"But now, with Rohit beside me and after playing for so long, it is special. This is the first time I have seen Rohit show so much emotion on the field. When I was walking up the steps, I was crying, he was crying and we hugged. That is a special moment."

## Rohit & Co. touch down to a rapturous welcome

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

The T20 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team returned to the country here on Thursday morning, aboard a specially-arranged charter flight, with scores of fans lining up outside the airport to welcome the players despite a steady drizzle and heavy security deployment that kept them at a distance from their heroes.

Hundreds of supporters, holding placards congratulating their favourites and waving the National flag, braved the weather to welcome the victorious side, which defeated South Africa last Saturday.

Heavy security was deployed to keep the crowd in check at the Indira Gandhi International airport but that did little to dampen the spirits as fans cheered enthusiastically holding up posters of star batter Virat Kohli, skipper Rohit Sharma and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid.

The Indian squad, its support staff, the players' families and some BCCI officials were aboard the



**Cheering away:** Fans gathered in huge numbers outside New Delhi airport to receive Team India. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

flight along with members of the travelling media contingent.

Tired but excited, the players acknowledged the waiting fans by waving at them and flashing warm smiles.

Suryakumar Yadav, who took the match-winning catch of David Miller in the final, was the most enthusiastic in responding to the cheering.

Wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant saluted the gathered crowd, while pacer Mohammed Siraj blew flying kisses in their direction.

Rohit and the player-of-

the-final Virat Kohli, both of whom retired from T20Is at the end of India's campaign, were among the last to come out of the VIP exit.

Rohit, who held the coveted trophy in his hands, raised it for the fans to catch a glimpse before boarding the bus. Kohli gave a thumbs up to acknowledge the support before taking his place in the bus.

Buses stationed outside the T3 Terminal then ferried the players to their hotel from where they went to meet the Prime Minister's at his residence.

## PM Modi has 'memorable conversation' with the triumphant Indian squad members

**Press Trust of India**  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted the T20 World Cup-winning Indian cricket team for breakfast here on Thursday during which, he said, there were "memorable" conversations on the side's experiences through the marquee event co-hosted by USA and the West Indies.

The Rohit Sharma-led squad, that won the title after defeating South Africa by seven runs in the final last week, arrived in Delhi early morning after being stranded in Bridgetown, Barbados for five days due to a category 4 hurricane.

"An excellent meeting with our Champions! Hosted the World Cup winning team at 7, LKM and had a memorable conversation on their experiences through the tournament," Modi posted on 'X' along with pictures of him with the team.

The PM was flanked by Rohit and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid in the group picture.

Several players later shared photos with the PM. Pace spearhead Jasprit



**One for the album:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Indian team at a breakfast meeting in his official residence on Thursday. AFP

Bumrah posted an image of him and his wife, Sanjana Ganesan, basking in the moment with Modi holding their 10-month old son, Angad.

Kuldeep Yadav also shared images of his interaction and looked emotional while being hugged by Modi.

Pacer Arshdeep Singh and his parents were all smiles posing with Modi. "What a great honour,

meeting our honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji. Thank you sir for inviting us to the Prime Minister's residence," star batter Virat Kohli, who was adjudged player of the final for his 59-ball 76, posted on Instagram.

The team had earlier landed in Delhi amid much fanfare before heading to the Prime Minister's residence for breakfast, where they spent close to two

hours. The Prime Minister's Office shared a little over a minute-long video in which the players were seen engaging in a chat, sitting in a circle around Modi.

**Special jersey**  
For the interaction, players wore customised jerseys with the world 'CHAMPIONS' inscribed in bold letters on the front.

It also featured two stars, denoting the two T20 World Cup titles, above the Team India crest on the top left corner. All of them were seen flashing smiles as they chatted with the PM.

BCCI president Roger Binny and secretary Jay Shah also presented the Prime Minister with a customised Team India jersey with 'NAMO' and 'I' inscribed on it.

# India takes on a wonky South Africa in T20 leg

Women in Blue have won 11, Proteas four in the 17 games in the shortest format the two have played in the last 12 months; series crucial for both sides keeping the upcoming T20 WC in mind

## SA IN INDIA

Lavanya L  
CHENNAI

The M.A Chidambaram Stadium here is all set to host its first women's limited-overs bilateral game in 17 years when India and South Africa spar in the last leg of the multi-format series starting Friday.

South Africa, runner-up in the previous edition held at home, comes into the series with a wonky T20I record. Both teams have played 17 T20Is in the last 12 months. While India has won 11, the Proteas have won just four.

All eyes will be on Marizanne Kapp, who is yet to bowl in this series against India due to a back issue. The ace all-rounder has been stingy with rolling her arm over in the nets as well. Ayabonga Khaka's return after missing the one-off Test will offer the visitors relief, particularly in the PowerPlay.

Chloe Tryon's return from a back injury also boosts the Proteas. An explosive middle order bat and a handy left-arm spinner, Tryon will hope to make up for lost time in what is South Africa's final



Having a good laugh: The Indians enjoying themselves during the practice session on Thursday. R. RAGU

international assignment before the T20 World Cup in Bangladesh in October.

India comes into this series after a 5-0 thrashing of Bangladesh in its backyard, but keep in mind that Harmanpreet and Co. were up against an anaemic batting line-up.

With SA skipper Laura Wolvaardt and Kapp in red hot form, India will have its task cut out over three fixtures here.

Also crucial is how India's in-form batters led by Smriti Mandhana translate their longer format fluency to the tune of T20Is. With

the Asia Cup campaign in Sri Lanka coming right after, this will be perfect conditions for coach Amol Muzumdar to experiment with reason.

While Chennai has traditionally been a spin haven, the edition of the IPL gone by and the recently concluded Test surprisingly had little for the tweekers.

Given that the venue has been strategically chosen keeping India's World Cup preparation in mind, curators might look to veer away from the flat track the venue saw for the Test.

### The teams (from):

**India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Uma Chetry (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Dayalan Hemalatha, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Sajeevan Sajana, Deepthi Sharma, Asha Sobhana, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Shabnam Shakil, Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav.  
**South Africa:** Laura Wolvaardt (C), Tazmin Brits, Mieke de Ridder (wk), Sinalo Jafta (wk), Anneke Bosch, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Marizanne Kapp, Sune Luus, Chloe Tryon, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Eliz-Mari Marx, Nonkululeko Mlaba and Tumi Sekhukhune.  
Match starts at 7 p.m.

# We are setting high standards in fielding, says Jemimah

Lavanya L  
CHENNAI

Indian middle-order mainstay Jemimah Rodrigues identified fielding as an area of constant improvement for the Indian team ahead of its three-match T20I series against South Africa starting here on Friday.

"As the Indian women's cricket team, we are setting our standards high and we will continue to do whatever it takes to maintain that standard. If there is one thing for a very long time that we were missing somewhere towards the end, where we would come close and miss out, we know it's fielding."

Jemimah revealed that while specialist batting and bowling camps have been held for the outfit, fielding and fitness, coach Amol Muzumdar's two non-negotiables for the outfit, were never compromised on.

The series will also see local girl Dayalan Hemalatha potentially set the stage on fire.

"I'm very happy for her because we know what she's been through. She's not had the best of times, even back home. Coming into the WPL and then getting that one opportunity because Yastika Bhatia was injured and then making the best of it shows what her mindset is."



Key players: Tryon, returning from injury, and Khaka will take centrestage if Kapp opts not to bowl. R. RAGU

Jemimah is excited to continue playing before a Chennai crowd that kept India's spirits high during the draining red-ball fixture.

"I think the crowd in Chennai is going to be amazing. I just heard that it's been 17 years since a women's (white ball bilateral) match has happened here. We can't wait for the T20Is."

### Need to score more

As South Africa gets ready for its 'last T20 dress rehearsal' ahead of the T20 World Cup later this year with the three T20Is against India, skipper Laura Wolvaardt is wary of getting ahead of herself, as a batter and as a team.

The two teams head into the last leg of the multi-format tour on the back of a hard-fought Test that India eventually won by 10

wickets. "It's difficult going both ways. It's difficult to adapt to the Test and then to unadapt from the Test. My net today wasn't the best ever," Wolvaardt admitted on the eve of the first T20I.

Wolvaardt says the T20Is offer her side a chance to experiment.

"It's a good time to see if we could perhaps use a bit more spin in the PowerPlay and in the death."

With Marizanne Kapp still doubtful with the ball, the pressure doubles on a slightly shaky batting order.

"The batting unit needs to find those extra 10-20 runs. Throughout that Australia series, we were pushing 150,160.

"But with how the game is nowadays and more flat wickets, teams are scoring 180-200, we need to go in that direction, be brave and play positive cricket."

## SNAPSHOTS

### Groenewegen wins sixth stage, Pogacar still in lead

DIJON: Dutch sprinter Dylan Groenewegen won stage six of the Tour de France on Thursday after an eye-catching run though Burgundy ended in a mass dash for the finish line in Dijon. Tadej Pogacar retained the yellow jersey by 45sec from Belgian Remco Evenepoel while defending champion Jonas Vingegaard is third.

### Gukesh holds leader Caruana

BUCHAREST: World Championship challenger D. Gukesh played out a draw with tournament leader and top seed Fabiano Caruana of United States in the seventh round of the Superbet classic chess tournament. On another 'all-draws' day, R. Praggnanandhaa signed peace with Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia leaving the lead positions intact like the previous round.

Caruana on 4.5 points remains in front with two victories and five draws and is followed by Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Alireza Firouzja of France, who are all half a point behind the American.

**The results (round 7):** Nepomniachtchi (FIDE) 3.5 drew with Praggnanandhaa 4; Bogdan-Daniel (Rom) 2.5 drew with Firouzja (Fra) 4; Giri (Ned) 3 drew with Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 3.5; Gukesh 4 drew with Caruana (USA) 4.5; Wesley So (USA) 3 drew with Abdusattorov (Uzb) 3.

# No surprises in AFI's 28-member squad for Paris

## ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau  
NEW DELHI

India will field a 28-member athletics squad at the Paris Olympics, headlined by Neeraj Chopra in javelin.

The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) announced the squad on Thursday with no surprises, including all those who have either achieved the qualifying standard or made the cut through world rankings.

The only name missing was long jumper Jeswin Al-



Focused: Neeraj would hope to repeat the Tokyo Olympics feat despite the severe competition he is likely to face. K.R. DEEPAK

drin, who was expected to be included in place of an injured M. Sreeshankar. Sreeshankar's withdrawal

is expected to see Jeswin climb to 32nd and make the Olympics list, but the AFI clarified that Jes-

win, currently ranked 33rd, will have to wait till the final rankings list is updated on Sunday.

**Two triple-jump entries** Apart from javelin, India will have two entries in triple jump as well.

Quartermiler Kiran Pahal, who qualified at the recent Inter-State championships and was surprisingly fielded by the AFI in a last-ditch attempt to qualify in the mixed relay as well, has not been named for the women's relay team.

### The squad:

**Men:** Avinash Sable (3000m steeplechase), Neeraj Chopra,

Kishore Jena (javelin), Tajinderpal Singh Toor (shot put), Praveen Chithravel, Abulla Aboobacker (triple jump), Sarvesh Kushare (high jump), Akshdeep Singh, Vikash Singh, Paramjeet Singh Bisht (20km race walk), Muhammed Anas, Muhammed Ajmal, Amod Jacob, Santhosh Tamilarasan, Rajesh Ramesh, Mijo Chacko Kurian (4x400m relay), Suraj Panwar (race walk mixed marathon).  
**Women:** Kiran Pahal (400m), Parul Chaudhary (3000m steeplechase and 5000m). Jyothi Yarraji (100m hurdles), Annu Rani (javelin throw), Abha Khatua (shot put), Jyothika Sri Dandi, Subha Venkatesan, Vithya Ramraj, M.R. Poovamma, Prachi (4x400m relay), Priyanka Goswami (20km race walk/ race walk mixed marathon).

# Germany out to snap 36-year winless run against Spain



Reuters  
BERLIN

Germany takes on fellow title contender Spain in their mouth-watering Euro 2024 quarterfinal clash on Friday, hoping to end a winless run at tournaments against them that stretches back to 1988.

The Germans are enjoying their best international tournament in eight years but the match against the Spaniards is also seen as a premature final.

Spain cruised through its group with wingers Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams quickly establishing a superb partnership that has terrorised opposing defences.

With Fabian Ruiz directing their game, often called "possession with a purpose", there is a constant drive forward instead of merely holding onto the ball. The Germans meanwhile had to dig deep to top their group.

It is how Germany's defensive organisation copes with Spain's lethal attacking football that is likely to decide the outcome.

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann has a tough decision to make for the left back position, with attack-minded David Raum and Maximilian Mittelstaedt having occupied it in recent games.

He could potentially opt for a more defensive option in Benjamin Henrichs. Meanwhile, in Hamburg, the forward lines of France and Portugal need to fire up again, where every little advantage will likely be crucial in a tight contest.



France has not scored in open play in its last five internationals while Portugal has failed to find the net in its past two outings at Euro 2024.

**Ronaldo vs Mbappe** There is no doubting the quality on both sides, with Kylian Mbappe captaining the French and Cristiano Ronaldo bringing record-breaking achievement to Portugal.

But Mbappe is battling with a broken nose in Ger-

many and at the age of 39 Ronaldo's powers are on the wane.

France coach Didier Deschamps tried to fix the malaise with a three-man strike force against Belgium but the pickings were slim. Defence, ironically given the attacking talent at their disposal, has been France's strong point in the last weeks.

The margins will likely be fine again and the outcome possibly determined by a moment of genius.

# Djokovic 'made to work' for win over wild-card Fearnley; Bhambri & Olivetti advance

## WIMBLEDON

Associated Press  
LONDON

Novak Djokovic says he wouldn't have been surprised if his second-round match against young Jacob Fearnley at Wimbledon went to a fifth set, but he's "very glad it didn't."

The seven-time champion at the All England Club beat his 22-year-old Scottish opponent 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 7-5 on Centre Court on Thursday in another test of his fitness following recent knee surgery.

Fearnley, a wild-card entry who recently finished playing college tennis at TCU, had a strong cheering section that erupted when he took the third set.

"He served very well, it was very difficult to break his serve.

"He made me work, definitely," Djokovic said.

Iga Swiatek progressed smoothly into the third round at the expense of Croatia's Petra Martic, racking up a 21st straight win.

### TOP RESULTS

**Men: Second round:** 24-Tabilo (Chi) bt Cobolli (Ita) 7-6(4), 7-6(4), 4-6, 4-6, 6-4; 15-Rune (Den) bt Wild (Bra) 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-2; 13-Fritz (USA) bt Rinderknech (Fra) 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4; Halys (Fra) bt 21-Khachanov (Rus) 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; Norrie (GBR) bt 28-Draper (GBR) 7-6(3), 6-4, 7-6(6); 9-de Minaur (Aus) bt Munar (Esp) 6-2, 6-2, 7-5; Fils (Fra) bt 7-Hurkacz (Pol) 7-6(2), 6-4, 2-6, 6-6, ret.; 14-Shelton (USA) bt Harris (RSA) 4-6, 7-6(5), 6-7(5), 6-3, 7-6(7); 10-Dimitrov (Bul) bt Juncheng (Chn) 5-7, 6-7(4), 6-4, 6-2, 6-4; Shapovalov (Can) bt Altmaier (Ger) 7-6(3), 6-3, 1-6, 6-7(3); 6-4; 2-Djokovic (Srb) bt Fearnley (GBR) 6-3, 6-4, 5-7, 7-5; Popyrin (Aus) bt 30-Etcheverry (Arg) 3-6, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3; 25-Musetti (Ita) bt Darderi (Ita) 6-4, 4-6, 6-7(5), 6-4, 6-4; Kecmanovic (Srb) bt 27-Griekspoor (NED) 4-6, 7-6(7), 1-6, 6-2, 6-3; 12-Paul (USA) bt Virtanen (Fin) 4-6, 6-3, 7-5, 7-6; 8-4; Struff (Ger) bt 32-Zhang (Chn) 5-7, 6-3, 7-6(1), 7-6(8); 1-Sinner (Ita) bt Berrettini (Ita) 7-6(3), 7-6(4), 2-6, 7-6(4).

**Doubles: First Round:** Bhambri (Ind) & Olivetti (Fra) bt Bublik (Kaz) & Shevchenko (Rus) 6-4, 6-4; 4-Pavic (Cro) & Arevalo-Gonzalez (Esa) bt Sriram Balaji (Ind) & Johnson (GBR) 6-4, 7-5.  
**Women: Second round:**

21-Svitolina (Ukr) bt Niemeier (Ger) 6-3, 6-4; Pera (USA) bt 23-Garcia (Fra) 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; 1-Swiatek (Pol) bt Martic (Cro) 6-4, 6-3; 4-Rybakina (Kaz) bt Siegemund (Ger) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.  
14-Kasatkina (Rus) bt Miyazaki (GBR) 6-0, 6-0; 12-Keys (USA) bt Wang Yafan (Chn) 6-2, 6-2; Putintseva (Kaz) bt 27-Siniakova (Cze) 6-0, 4-6, 6-2; Maneiro (Esp) bt Bucsa (Esp) 7-6(1), 6-3; 31-Krejcikova (Cze) bt Volynets (USA) 7-6(6), 7-6(5); 20-Haddad Maia (Bra) bt Osorio (Col) 3-0, ret.; 18-Kostyuk (Ukr) bt Saville (Aus) 4-6, 7-6(2), 6-4; Wang Xinyu (Chn) bt 5-Pegula (USA) 6-4, 6-7(7), 6-1; 17-Kalinskaya (Rus) bt Bouzkova (Cze) 6-4, 6-1; Dart (GBR) bt 32-Boulter (GBR) 4-6, 6-1, 7-6(8); 13-Ostapenko (Lat) bt Snigur (Ukr) 6-3, 6-0; 10-Jabeur (Tun) bt Montgomery (USA) 6-1, 7-5; 11-Collins (USA) bt Galfi (Hun) 6-3, 6-4, 9-Sakkari (Gre) bt Rus (Ned) 7-5, 6-3; Zhu (Chn) bt 25-Pavlyuchenko (Rus) 6-4, 6-3; 7-Paolini (Ita) bt Minnen (Bel) 7-6(5), 6-2; 28-Yastrenska (Ukr) bt Gracheva (Rus) 3-6, 6-4, 7-6(5).

### Fallen seeds

**Men:** 7-Hurkacz, 30-Etcheverry, 27-Griekspoor, 32-Zhang; 28-Draper, 21-Khachanov  
**Women:** 27-Siniakova, 5-Pegula, 32-Boulter, 25-Pavlyuchenko; 23-Garcia

**INBRIEF**



**Argentina sets sights on semis as Copa knockouts begin**

World champion Argentina will look to book its place in the last four of the Copa America when it opens the knockout stage of the competition against Ecuador at the NRG Stadium on Thursday. There remains a doubt over the fitness of Lionel Messi however, who sat out the win in Miami as he nursed a sore right hamstring. Later surprise quarterfinalists Canada, which finished above Chile and Peru in Group A, takes on Venezuela, which impressed with three wins from three to top Group B.

**Rajawat stuns Gemke, enters second round**

Priyanshu Rajawat stunned higher-ranked Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in a hard-fought three-game contest to advance to the men's singles second round of the Canada Open badminton at Calgary on Wednesday. World No. 39 Rajawat had to dig deep to get the better of eighth seed Gemke 17-21, 21-16, 21-14 in his opening round match that lasted an hour and 10 minutes.

**Other results: Men:** Koki Watanabe (Jap) bt Ayush Shetty 21-14, 21-11; Alex Lanier (Fra) bt S. Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian 21-16, 21-17; **Women:** Tanya Hemanth bt Jackie Dent (Can) 21-13, 20-22, 21-14; Anupama Upadhyay bt Rachael Darragh (Ire) 21-11, 21-11.

**LIVE TELECAST**

**Wimbledon:** SS Select 1, 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 3.30 p.m. onwards  
**India Women vs South Africa Women:** 1st T20I, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 7 p.m.  
**TNPL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & FanCode, 7.15 p.m.  
**Football:** Euro 2024, Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 9.30 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)  
**Badminton:** Canada Open, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 10.30 p.m.

**Bopanna-Balaji to play Hamburg, Umag to prepare for Paris**

The two have been sanctioned suitable support, along with coach Balachandran and physio Rebecca Van Orshagen, for the two ATP events



**Interesting match:** Bopanna and Balaji will use the Tour events to get in sync ahead of Paris. AP

**TENNIS**

**Sports Bureau**

**R**ohan Bopanna and Sriram Balaji are scheduled to play together in the ATP Tour events in Hamburg and Umag on clay in the run-up to the Paris Olympics at Roland Garros.

The two have also been sanctioned suitable support along with their coach M. Balachandran and physio Rebecca Van Orshagen for the two ATP events, by the Mission Olympic Cell of the Union Sports Ministry.

Hamburg, Germany, will be a ATP 500 event to be played from July 15, after Wimbledon. The Umag

event in Croatia will be a ATP 250 event, scheduled from July 21.

The Olympics Games tennis event is scheduled from July 27 to August 4, with a singles draw of 64 and the doubles draw of 32. With no woman player qualifying in tennis, India will not have a mixed team entry in tennis.

Sania Mirza had kept the Indian presence felt in the four Olympics in Beijing, London, Rio and Tokyo. She had partnered Sunita Rao, Rushmi Chakravarthi, Prarthana Thombare and Ankita Raina in that order in those four Olympics, apart from playing mixed doubles with Leander Paes in London and Bopanna in Rio.

Bopanna is ranked No. 4 in the world, while Balaji is ranked No. 64. In the normal run, they may not get to play together.

Balaji capitalised on his French Open doubles entry recently to play the third round against Bopanna and Aussie Matthew Ebden.

With his big serve and a solid backhand, the 34-year-old Balaji did compete hard on clay in partnership with Miguel-Angel Reyes-Varela of Mexico, before losing 8-10 in the third set tie-break.

Balaji has won 56 doubles titles in the professional circuit, and more than a dozen Challenger titles, and is yet to win a title in the Tour events.

**Abhay-Velavan post a win**

**Sports Bureau**

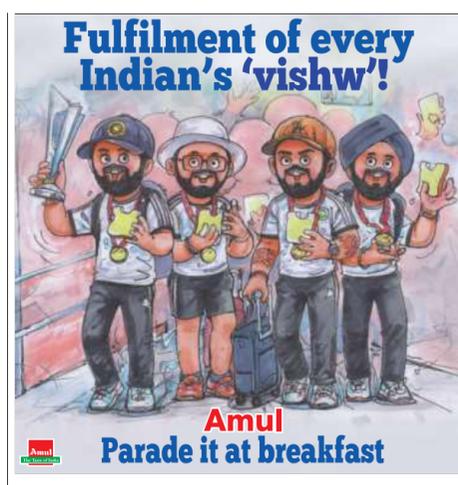
Abhay Singh and Velavan Senthilkumar defeated Reymark Begornia and David William Pelino 11-4, 11-6 in a Pool A men's doubles match of the Asian doubles squash in Johor, Malaysia, on Thursday.

**The results: Men (Pool A):**

Abhay Singh & Velavan Senthilkumar bt Reymark Begornia & David William Pelino (Phi) 11-4, 11-6.

**Women (Pool B):** Rathika Suthanthira Seelan & R. Pooja Arthi bt Rafia Putri Yattaqi & Zalabila (Ina) 11-1, 11-4; Rathika & Pooja lost to Tze Lok Ho & Ching Hei Fung (HKG) 4-11, 6-11.

**Mixed doubles (Pool C):** Abhay Singh & Joshna Chinappa bt Anders Ong & Naisha Singh (Sin) 11-3, 11-6; Abhay & Joshna bt Yvonne Dalida & Reymark Begornia (Phi) 11-3, 11-4.



**Siddharth Vishwakarma enters the last eight**

**TENNIS**

**Sports Bureau**

Reigning National champion Siddharth Vishwakarma won back-to-back matches, dropping just eight games, to reach the quarterfinals of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan, on Thursday. In the quarterfinals, Siddharth will play seventh seed Maxim Zhukov.

Aryan Shah in South Africa, Adil Kalyanpur in Thailand, and S. Mukund in China also made the singles quarterfinals of similar tournaments.

**The results:**  
**\$15,000 ITF men, Tianjin, China: Singles (pre-quarterfinals):** S Mukund bt Ray Ho (Tpe) 6-1, 6-3.  
**\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Singles (first round):** Pedro Araujo (Por) bt Dev Javia 7(4), 6-7(2), 6-3.  
**\$15,000 ITF men, Hillcrest,**

**South Africa: Singles (pre-quarterfinals):** Aryan Shah bt Luc Koenig (GBr) 6-3, 4-6, 7-5; Nico Hornitschek (Ger) bt Ishaque Eqbal 6-2, 6-3.

**\$15,000 ITF men, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand: Singles (pre-quarterfinals):** Adil Kalyanpur bt Ajeet Rai (Nzl) 6-4, 7-6(5).

**\$15,000 ITF men, Kazakhstan: Singles (pre-quarterfinals):** Siddharth Vishwakarma bt Konstantin Zhzhenov 6-1, 6-1.

**First round:** Siddharth bt Tsihon Fedorov 6-4, 6-2.

**Doubles (quarterfinals):** Islam Orynbasar & Yerassyl Yerdilda (Kaz) bt Daniel Ibragimov & Karan Singh 7-5, 2-6, [11-9].

**\$25,000 ITF women, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand: Doubles (quarterfinals):** Monique Barry (NZ) & Alicia Smith (Aus) bt Humera Baharmus & Pooja Ingale 7-5, 6-2.

**\$25,000 ITF women, Hillcrest, South Africa: Singles (pre-quarterfinals):** Darja Suviridjonkova (Srb) bt Soha Sadiq 6-2, 6-1.

**Doubles (quarterfinals):** Matilde Mariani & Beatrice Stgno (Ita) bt Shria Atturu (USA) & Smriti Bhasin 3-6, 6-2, [10-3].

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# THE MLABA-RI BANGER dances to her own beat

Nonkululeko Mlaba has come a long way from being a nervous 19-year-old finding her feet in international cricket, overcoming the shadows of socio-economic constraints to being a bright spin prospect for South Africa



GETTY IMAGES

Lavanva Lakshmi Narayanan

**N**onkululeko Mlaba's life looked very different five years ago. She was still coming through the ranks of age-group and club cricket, showing sparks of brilliance that could be fanned for the national team someday.

Her rise from the grassroot level to the National Academy and eventually the South African national women's cricket team happened in the blink of an eye. From the scenic locales of Durban where she sharpened much of her toolkit as a cricketer, she suddenly found herself on the plane to India, all set for her first rodeo in international cricket.

September 24, 2019. Surat. Plenty of debutants in the fray. The Lalbhai Contractor Stadium was hosting its first ever international match. A 15-year-old Shafali Verma had been handed her maiden T20I cap, as was a 19-year-old Mlaba.

"I knew how Indian people love cricket. Making my debut here in India, seeing a lot of people attending the game almost felt like a movie or a dream. I was so nervous. It was so loud that I couldn't even hear my own teammates talking to me," the left-arm spinner reminisces, while in the middle of yet another assignment in the subcontinent.

Noises. A phenomenon she would have to contend with her whole life, for better or for worse.

That initiation was a hard one. She'd have to wait for five more months to finally manage her first international wicket, in a T20 World Cup no less, when she dismissed Thailand's Somnarin Tippoch in a game the Proteas won by a whopping 113 runs.

## Luck by chance

Mlaba hails from KwaMashu, a South African township (areas that were underdeveloped and racially segregated in the lead-up to and during the apartheid era in the country). She then moved to Ntuzuma to stay with her uncle, aunt and cousins at the age of 13.

As a teenager, Mlaba's first passion was dancing, particularly the traditional dancing style of the region called Pantsula - a style that emerged from the townships as a form of commentary during the ages of social separation. However, in Ntuzuma, she found no one to really pursue this passion with. Dancing's void allowed cricket to enter the room.

Mlaba took up the sport as a way to kill time. She followed her brother and sisters to the local ground to watch them train. Eventually, she began going every day.

Eventually, she found herself in Lindelani Cricket Club and she has not

turned back since.

"I didn't go to a big school where I'd get to see people of other races. I went to school in the township. For me, as a township girl, to play cricket...starting out, cricket was more for white people. For me to get to where I am motivated a lot of people and helped them see that anything is possible," Mlaba says. Her teammate Nondumiso Shangase has a similar story.

## Spinning away to success

Mlaba started out as a pacer, a story countless spinners will relate to world over. In her case, it wasn't a lack of purchase or a certain paucity of ability that pushed her to the world of spin. It was a coach's call at club level.

"In my club, we only had one spinner and we also had one left-arm pacer. My coach decided to move me to spin so there would be a right-left spin combination. It wasn't too hard. I had to fine-tune some technique but I naturally got the turn."

But the pacer in you never dies. Speed still makes its way into her game every now and again.

"I'm happy with spin," she quips when asked if she misses life as a seam bowler. "When I asked one of my teammates who bowls pace, they're always complaining. You have to run in. I feel like it's a lot of work. Spin is also hard, it's technically difficult. But now and then, I have this arm ball. It's very fast because I used to bowl pace. I like using it from time to time and it's faster than some of the pace bowlers in the squad."

"Sometimes, I feel that if I am bowling slower, if I don't bowl it in the right spots, I get hit everywhere. So then I tend to stick to what I know. It's not exactly quicker, but it's flatter."

Mlaba modelled her game on Imran Tahir starting out, a player and person she grew to be quite fond of as a mentor. Eventually, Keshav Maharaj also became one of her idols and is someone she turns to for advice even today.

## Taking the bull by its horns

Life has never been easy for Mlaba. She is a player with a natural ability to turn the ball who is now trying to make space in a world of flat T20 tracks. India, known for its spin-friendly tracks, would have been an opportunity leaving Mlaba licking her lips, as South African skipper Laura Wolvaardt put it ahead of their multi-format tour of the nation this year. But through the course of the ODIs in Bengaluru and the one-off Test in Chennai, the surfaces left Mlaba questioning her own abilities.

"(Maharaj) told me Chennai is spin-friendly. I was very excited. But as soon as I started bowling, I was like, 'No man, what's going on? Am I not bowling the right lengths?' Everything was off for



I think she wants to be number one, she works really hard. I love the fire that's burning inside of her

CHLOE TRYON  
South African allrounder

me. If I bowled a bit into the spot, it was turning a lot and went wide. If I tried to get to the stump line, it wasn't doing what I wanted either. It was very difficult."

An opponent as strong as India, at home to boot, only made things twice as challenging, but Mlaba is always up for a fight.

"I really like India (conditions and the team) because they really come hard at me. They really want to hit me hard. I just love that coz I just go like 'Do it again.' If they hit me for six, I'm just like, 'Do it again.' I love the challenge that they give me. It's nice for me as a bowler. I love T20 and to play against India, I know they come down hard on the bowlers especially the spinners. If you toss it up a bit, it's gone. I feel like they make me grow a lot in my bowling."

Ahead of what promises to be a fiercely contested T20I series against India, Mlaba is looking forward to her battles with Smriti Mandhana, whom she has dismissed a number of times in the past, including twice already in the current tour.

"Even though the ball is turning into the left handers, I somehow get wickets. I don't know how. I love bowling to left-handers even though they challenge me a lot. I love challenges. I've gotten Mandhana a lot. Back home, during the tri-series, she was struggling. I know she's going to come hard at me and might have done a lot of research to do that. I am waiting for that challenge."

Mlaba enjoys encounters against the best in the world. Another instance is facing Suzie Bates in the T20 World Cup at home last year. Mlaba was crucial to South Africa's 65-run where she took three wickets including getting Bates for a two-ball duck. Her dancing celebration went viral from that game and is understandably a core memory for the spinner in her still flourishing international career.

"I was very angry with how I started in the first game against Sri Lanka. I kept thinking this is not my standard. After that, to play the second game at Paarl on a spin-friendly turf, I kept thinking, I had to get this right now. I am in my country, I am used to these conditions, I need to come up with something good."

"My friend and teammate Masabata Klaas came to me that morning and said, 'If you don't get this right, I am going to

punch you in the face.' Obviously, she was joking but it really pumped me up.

Noise made an appearance again, this time through the comments of critics on her social media accounts, something she quite guiltily admits she needs to stop.

"Another thing that really made me perform that way was the comments online. I read a lot of comments online, I maybe shouldn't be doing that as a professional. The more I read them, the more I grow as a person, because it just pisses me off."

"Most of the time, I just laugh at some of the comments I get. Even if something nasty is said about me. When I am playing, I always remember some of the negative comments. Maybe the person wasn't trying to be mean, maybe they were trying to help me in some way, but I need to stop reading these comments," she shrugs.

## Acing the last mile

South Africa made it to the final of that edition, pitted against Meg Lanning's Australia in the final. In a maiden summit clash appearance against one of the most dominant sides in the game's history, the Proteas folded. A similar story unfolded a little over a year later with the men against an Indian side in the Men's T20 showpiece in Barbados.

Mlaba believes the wounds have closed over and hopes that learning is the way to heal.

"It was a bit overwhelming for us. We didn't know how to do certain things in some situations. I think we should have been calmer. We were just rushing, we were trying to do so many things. We should have tried to take every ball one at a time."

That final was not without its personal positives. For Mlaba, it gave her community an opportunity to step up for one of their own.

"Funny part is, in my township, a lot of people know I play cricket. Mostly, it's the older people who watch cricket. But when we made the final, I don't know what happened. The people in my township put up a screen and were watching. They sent me the videos and it was so lovely. They supported us so much. I felt so good and I feel that's inspired so many youngsters and teenagers."

In a few months' time, another World Cup will see the Proteas head to Bangladesh for a chance to right the wrongs of 2023. It's been a harder journey with the side in major transition after key retirements since the last edition. Mlaba is not the cherubic youngster waiting to make a mark. She's the hardened professional now expected to lead. She knows pressure and the nerves are okay. She's always gotten past them and she's not quite done dancing to her own beat just yet.

## THE GIST

▼ Mlaba started out as a pace bowler, but switched to spin after her coach at the club level required a spinner to plug gaps in the side's bowling attack

▼ In 48 T20Is, the left-arm spinner has 36 wickets, of which India accounts for six wickets (her best against a nation)

▼ Mlaba enjoys dancing and her moves often make an appearances even on the field

▼ She enjoys bowling to Laura Wolvaardt in the nets, fondly remembering calling her captain 'loser' if she manages to beat her. Wolvaardt, Mlaba admits, is happy to answer her in kind

▼ Mlaba is a player whose life has transformed since taking up cricket. She has revealed that her career has helped her fix her family home and even afford better housing that's close to cricket facilities

▼ She pursues several interests outside cricket, one of which is an interest in studying sports management to widen her avenues after her time as an active cricketer

# Radiation biodosimetry: the ABCs of responding to a radiological event

The time required to report the dose is critical, treatments for radiation are more effective the earlier they are administered. It would therefore be beneficial for the assay to produce a same-day result. The team at Columbia is working to reduce assay time, on an HTS platform, to under 4 hours

Guy Garty  
Venkatachalam P

After a large-scale radiological event, such as an Improvised Nuclear Device or reactor accident, it is important to identify those individuals who have received a significant dose of radiation and would benefit from one of the drugs that have been recently approved to treat radiation sickness. These drugs are most effective when administered within a few days of exposure. It is also critical to reassure those individuals who have not received a significant dose but are extremely concerned, preventing them from overwhelming hospitals. Thus, there will be a pressing need to assess, within a few days, the radiation doses received by tens or hundreds of thousands of individuals.

## What is biodosimetry?

Biodosimetry allows one to determine the amount of radiation to which an individual was exposed based on changes in blood, urine, or hair. It would be particularly useful in a radiological event where the exposed individuals do not carry any personal radiation monitoring devices.

The gold standard biodosimetry assay is measurement of chromosome aberrations, in white blood cells. When irradiated, DNA in the blood cells gets broken and is repaired within a few hours. In some cases, there is an incorrect repair, joining fragments from different chromosomes, forming a 'DicentricChromosome (DC)' - a chromosome with two centromeres. Because a DC can only be formed by radiation, measuring these chromosomes is a specific and sensitive indicator of past radiation exposure. In order to measure DC, lymphocyte from the exposed individuals is cultured to begin division and then the chromosomes are spread on a slide and stained. The DC are then counted either while looking down a microscope directly or in images captured at high magnification. Due to the need for culturing the cells followed by the analysis of few hundred metaphases, the overall time taken to produce a result is about 2-3 days. Over the past decades, the Dicentric Chromosome Assay (DCA) has been successfully employed in many radiation accidents, where the number of exposed people is small. However, as implemented in a clinical cytogenetic lab, the DCA is too labour intensive to be practically applied in a larger event, with a throughput of a few tens of samples per day.

A second, slightly simpler, assay is the Cytokinesis Block Micronucleus Assay (CBMN), where the white blood cells are made to divide, but arrested before division is complete. This forms a cell with two nuclei. Following radiation exposure some DNA will be ejected during division forming a "micronucleus". This assay is slightly simpler to perform and score but overall time to answer is longer (~3 days), as it requires longer culturing of the cells.

Measurement on the phosphorylated form of specific histone protein, an inherent component of chromosomes known as the "gamma-H2AX" assay, has the potential to segregate the exposed



Dr. Guy Garty with Medical Students at the INDO-USA-Sparc Workshop at the Sri Ramachandra, Institute of Higher Education and Research in Porur. VELANKANNI RAJ B

from that of unexposed and those exposed to low dose versus high dose without culturing cells, within 6-8 hours of time. This assay needs to be performed within 24 hours owing to the kinetics of histone phosphorylation.

## Increasing throughput

The traditional approach to increasing the throughput of biodosimetry assays is to implement a lab network, where samples are shared between a dozen or more labs around the world, however this does not provide a sufficient increase in throughput to cope with a large radiological event.

Over the last 20 years the Center for Radiological Research at Columbia University has developed automatable versions of the major biodosimetry assays, performed in 96-well plates. The use of 96-well plates allows a significant increase in throughput as 96 samples are processed simultaneously.

The first iteration of the Rapid Automated Biodosimetry Tool (RABiT) used custom robotics to perform the CBMN assay with a target throughput of 6000 samples per day per machine. More recently we have implemented both the CBMN and DCA assays on several commercial High Throughput Screening (HTS) platforms, dubbed "RABiT-II". HTS systems use robotics, liquid handling devices and automated microscopes to quickly conduct millions of chemicals, genetic, or pharmacological tests. In the pharmaceutical industry, these systems leverage automation to quickly assay the biochemical activity of many drug-like compounds. In academia, the same systems are increasingly used to arrive at fundamental biological insights rather than drug candidates.

The broad deployment of HTS platforms would allow significantly increased throughput for performing biodosimetry, with each machine capable, in principle, of analyzing thousands of samples per day. A

## Logistics

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests establishing Community Reception Center (CRC) locations as quickly as possible in the aftermath of a large-scale radiological or nuclear incident, after which the public will be provided with information about CRC locations and will be provided with instructions regarding who should report to which CRC. The CRC itself will include several distinct areas in which persons will be screened for external contamination, decontaminated, if necessary, entered into the long-term tracking system, and discharged with appropriate instructions. In order to cope with the high number of individuals that need to be tested, the U.S. government envisages a two-tier triage scheme: a rapid Point-of-Care (POC) biodosimetry assay and a hospital- or lab-based biodosimetry assay.

The POC test will be administered at the CRC and is meant to provide a binary (exposed/not exposed) answer within 30 minutes but no dose estimate. One candidate POC assay is based on a protein signature using a lateral flow assay, like a Covid test. Individuals found to be unexposed using this test will be sent home (but may be asked to return for follow-up later).

Individuals found to be exposed, using the POC test, will be required to submit to a lab- or hospital-based test, such as DCA or CBMN, implemented ideally on a HTS platform. This test requires more time to perform but can determine dose with higher precision and can be used to assign individuals to treatment categories. For example, individuals who received lower doses would only need observation while a higher dose category would benefit from administration of one of the drugs that were recently approved by the FDA for mitigating radiation sickness. Individuals who have received even higher doses may benefit from a bone marrow transplant.

At a later stage, once all seriously injured individuals have been treated, this test can then be offered to the rest of the population to provide information on long term risks and to identify individuals requiring, for example, increased cancer screenings.

In conclusion, high throughput automated biodosimetry offers the opportunity to perform dose assessment on a large number of people in the event of a large-scale radiological or nuclear incident.

It fits well with the current operation concept, as a 2nd-tier triage separating exposed individuals into treatment categories and later for long-term epidemiological follow-up.

(Dr. Guy Garty is the Director, Radiological Research Accelerator Facility & Associate Professor of Radiation Oncology at CUMC, USA (email: ggy2101@cumc.columbia.edu))

& Dr. Venkatachalam P. is the Professor & Head with the department of Human Genetics & Associate Dean for Research, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education at Chennai, India (venkip@sriramachandra.edu.in.)



The country is seeing an increase in teenage pregnancies THE HINDU

## Education 'remains the most effective contraceptive'

Zubeda Hamid

Last year, India overtook China as the world's most populous country.

According to United Nations estimates, India's population which is currently 1.4 billion, will peak at 1.7 billion or so in 2064 before settling at 1.53 billion in 2100. But even though these numbers are staggering, data indicates that population growth is slowing - the total fertility rate has dipped below the replacement level of 2.1 and is projected to dip further.

With World Population Day (July 11) around the corner, experts say India's thrust should be on ensuring the sexual and reproductive health of its young people.

A study that referenced the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) concluded that there is a significant association between years of schooling and total unmet needs for family planning and unmet needs for spacing. The results of the study are contained in the paper 'Changes in discourse on unmet need for family planning among married women in India: evidence from NFHS-5'. It was published in the *Scientific Reports* journal last year. According to the study: "The demand for unmet needs for spacing and limiting was the highest among the women in the age categories 15-19 (17.8%) and 20-24 (17.3%)."

This, says Poonam Muttreja, executive director, Population Foundation of India, is primarily due to two factors: women who get married very young are usually from backward regions and not very educated, and therefore, their agency to negotiate or even talk about family

## Experts insist that India's thrust should be on ensuring the sexual and reproductive health of its young people

planning is limited. "This is a social norm: even if the young woman does talk to a healthcare worker, the thinking is that once they are married, they must prove their fertility with children before family planning, and therefore there is no room for access to contraception," she says.

The other issue, Ms. Muttreja says, is that the country is increasingly seeing teenage pregnancies both among married and unmarried women, and yet, families are unwilling to accept that their unmarried children may be sexually active. "This is compounded by the lack of sex education. Globally, evidence has shown that where sex education is given, the sexual debut of a young person is postponed. It also helps eradicate misconceptions. In India, for a young person to even access condoms or any other form of contraception is culturally and socially against norms," she adds.

There is an urgent need to focus on young people, both men and women, and on their sexual and reproductive health through culturally sensitive behaviour change communication, and by offering them a basket of contraceptive options to meet their needs. She reiterated that women's education continues to be the most effective contraception.

Sumana Manohar, senior consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, also highlights the need for education among older students - those in classes 11 and 12.

Even abortion, points out Dipika Jain, director, Centre for Justice Law and Society, Jindal Global Law School, is a qualified right. "Abortion is largely criminal in India except under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, the person must qualify for the service as per the conditions of the act. Any abortion outside of the Act is criminalised. This makes access to safe and legal abortions difficult for a large section of pregnant people in India," Ms. Jain says.

(zubeda.h@thehindu.co.in)

## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

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

### The science of hydration

Anjali Srivastava

#### QUESTION 1

This specific electrolyte, essential for nerve function and muscle contraction, is often lost through sweat and must be replenished during intense physical activity. What is it?

#### QUESTION 2

\_\_\_\_\_ is a rare genetic disorder that causes individuals to feel extremely thirsty and drink excessive amounts of water, leading to frequent urination and potential water intoxication.

#### QUESTION 3

Which common beverage, often

consumed for hydration, can lead to dehydration due to its diuretic properties?

#### QUESTION 4

Despite being vital for life, this molecule makes up a significant portion of our brain, with estimates suggesting that the human brain is composed of what percentage of water?

#### QUESTION 5

What is the name of the condition caused by drinking excessive amounts of water in a short period, leading to dangerously low levels of sodium in the blood?



Visual: Identify this gland in red, which releases the hormone vasopressin to help regulate the body's water balance by signalling the kidneys to retain water. GETTY IMAGES

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