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Lone survivor: Captain Manish Ratna Shakya, pilot of Saurya Airlines, being rescued from the wreckage of the aircraft.



Thorough check: An official examines debris of the flight that crashed in Kathmandu.

18 killed in Nepal plane crash, pilot survives

Accident happened when a Saurya Airlines aircraft with 19 passengers, including a Yemeni national, crashed after take-off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport

Sanjeev Satgainya
KATHMANDU

As many as 18 passengers, a Yemeni national and a child among them, were killed on Wednesday after an aircraft crashed shortly after taking off from the Tribhuvan International Airport in Nepal's capital Kathmandu.

There were 19 persons aboard the Saurya Airlines 9N-AME plane, a non-scheduled flight headed to Pokhara, a tourist destination which is a 25-minute flight from Kathmandu.

"One injured person was rescued and taken to the hospital, and 18 persons were found dead," the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) said.

Pilot Captain Manish Ratna Shakya, who is the lone survivor in the crash, is undergoing treatment at the Kathmandu Model Hospital.

Hospital officials said Captain Shakya remains in a critical condition.

According to airline officials, the aircraft was heading to

Pokhara for a C Check, a comprehensive inspection carried out every 18 to 24 months. All aboard the plane were Nepalese except one, who has been identified by CAAN as a Yemeni national.

After take-off, the plane turned in the wrong direction, Jagannath Niraula, chief of Tribhuvan International Airport, said. "As soon as it took off, it turned right instead of turning left," Mr. Niraula was quoted as saying by the *BBC News Nepali*. However, "the cause of the accident has not been revealed yet."

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Home Minister Ramesh Lekshmi separately visited the accident site to gather details about the incident and provide necessary directives.

Mr. Oli said he was deeply saddened by the tragic deaths in the crash and was at the site to inquire about the cause of the crash with the Civil Aviation Authority's officials. He urged all for patience at this hour of grief. According to Flightradar24

flight tracking, the plane was built in 2003 and was handed over to Saurya in 2017.

"The aircraft was not equipped with a modern ADS-B transponder, so it was not tracked on Flightradar 24," the flight tracker wrote on X, immediately after the crash.

An emergency Cabinet meeting on Wednesday decided to form a committee to investigate the crash. "A five-member committee has been set up under the leadership of Ratish Chandra Lal Suman, former director general of CAAN," said Communications Minister Prithvi Subba Gurung.

Airports in Nepal's mountain regions are notorious for their tricky runways and quickly changing weather conditions, posing challenges even for accomplished pilots. Wednesday's crash was the 105th in Nepal since the country recorded its first air disaster in August 1955, and the worst aviation accident in the country in 18 months. (With inputs from PTI)



Blown to smithereens: Rescue and security personnel at the crash site near Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu on Wednesday. AFP

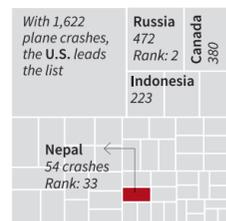
Nepal's treacherous skies

Airports in Nepal's mountain regions are notorious for their tricky runways and quickly changing weather conditions. By **Jasmin Nihalani** and **Vignesh Radhakrishnan**



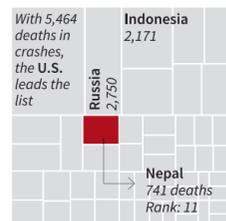
1: RANK AMONG CRASHES

Since 1996, 54 flights have crashed in Nepal, ranking 33 out of 207 nations ordered based on the number of plane crashes



2: RANK AMONG FATALITIES

Including Wednesday's incident, 741 lives have been lost over Nepal in plane crashes, ranking 11 out of 207 nations

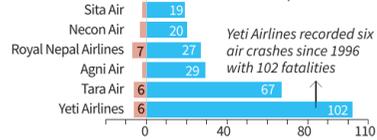


POOR INVESTIGATIONS

In the ICAO's latest Audit, Nepal scored only 21.6% on the accident investigation parameter, which is much lower than the global average of 54.5%

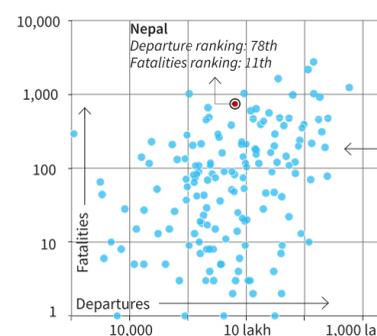
4: SMALL COUNTRY, MANY AIRLINES

Nepal has had a lot of private airlines. The graph shows the number of air crashes across each airline and the number of fatalities cumulatively in those plane crashes



3: LOW AIR TRAFFIC, MORE FATALITIES

Nepal belongs to a set of countries where air traffic is relatively low (ranked 78th in departures) but fatalities are relatively high (11th in fatalities). Other countries in this lot include Nigeria, Pakistan, Angola and Sri Lanka.



19
Number of persons on board the Saurya Airlines aircraft which crashed on Wednesday

105
Number of plane crashes recorded in Nepal since its first disaster in August 1955

Chart depicts fatalities in crashes against departures by air carriers registered in a country since 1996. The farther to the right a dot (representing a country), the more the departures. Fatalities in crashes are plotted in the vertical axis of the chart. The higher a dot on the chart, the more the fatalities. In 68 countries, the number of departures was higher than in Nepal, but the number of fatalities was lower



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NEET landed in a string of bad news this year
It needs safeguards against malpractice
EDITORIAL » PAGE 8



NETANYAHU IN U.S.
Israeli PM's planned speech sparks protest
WORLD » PAGE 16

Opposition slams Budget as 'unfair'; govt. denies charge

In both Houses, Opposition says Centre has 'excluded' States ruled by non-NDA parties; terming the accusation outrageous, Finance Minister says Congress is giving people a wrong impression

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In both Houses of Parliament, the Opposition on Wednesday attacked the government, accusing it of presenting a "discriminatory budget" that excluded the States ruled by parties that are not part of the National Democratic Alliance.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman issued a strong rebuttal to this in the Rajya Sabha, saying the Opposition was deliberately maligning the government and giving a wrong impression that some States had been left out.

The Upper House saw a sharp exchange of words between the two sides on Wednesday morning. The Opposition staged a walk-out in protest.



Locking horns: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge speaking in the House on Wednesday. PTI

Congress president and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said that only two States had benefited from the Budget. He said it was a Budget aimed solely at safeguarding the BJP-led NDA government. "Opposition party-ruled States have been neglected. How will development happen if there is no balance? I

condemn this and all the parties condemn this type of attitude," he said.

Ms. Sitharaman reacted strongly to the accusation, saying that all the States could not be named in the Budget, and the Congress, which had been in power for long, should know better than to make such an allegation. The finer details about scheme-wise alloca-

tions were available for all to see in the Budget documents, she said.

"The Cabinet, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, decided to set up a port at VadHAVAN, but Maharashtra's name was not included in the Budget [speech]. Does this mean that Maharashtra should feel ignored?" she said, adding that ₹76,000 crore had been allocated for the project.

"This is a deliberate attempt of the Opposition parties led by the Congress to give the people the wrong impression that their States were not allocated funds or schemes," she said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

'USED AS AN INSURANCE'
» PAGE 13

UPSC set to revamp exams by adopting latest technologies

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is all set to revamp its examination system through technological solutions such as Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication and facial recognition systems and CCTV surveillance using artificial intelligence.

The decision comes amid allegations of cheating in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for undergraduate medical admissions conducted by the NTA.

Tender floated

The UPSC floated a tender on June 20 seeking bids from public sector undertakings to revamp the examination process.

The move also coincided with the controversy over trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who allegedly

forged documents to appear for the Civil Services Examination on 12 occasions, far above the number of permitted attempts.

'Preventing fraud'

"The Commission intends to make use of the latest digital technology to match and cross-check the biometric details of the candidates and to monitor various activities of the candidates during the examination to prevent cheating, fraud, unfair means and impersonation," the tender document read.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

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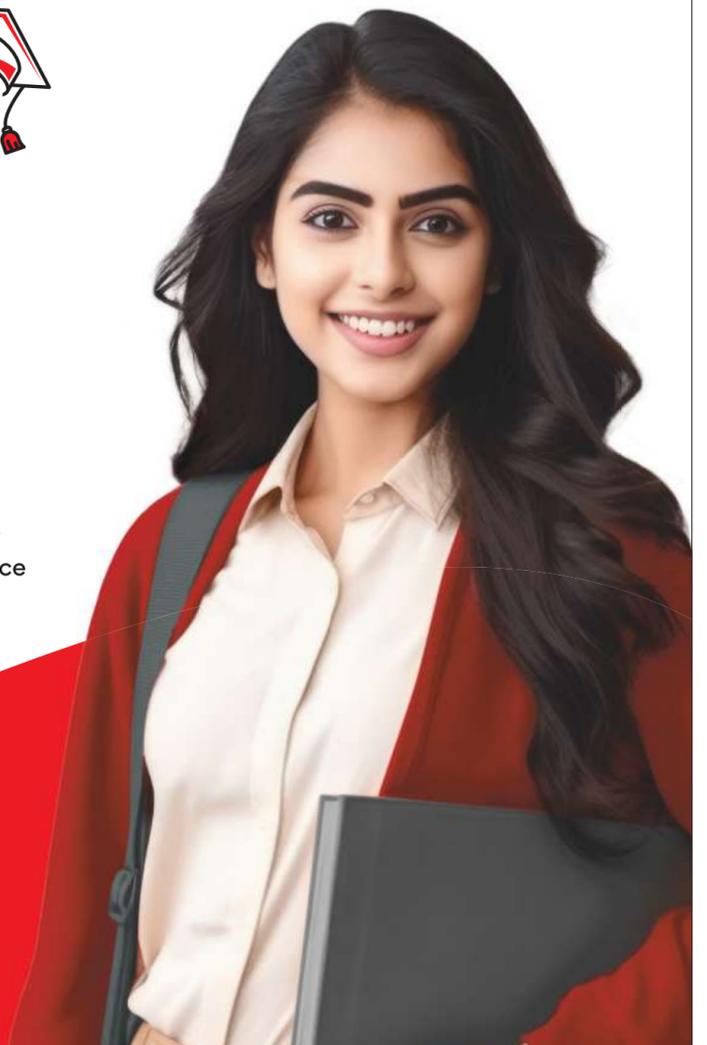
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NGT notice to Centre over waste dump near AIIMS

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued a notice to the Centre and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi on a plea alleging the dumping of garbage near the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

The tribunal was hearing a petition claiming that garbage was being dumped opposite Gate No. 6 of AIIMS.

In its recent order, a Bench led by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said, "The grievance of the applicant is that this garbage dump is a major source of air pollution in the surroundings of AIIMS and such an open dump is causing huge air pollution in the surrounding area."

The Bench noted the petitioner's submissions that the authorities concerned were not taking any action despite complaints.

"The original application raises a substantial issue relating to compliance of environmental norms," it said. The tribunal listed the matter for further hearing on October 14.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, JUL. 25

RISE 05:40 SET 19:17
MOON ☾ RISE 22:12 SET 09:38

FRIDAY, JUL. 26

RISE 05:40 SET 19:16
MOON ☾ RISE 22:45 SET 10:42

SATURDAY, JUL. 27

RISE 05:41 SET 19:16
MOON ☾ RISE 23:19 SET 11:47

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 34 25
Safdarjang 34 25
Palam 32 24

Delhi Palam Today
34°C Day will be warm and uneasy. Night will be pleasant. Spell of moderate to heavy rain and thundershower with gusty winds to occur.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
35°C The weather will be warm with cloudy sky. Spell of moderate rain and thundershower with gusty winds will occur.

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THE HINDU
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Vivek Vihar hospital fire: police file chargesheet; 81 witnesses questioned

Police say oxygen cylinders stored in hazardous manner exploded as soon as the blaze started; hospital staff allowed to cook food on the rooftop; on-duty doctor didn't inform police in time

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Two months after seven newborn babies were charred to death in a fire incident at a hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar area, the police filed a 796-page chargesheet with statements of 81 witnesses in a court here on Monday.

The incident took place at Baby Care New Born Hospital on May 25.

The police had arrested hospital owner Naveen Khichi and a Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) doctor, Akash, under IPC Sections 34 (common intention), 304 (punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder), and 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide).

The chargesheet, filed at a Karkardooma court, stated that flaws in the medical facility's structural design prevented emergency response and that the on-duty doctor did not alert the police or the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) in time.

It stated that medical oxygen cylinders were kept in a "hazardous manner" and that too beyond the permissible limit. These exploded as soon as the fire started.

A police source said the

Recipe for disaster

Police probe found hospital wanting on eight counts, including fire safety, qualified staff and mandatory spacing requirements

Statutory requirements	Norms violated
Safety measures	No fire safety devices installed
Spacing between beds	Hospital lacked mandatory 4.65 sq.m spacing between two beds
Qualified staff	Only BAMS doctors deployed; nurses lacked requisite experience for a 10-bedded hospital
Adherence to permissions	Hospital ran services with 12 beds against the permission for five



Seven newborn children were charred to death in the fire tragedy on May 25. FILE PHOTO

SOURCE: POLICE CHARGESHEET

hospital did not meet eight statutory requirements needed to run a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). "There is no document available to show the safety measures implemented by the hospital," stated the chargesheet.

It stated that at the time of the issuance of the licence to the hospital, the hospital owner had de-

clared that only 15 oxygen cylinders would be stored. However, norms were flouted and a total of 31 cylinders were stored at the hospital in violation of rules.

The police also said that, according to two witnesses, Dr. Akash did not call the police as soon as the blaze started and was seen talking over the

phone, causing an emergency response delay of at least 30 minutes.

The source said the nursing staff on duty told the police that the owner of the hospital "allowed the male staff members to cook food on the rooftop".

According to the chargesheet, the nursing staff had brought this to the notice of the owner, but to no avail.

Inflammable material

To determine the cause of the fire, a team including a forensic expert and officials from the DFS and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi inspected the site. The accused had stored inflammable material - bundles of old paper and wooden material - which aggravated the fire, the chargesheet also stated.

Moreover, the police recorded evidence from documents of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the Delhi government. The chargesheet stated that the renewal application of the hospital had been pending with the DGHS since 2021.

"From the probe conducted so far and relying upon statements of witnesses, sufficient evidence has come on record against the accused," the source said.

Delhi riots case: court asks police to reply to Khalid's bail plea by August 29

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the police's response on the bail plea of former Jawaharlal Nehru University student Umar Khalid in an Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) case related to the alleged larger conspiracy behind the February 2020 communal riots.

A Bench of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Girish Kath-

palia issued a notice to the police and asked the agency to file its reply by the next date of hearing, August 29. The court will then hear Mr. Khalid's bail plea and the bail pleas of other co-accused in the case, including student activist Sharjeel Imam.

Mr. Khalid, who was arrested by the police in September 2020, has challenged a May 28 trial court order refusing to grant him relief. He had approached the trial court on Fe-

bruary 14 and sought regular bail in the matter on the grounds of delay and parity with other accused in the riots case. Natasha Narwal, Devangana Kalita, and Asif Iqbal Tanha - all accused in the Delhi riots larger conspiracy case - have been granted bail by the Delhi High Court.

The police have charged Mr. Khalid with criminal conspiracy, rioting, and unlawful assembly, among other offences, under the UAPA.

Delhi Police may summon IAS probationer Pooja Khedkar in cheating case

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police are likely to send a notice to IAS probationer Puja Khedkar to join the probe early in a case of cheating and forgery registered against her last week, sources said on Wednesday.

Delhi Police Crime Branch had booked Ms. Khedkar on July 19 for fraudulently obtaining an Other Backward Classes certificate and a Persons with Benchmark Disabilities certificate to clear the Union Public Service Commission examination. The authenticity of various certificates submitted by her to the commission is being probed.

Collecting documents

Looking to a source, a team led by an Assistant Commissioner of Police has been tasked with collecting relevant documents from various government departments.

After compiling the documents, the police team is likely to issue a notice to the IAS probationer, said

the source, adding that they will confront her with the documents she allegedly forged.

Last week, the UPSC took a series of actions, including registering a criminal case against Ms. Khedkar for allegedly forging identity papers, misrepresenting and falsifying facts to attempt the Civil Services Examination (CSE) beyond the prescribed limit.

Additionally, Ms. Khedkar's probation period was put on hold and she was recalled to Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Uttarakhand's Mussoorie.

The commission has also issued a show-cause notice to cancel her candidature for the CSE and debar her from future examinations and selections. She has also been accused of misusing power and privileges by demanding perks and facilities she was not entitled to.

The 2023-batch IAS officer was posted as a probationary assistant collector at the Pune district collectorate.

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Rudrani Tyagi
Advocate
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IN BRIEF



Remuneration of anganwadi workers hiked in Rajasthan

The remuneration paid to the workers and assistants at anganwadi centres in Rajasthan has been increased by 10% along with an ambitious plan to develop 365 anganwadis at the block-level as model rural child care centres. The model centres would be spruced up on the lines of play schools, Minister of State for Women and Child Development Manju Baghmar has said. Replying to the debate on the grant of demands for her department in the Assembly, Ms. Baghmar said the “nutrition panchayats” in the villages formed part of the State government’s initiative for combating child malnutrition and taking care of women’s health.

‘Cow smuggler’ killed while being chased in Rajasthan

A pickup van driver allegedly smuggling cows was shot dead in the early hours of Wednesday in Rajasthan’s Deeg district, police said. Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar Meena said that police had information that two men were smuggling cows in a pickup van. As a police team gave the vehicle a chase, the occupants of the pickup truck opened fire at it, he said. Mr. Meena said that at some distance, two other suspected cow smugglers were catching bovines. Seeing the commotion, they opened fire at the pickup van, the officer added. “A bullet hit the driver of the van,” the SP said, adding that he died of the gunshot wound. PTI

Chhattisgarh’s law varsity introduces menstrual leave

Chhattisgarh’s Hidayatullah National Law University (HNLU) has announced menstrual leave for its students. This makes HNLU the first University in Chhattisgarh to implement a Menstrual Leave Policy (MLP) even as it joins several other Universities in the country that have made similar announcements. In a press statement, the University stated that the new policy was effective from July 1. “This progressive policy is part of the broader HNLU Health Shield Initiative and underscores the University’s commitment to fostering an inclusive academic environment,” the statement read.

167 sq. km land freed from encroachment: Assam CM

The Assam government has reclaimed 167 sq. km of land from encroachers in the last three years, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday. Consistent efforts and cooperation from a large section of society helped free up an area larger than the 114 sq. km that Chandigarh covers, he said. “Our government stands committed to making every inch of land free from encroachers,” the Chief Minister said. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led government launched the anti-encroachment drive soon after Mr. Sarma took charge in May 2021.

In poll-bound Haryana, BJP is facing resentment of its Ahirwal leader over ‘repeated snubs’

Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

At a recent rally in Sehlang village in Mahendragarh, Haryana, Bharatiya Janata Party’s Gurgaon MP Rao Inderjit Singh expressed his resentment at not being made a Cabinet Minister in the present Narendra Modi government. Mr. Singh, who is Union Minister of State (Independent charge) for Planning, said he held the dubious record of probably being the only MoS who has been a Lok Sabha member for three decades.

“I am probably the only Lok Sabha member who was an MoS in 2004 and still is in 2024. First-time MPs got the Cabinet rank, those junior to me also got the Cabinet rank... everyone knows about my record of winning Lok Sabha elections six times...” Mr. Singh said with a grin, making those on the dais

around him chuckle over the irony.

However, the prominent Ahir leader and seasoned politician gave a curt political message in his address later, exhorting his supporters to stay united and not to forget that the “road to government formation in Haryana passes through the Ahirwal belt”.

The Gurgaon-Rewari-Mahendragarh belt dominated by the Ahirs (Yadavs), categorised as OBC in Haryana, has made significant contributions to the formation of consecutive BJP governments in the State over the past decade.

In 2014, the BJP made a clean sweep in this region winning all 11 Assembly constituencies after the Ahir leader joined the party, and formed its first simple-majority government in the agrarian State.

Similarly, the BJP won eight seats in the previous

Bihar Assembly passes Bill to curb paper leaks in govt. recruitment exams

Legislation cleared by voice vote amid Oppn. walkout; it stipulates severe punishment, including a prison term of 5 to 10 years and a fine of ₹1 crore, for service providers who engage in malpractice

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

The Bihar Assembly on Wednesday passed a Bill aimed at curbing question paper leaks and malpractice in government recruitment examinations in the State.

The Bihar Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, was tabled by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and passed by voice vote amid a walkout by the Opposition. The Bill stipulates severe punishment, including a prison term of three to five years and a fine of ₹10 lakh, for those involved in such malpractices.

Termination of services Service providers – government or private agencies entrusted with conducting such tests – that commit such crimes in an organised manner would face a prison term of five to 10 years, a fine of up to ₹1 crore, and termination of services for four years.



Strict measures: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar speaks during the Legislative Assembly session in Patna on Wednesday. PTI

There are also provisions to confiscate the property of offending service providers and recover from them a portion of the total cost of conducting such examinations.

All crimes under this law will be cognisable and non-bailable. The investigating officers in such cases shall not be below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.

The new legislation comes close on the heels of governments at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh enact-

ing stringent anti-paper leak laws. The Jharkhand Assembly passed a similar Bill in 2023 with provisions for life imprisonment and a fine up to ₹10 crore.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi has implemented the law at the national level and now the Bihar government is also going to implement it. The State’s 1981 law had provision for six-month imprisonment. This time, we have made a strict law,” Mr. Chaudhary said.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair

Means) Bill, 2024, with provision for imprisonment up to five years and a fine of up to ₹1 crore for malpractice and organised cheating in government recruitment exams, was notified by the Centre to come into effect from June 21. Parliament had passed the Bill on February 6.

Spate of paper leaks

Bihar has been embroiled in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) 2024 paper leak controversy, with many of the accused in the case being arrested from the State.

The Bihar Public Service Commission’s (BPS) Teachers’ Recruitment Exam was also cancelled this year following widespread allegations of paper leak.

Last year, the question paper of the Bihar Constable Recruitment Examination 2023 went viral on social media, leading to the cancellation of the exam. In 2022, the BPS had to cancel the 67th Combined Competitive Preliminary Exam due to a paper leak.

Railway budgetary allocation for Maharashtra is akin to ‘special package’: Vaishnaw

Ateeq Shaikh
MUMBAI

With the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra crying foul that the State was given the short shrift in the Union Budget, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Wednesday that the allocation for railway projects in the State for financial year 2024-25 – the second highest in the country after Uttar Pradesh – is almost akin to a “special package”.

Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in the State later this year.

On Tuesday, while the Mahayuti government had welcomed the Union Budget for allocating funds and projects worth over ₹8,000 crore for Maharashtra, MVA constituents



Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. FILE PHOTO

Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) criticised it for focusing mainly on Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, States ruled by allies of the BJP.

‘Record allocation’

“A record allocation has been made this year for Maharashtra for varied railway projects of ₹15,940 crore,” he said while inte-

racting with the media. “New track-laying work of about 180 km per year is ongoing in the State.”

The Minister said there are ongoing works worth ₹81,580 crore for railway projects in Maharashtra of station revamp, augmentation of passenger capacity, track laying, etc. Roughly ₹1,30,000 crore worth of projects such as dedicated freight corridor, Gati Shakti, inland container depot are in different stages of execution, he said.

An additional ₹30,000 crore has been earmarked for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project or bullet train.

Specifically focusing on the Mumbai suburban local services, he said 250 additional services will be introduced in the next five years.

Plea against Varanasi civic body order on closure of meat shops

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

National Loktantrik Party president (executive) Mohammad Suhail has filed a public interest litigation (PIL) petition in the Allahabad High Court challenging the recent order of the Varanasi Municipal Corporation to close all meat shops along the Kanwar Yatra route during the Hindu month of Shravan.

Calling it “unconstitutional”, the petitioner said the civic body’s order violated the freedom to do any business guaranteed under Article 19(1)(g). “... the closure of the meat and poultry shops, especially on the occasion of Shravan, or any other Hindu festival, tends to be arbitrary in nature and violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution,”

the plea argued, adding that orders like this would impact the livelihood of people.

The petition came days after the Supreme Court stopped the enforcement of directives issued by the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments asking food stalls on the route of Kanwar Yatra to prominently exhibit the names and other identity details of their owners and employees.

‘Compensate losses’

The PIL said the Kanwar Yatra was an age-old practice and so was the existence of the meat shops in Varanasi.

It urged the court to declare the said directive unconstitutional and invalid, and order the civic body to compensate the losses incurred by shopkeepers.

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Stalin urges Centre to help free fishermen in Sri Lanka

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has requested Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar to secure the release of all the fishermen arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy.

He urged the Union government to secure the release of a total of 87 fishermen and 175 boats.

Nine fishermen were apprehended on July 22. From January to July 22, 250 fishermen had been arrested by the Sri Lankan authorities, the highest since 2014, Mr. Stalin said.

“Incidents of intimidation and arrest of fishermen and seizure of their boats and fishing apparatus are continuing. This has made the fishermen community extremely distressed,” he said.

Little clout

Professor Rajendra Sharma, head of the Political Science Department at Mahatma Dayanand University, Rohtak, said Mr. Singh was a senior leader, but his political influence was confined to three districts in Haryana and he had little clout within the Yadav community in other States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

“Also, his political influence in Haryana and in

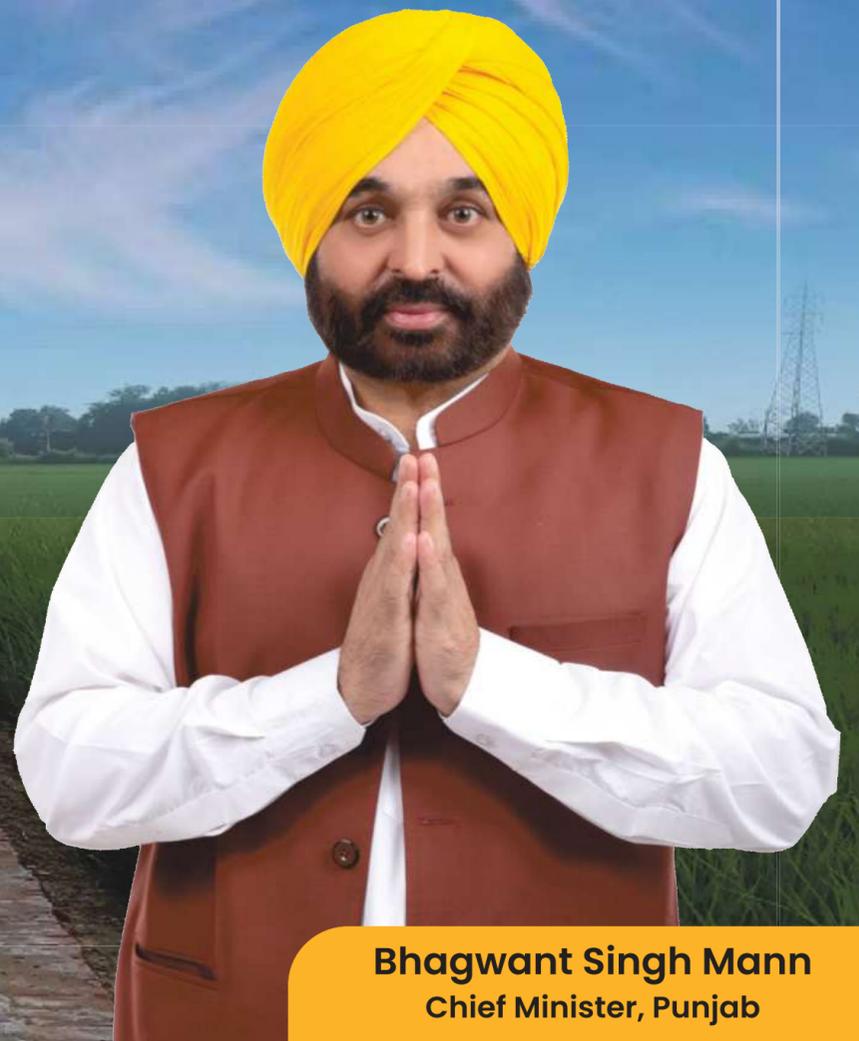
the party seems to be on the decline as suggested by the reduced margin of his Lok Sabha victory and the growing stature of the party’s other Ahir leaders such as Central Parliamentary Board member Sudha Yadav, Irrigation Minister Abhe Singh Yadav and former Minister Rao Narbir Singh,” Mr. Sharma said, adding that several Haryana Congress leaders who had joined the BJP over the past decade now felt sidelined in the party.

Some analysts though dismissed Mr. Singh’s assertions as mere “pressure politics” in the run-up to the Assembly poll to seek his “pound of flesh”, arguing that he had little political choice and was unlikely to return to the Congress or join the Indian National Lok Dal, which is struggling to remain relevant in State politics after the split in 2018.



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Deputy Commissioner Lakshmi Priya and Superintendent of Police Narayan monitoring the search operations. GIRISH PATTANSHETTI

'Metal object' under water raises hopes to locate lost truck

Girish Pattanashetti
SHIRUR (UTTARA KANNADA)

Inclement weather on Wednesday halted search operations to trace a missing truck and its driver at the landslide site in Uttara Kannada being carried out jointly by the district administration and various government agencies.

The search operations seemed to have reached the final stages. Although experts in radar technology from a private agency reached the landslide site near Shirur by evening, heavy downpour spoiled the chances of a coordinated effort planned to be carried out with the help of helicopters from the Coast Guard and Navy personnel.

By that time, it was confirmed that a heavy metal body was under water around 30 m from the riverbank. Deputy Commissioner Lakshmi Priya, Superintendent of Police Narayan and Ankola MLA Satish Sail, who have been monitoring the operations from day one, told the me-

dia that the operations would resume on Thursday morning.

NASA help

Earlier in the day, Mr. Narayan told *The Hindu* that with the help of his friend in NASA in the U.S., he was able to get the location coordinates which were subsequently sent to ISRO for further confirmation. Through satellite images, they were able to confirm the presence of a heavy metal body under water.

Subsequently, the data was further put to scrutiny to ascertain the possible location of the buried truck. "A deep penetrating radar from Noida is being brought to the site and on its arrival, a Coast Guard helicopter will take them over the river to pinpoint the exact location. Once that is done, Navy personnel will fix boundaries for the operations to be carried out and divers will go under water to search for the body of the driver which is likely to be stuck in the cabin of the truck," Mr. Narayan said.

Jagan holds protest in Delhi; INDIA bloc extends support

More than 30 YSRCP workers have been killed in political vendetta, claims former A.P. CM; SP, Trinamool, and Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders visit Jagan, signalling a possible political realignment

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) chief Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy held a protest in the national capital on Wednesday, accusing the State's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government of unleashing violence against his party. Several leaders from the Opposition INDIA bloc visited Mr. Reddy at Jantar Mantar to express solidarity with him, including Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav.

The YSRCP also exhibited photos and videos of its workers, whom it claims were injured in a recent spate of attacks, allegedly at the behest of the ruling party in Andhra Pradesh.



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav addressing the media at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

Mr. Reddy singled out Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's son Nara Lokesh, accusing him of spearheading these attacks and encouraging a breakdown of law and order in the State.

The presence of INDIA bloc leaders at Jantar Mantar signals a clear shift in

the YSRCP's political alignment. For the last 10 years, though the YSRCP never formally joined the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, it has leaned in favour of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government both inside and outside Parliament.

Apart from the SP chief,

Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Sanjay Raut and Priyanka Chaturvedi, the Trinamool Congress leader Nadimul Haq, and the AIADMK's M. Thambidurai were among those who condemned the alleged attacks on YSRCP workers in Andhra Pradesh.

"I would not have known the truth had I not seen the photographs and videos. Those in power should maintain simplicity, listen to others, and not take their lives," Mr. Yadav said.

The TDP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh as well as a constituent of the NDA government at the Centre, dismissed the YSRCP's allegations as "fake drama". TDP MP Byreddy Shabari refuted Mr. Reddy's claims of 30-odd deaths in the State.

Women in film industry: Kerala HC stays order on release of Hema panel's report

K.C. Gopakumar
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday stayed for one week the State Information Commission's order directing the State government to disclose the K. Hema Committee report on women's working conditions in the film industry with li-

imited redactions.

Justice P.M. Manoj passed the order on a writ petition filed by film producer Sajimon Parayil challenging the SIC order. The court directed the State, the SIC and other respondents to file an affidavit in response to the petition.

The petitioner contended that the disclosure

would violate fundamental privacy rights, breach the confidentiality promised to the witnesses, and go against public policy.

During the hearing on the petition, M. Ajay, counsel for the SIC, said the petitioner was trying to prevent the disclosure of individuals by redacting sensitive information.

four-and-a-half years. He argued that the public had every right to know the contents of the report since it would help improve conditions of women in the film industry. He said the commission had already taken steps to protect the privacy of individuals by redacting sensitive information.

Spider-Man in 'Hawai chappal' walks into Delhi Police net again



Aditya and Gaurav Singh (in black T-shirt) with Traffic Police personnel after their arrest; (inset) Aditya after his arrest in April. ANI

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Clad in a tight-fitting, rubbery Spider-Man costume, resembling the Marvel comic character from head to toe, except his pair of 'Hawai chappal', 20-year-old Aditya walked straight into the police net on Wednesday, the second time this year.

The Delhi police arrested him from Najafgarh for violating traffic rules. The accused, the police said, was arrested for posing on the bonnet of a moving car in Dwarka.

He was last arrested in April, along with another woman, Anjali, 19, after a video of the couple wearing Spider-Man and Spider-Woman costumes and performing stunts on a motorbike went viral on social media.

A senior officer said that the couple was booked un-

der relevant sections of the Motor Vehicles Act but had been let off after they paid a fine.

This time, the police took action after a social media user reported the incident in Dwarka on X (formerly Twitter).

Apart from Mr. Aditya, the driver of the car, whom the police have identified as Gaurav Singh, 19, has also been arrested. A case has been registered against both the accused for dangerous driving, driving without a pollution certificate and for not wearing a seat belt.

The punishment for the charges includes a possible maximum fine of ₹26,000 and/or imprisonment or both, the police said.

The greatest superpower, as Spider-Man's creator Stan Lee said, is luck, which doesn't seem to be favouring Mr. Aditya.

Bus drivers clash in A.P.'s Chittoor, one mowed down

The Hindu Bureau
CHITTOOR

A private travel bus driver's fury led to the killing of another driver, who crushed the latter and later dragged the body for about a km, at the Mahasamudram Toll Plaza in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh in the early hours of Wednesday.

According to the police, two private buses were on their way to Vijayawada from Bengaluru and reportedly kept racing with each other at several points on the national highway. At one stage, the side view mirror of one bus reportedly hit the other bus. Both drivers clashed when they arrived at the toll plaza. After crossing the point, the duo reportedly clashed again.

After a heated argument, Sudhakar Raju, the driver of Morning Star Travels bus, got off the vehicle and was standing in front of the Sri Krishna Travels bus, lodging his protest. However, the other driver, Srinivasa Rao, allegedly knocked down Sudhakar Raju and drove away at a high speed. Sudhakar Raju got trapped under the bus and his body was badly mutilated after it was dragged for a km. The passengers inside the bus and other motorists forced Srinivasa Rao to stop the bus. Getting information from the toll plaza staff, the police rushed to the spot and took Srinivasa Rao into custody.

The deceased belonged to Reddipalem village of Guntur district. It was suspected that the accused might have been under the influence of alcohol when the incident took place.

Staying afloat



Due to continuous rain, the water level of the Krishna river has been increasing. A view of the partially submerged Sangameswara temple in Nandyal district of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday. U. SUBRAMANYAM

Gauri Lankesh case trial delay raises call for fast track courts

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The clamour for setting up Special Fast Track Courts to try the Gauri Lankesh and M.M. Kalburgi murder cases has grown louder even as the accused in both cases have been granted bail by the High Court of Karnataka on the grounds that there has been an inordinate delay in their trial.

Four accused in the murder of editor-activist Gauri Lankesh – Mohan Nayak, Amit Degvekar, K.T. Naveen Kumar, and H.L. Suresh – have been granted bail. In the murder of scholar M.M. Kalburgi, two

accused – Amit Baddi and Vasudev Suryavanshi, both also accused in the Gauri Lankesh case – have been granted bail.

The Benches of the High Court of Karnataka in Kalaburagi and Hubballi-Dharwad, which have granted the bail, have cited delayed trial as a ground.

Families of Gauri and Kalburgi and activists who have been demanding a speedy trial for years now are upset that despite Chief Minister Siddaramaiah directing officials to set up Special Fast Track Courts for speedy trials in these cases, the courts haven't been set up yet.

A.P. govt. orders CID probe into 'liquor scam' during YSRCP term

The Hindu Bureau
AMARAVATI

The Andhra Pradesh government has ordered an inquiry by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) into the Excise policy during the tenure of the YSRCP dispensation led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

"It is one of the biggest scams in Andhra Pradesh," Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu said while releasing a White Paper on the subject in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday.

"It will be thoroughly probed by the CID. The State government will also refer the irregularities in cash transactions to the



N. Chandrababu Naidu

Enforcement Directorate (ED). There will be no political vendetta, but the government will take strict action on all those involved in the scam," Mr. Naidu said.

Of the ₹99,413-crore worth retail sales in the last five years, digital payments

were made only in respect of sales costing ₹615 crore, he said, adding "it is an irregular conduct of operation."

'Loss of ₹18,860 crore' Suspecting illegal monetary gains, Mr. Naidu alleged that Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy had floated benami distilleries and procured sub-standard liquor and beers from them through the A.P. State Beverages Corporation Limited.

"Due to the flawed and inconsistent policy brought by Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the State exchequer suffered loss of more than ₹18,860 crore between 2019 and 2024," the Chief Minister said.

After a week, traffic resumes on Gap road stretch near Munnar

The Hindu Bureau
IDUKKI

The traffic on the Gap road stretch of the Kochi-Dhanushkodi National Highway near Munnar resumed on Tuesday. According to officials, traffic on the stretch was banned after a landslide near Periyakanal on July 16. On July 20, the District Collector had instructed the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to clear the landslide debris from the Gap road stretch within two days. Following the directive, the NHAI cleared the debris on that day itself.

According to officials, the Udumbanchola tahsildar submitted a report to the Idukki Collector stating that the NHAI had already cleared the debris and the



Main link: A view of the Gap road stretch of Kochi-Dhanushkodi National Highway near Munnar. JOMON PAMPAPALLEY

road was ready to resume traffic.

However, a senior Revenue Department official said that traffic resumed on the stretch only on a trial basis and that the Collector had not yet officially issued an order to resume traffic on the stretch.

Meanwhile, tourism stakeholders said that the traffic ban on the stretch is affecting tourist arrivals in Munnar. They alleged that officials are imposing a traffic ban on the route whenever a heavy rain alert is issued, whether or not landslide is reported.

Two nursing students among five held with meth in Wayanad

The Hindu Bureau
KALPETTA

In a major drug haul at Bavalu on the Kerala-Karnataka boundary on Tuesday night, the Excise sleuths arrested five persons, including two nursing students, with 204 mg of methamphetamine crystal, a premium drug that also goes by the name meth.

The arrested are K.M. Faisal Razi, 23, of Chundale; Muhammed Azunul Shaduli, 23, of Muttill; Sobin Kuriakose, 23, of Puthur Vayal in the district; P.A. Muhammed Bava, 22, of Kothamanagalam in Ernakulam district; and Delbin

Shaji Joseph, 22, of Nilambur in Malappuram district. Muhammed Bava and Delbin Shaji Joseph are nursing students in Bengaluru.

From Bengaluru They were arrested while transporting the contraband from Bengaluru to Kerala for local sale in Wayanad district in a car, the Excise Department sources said. They procured the drug from Bengaluru at a cost of ₹2 lakh, the sources added.

The drug was kept in a small chamber under the steering wheel of the car, the sources said.

SC Bench seeks clarity on who has to hear contempt case over DDA tree felling

Don't want conflicting orders, says Bench headed by Justice Gavai taking note of two contempt proceedings pending before separate Benches regarding cutting of trees in Delhi's Ridge area

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Justice B.R. Gavai on Wednesday sought clarity about two separate contempt proceedings regarding the felling of trees by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in the protected Delhi Ridge area being heard at the same time by two different Benches.



The tree felling case is before the Justice B.R. Gavai Bench and another Bench of the apex court headed by Justice A.S. Oka. FILE PHOTO

The tree felling case is before Justice Gavai Bench and another Bench of the apex court headed by Justice A.S. Oka.

Justice Gavai noted that the Benches should not end up passing conflicting orders in the same case, and judicial propriety required a clarification on which Bench should continue to hear it.

Justice Gavai noted that though the contempt proceedings with regard to the

felling of trees were initiated by his Bench in April 2024, the other Bench had also started contempt proceedings on the issue in May.

"It would have been more appropriate for the other Bench to seek clarification from the Chief Justice of India before initiating the contempt proceedings," Justice Ga-

vai, heading the Bench comprising Justices P.K. Mishra and K.V. Viswanathan, observed.

It was noted that the Justice Gavai-led Bench had on February 8 last year directed that until further orders, the DDA shall not allot any land in the areas which are under consideration for being notified as a protected area.

It said to avoid the prospect of conflicting orders being passed by the two Benches, it is "appropriate that the matters pertaining to the Ridge area be heard by the same Bench".

"We are not touchy about any matter," Justice Gavai observed, adding, "let the CJ decide".

"CJI master of the roster" When one of the advocates said the contempt proceedings were initiated in separate matters, the Bench observed the appropriate course for any

Bench would have been to refer the matter to the CJ and get the order as to which Bench should hear it because, ultimately, "it is the Chief Justice who is the master of the roster".

"We don't want to say anything. On a question of propriety, when another Bench is already seized of the matter, whether the subsequent Bench could have looked into it?" the Bench said.

When the lawyer said the same action is a matter of contempt in two separate proceedings, the Bench observed, "Maybe... though the other Bench has not adhered to judicial propriety.."

In its February 2023 order, the apex court had noted that the Ridge in Delhi acts as a lung, which supplies oxygen to the citizens of the national capital and, therefore, the necessity to protect it cannot be undermined.

27 stranded in Cameroon return to Jharkhand

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Twenty-seven workers stranded in South Africa's Cameroon returned to Jharkhand on Wednesday courtesy the intervention of Chief Minister Hemant Soren.

One of the workers had posted their plight on X earlier.

He issued prompt instructions for the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development to step in.

Labour Minister Satyanand Bhokta and Gandey MLA Kalpana Murmu Soren welcomed the workers on their arrival in Giridih on Wednesday.

Among those stranded in South Africa, 18 are from Bokaro, four from Giridih and five from Hazaribagh. All these workers have been working there since March 29 this year.

On July 16, they expressed their desire to return to India as their wages were pending for the past four months.

Mr. Soren took cognisance of the matter and directed the department concerned to take necessary action.

Budget unfair to Delhi, Punjab: AAP; Centre spent ₹5.5 lakh crore on Capital in 11 years, says BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) continued to attack the Centre over the Union Budget and alleged that Delhi and Punjab had been treated unfairly. In response, the BJP claimed that the Central government had spent more than ₹5.5 lakh crore on the Capital over the past 11 years under various subheads and special schemes.

Addressing a press conference, AAP general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak said, "You (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) have discriminated against Delhi and Punjab because the governments in these States are not run by your allies." He added that Mr. Modi seemed to have made the Budget to save his government.

Mr. Pathak alleged that the BJP government considers the interests of the corporates but is not concerned about the plight of farmers and youth or about the education and health sectors.

"Forget about giving the minimum support price



Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva (left) said significant allocations had been made for the national capital in the health, transport, and housing sectors. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

guarantee to farmers, you have reduced their fertiliser subsidy," he added.

Countering the AAP leader, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said the Budget benefits every segment of society, including the youth, women, farmers and traders.

"AAP accused the Central government of reducing the budgetary allocation for health. But this year, the budget for the sector has increased by 12.59%. Similarly, the allocation for all Central government hospitals in Delhi, including AIIMS, has seen a nearly 10% jump," he said.

He added that the Centre had earmarked

₹53,000 crore for Delhi Metro, which transports 63 lakh people daily.

"The Central government has made significant investments in the housing sector in Delhi-NCR. Unfortunately, the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana are not reaching the city's poor because the [Arvind] Kejriwal government has not implemented it," Mr. Sachdeva said.

Delhi BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal, the national secretary general of the Confederation of All India Traders, said it was for the first time that the Union Budget had focused on employment, women, youth, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Global athletes will attend next Kashmir marathon: L-G

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

The J&K Lieutenant-Governor's administration on Wednesday announced

the hosting of a marathon for foreign and domestic athletes in the Valley later this year.

J&K L-G Manoj Sinha released the logo and web-

site of the marathon at the Kashmir International Convention Centre in Srinagar. He said the marathon was aimed at multiplying tourism potential in

Kashmir. The marathon will have two events – a 42-km full marathon, and a 21-km half marathon.

"Foreign and domestic athletes will participate.

There can be no better weather and atmosphere for a marathon than Kashmir. The event will open livelihood opportunities," Mr. Sinha said.

Haryana doctors begin hunger strike; indefinite stir to start from today

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

The office-bearers of the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association (HCMSA), a body representing government doctors in the State, began an indefinite hunger strike at Swasthya Bhavan in Sector-6 of Panchkula on Wednesday, accusing the State government of not keeping its word on fulfilling their demands, including better pay packages and greater promotion opportunities.

HCMSA president Rajesh Khyalia told *The Hindu* over phone that the Haryana government late in the evening had invited the association for talks on Thursday, but the doctors' body has decided to go ahead with its already announced indefinite strike,

including shutting down of emergency and post-mortem services, in all government hospitals across the State. Around 3,000 doctors across the State are expected to take part in the strike.

Mr. Khyalia, the association's vice-president Virender Kumar, and two district presidents – Mandeep Saini and Mandeep Kumar – sat on hunger strike outside the office of the Director General Health Services during the day.

The doctors are seeking four Assured Career Progression (ACP) increments on a par with the doctors in the Central government service and in States like Bihar in the fourth, ninth, 13th, and 20th year of service.

They are currently paid three increments.

Man sent to jail for 20 years for raping minor on the pretext of marriage

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court earlier this week awarded 20 years rigorous imprisonment to a man for abducting and raping a minor girl on the pretext of marriage.

The court also ordered the State to pay ₹10.5 lakh compensation to the victim who was 15 years old when the incident took place in 2022.

Additional Sessions Judge (POCSO), Susheel Bala Dagar of Rohini court, while awarding the punishment to the man, remarked that psychological scars of sexual abuse during childhood are indelible and hin-

der the proper physical and psychological development of the victim.

"Such persons like the convict mislead child victims into thinking that they are entering a legal marital union," the court said, and added, "By such allurements, the victim is enticed away from lawful guardianship as well as away from studies."

The court also pulled up the Delhi police for conducting a "shoddy investigation," saying that the investigating officer (IO) in the case failed to collect the first marriage documents of the convict "for the reasons best known to her", which led to a faulty probe.

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-Procurement Notice
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

No. PW/EE/NH/RMP/1-CB-Tender/2024-25-2347-98 Dated 19.07.2024
The Executive Engineer, NH Division HPPWD, Rampur on behalf of Governor of HP invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the work as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs)	Starting Date for downloading BID	Earnest money	Deadline for submission of bid	Opening of bid
1.	R/R damages on NH-05 Km 236/00 to 368/00 (SH-Filling Pot holes Patch work with Bituminous concert 40mm Between Km 245/00 to 254/00)	1256455	26.07.2024	25000/-	06.08.2024	06.08.2024

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

Executive Engineer, NH Division HPPWD Rampur Buzshahr, Tel. No. 01782-233214, e-mail ee-deh-hp@nic.in on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh
HP / 1007/24-25 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Telephone No. 01970233116, E-mail ID: ee-deh-hp@nic.in
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer Dehra Division HPPWD Dehra H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. invites the item rate bids in the electronic tendering system from the eligible class of contractors registered with HPPWD for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs)	Starting Date for downloading BID	Earnest money	Deadline for submission of bid	Tender Form Cost
1.	Construction of Aadarsh Gram Sukh Aashray Parisar / Complex at Jawalamukhi (Luthan) Tehsil Jawalamukhi Distt. Kangra HP (SH-C/O Building portion : Sanitary installation rain Harvesting tank & septic tank etc.	1,05,42,74,530.00	05.08.2024	Rs 2,10,86,000/-	13.08.2024	Rs 5000/-

The bidders are advised to note other details of tender from the department website www.hptenders.gov.in.

Executive Engineer, Dehra Division H.P.P.W.D., Dehra, Pin No. 177101, Tel. No. 01970-233116, e-mail- ee-deh-hp@nic.in on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh
HP / 1005/24-25 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

Office of Satna Smart City Development Limited (SSCDL)
1st Floor, 373/1, ICC Building, Collectorate Campus, Dhawari, Satna (M.P.), Pin-485001

E-TENDER NOTICE
Ref. No. _SSCDL/2024/PAN/50/408 Satna, Dated: 23/07/2024
Tender No: 2024_UAD_359269_1

Online tender through e-tendering is invited by Satna Smart City Development Limited (SSCDL), Satna, M.P. for Operation and Maintenance of smart LED with Web Enabled Centralized Control & Monitoring System for a period of 4 (Four) Years at Satna, Madhya Pradesh. The brief details of the project are as below:

- Document Download/Sale Start Date: 23.07.2024 18:00 Hrs
- Bid Submission Start Date: 23.07.2024, 18:30 Hrs
- Bid Submission Closing Date: 23.08.2024, 15:00 Hrs

For eligibility details, EMD and terms & condition of the tender please visit <https://mptenders.gov.in>

Executive Engineer
Satna Smart City Development Limited, Satna (M.P.)

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED
(CIN : U40108JH2013SGC001702)
Engineering Building, HEC, Dhurwa, Ranchi – 834004, Email:- gmrevenue2022@gmail.com

INVITING E-TENDER BID
NIT - 54/PR/JBVNL/2024-25
For selection of consultancy firm for "Supporting JBVNL in Monitoring and Implementation Support at HQ Level for Metering, Billing and Collection (MBC) Related Systems & Processes, Continuous assistance in Commercial related system Improvement & Continuous Regulatory Assistance in all Regulatory Matters"

Timelines for participating in the all the above e-tender is detailed below :

Sl. No.	Event	Timelines
i	Date of Publication of Notice in Newspaper	25.07.2024
ii	Start date & time for downloading the tender documents	From 25/07/2024 at 10:30 Hrs.
iii	Last date & time for submission of clarification, if any on the document for pre-bid meeting / Pre-bid Queries (Through E-mail Only)	Upto 31/07/2024 at 18:00 Hrs.
iv	Pre-bid meeting	On 01/08/2024 at 12:30 Hrs.
v	Last date & time of receipt of bid documents (Online)	Upto 14/08/2024 at 14:30 Hrs.
vi	Due date for opening of Technical Bid (Part-I)	14/08/2024 at 16:00 Hrs.

Bid uploading / opening will be through e-tendering norms only. The complete Tender documents can be downloaded through website www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in Bidder may contact help desk of e-Procurement system at the following web address: www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in

Note:- Pre-bid meeting shall be conducted at Conference Hall, JBVNL HQ, Ranchi at aforementioned date and time

Tendering Authority:
General Manager (Revenue) 9431708980, 7992276731 Sd/- General Manager (Revenue)

PR 330552 Jharkhand Bijlee Vitran Nigam Ltd (24-25)_D

दामोदर घाटी निगम / DAMODAR VALLEY CORPORATION
ई-प्रोसेसिंग पोर्टल: कोयंबटूर रोड, कोयंबटूर-700054 / DVC Towers, VIP Road, Kolkata - 700054

ADVERTISEMENT FOR ENGAGEMENT OF SR. ADVISOR (RAILWAY) IN DVC.
(Advt. No. PLR/Retired/2024/08 Dated : 24/07/2024)

Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC), a statutory organization, under the Ministry of Power, Government of India invites ONLINE applications from retired employees as Sr. Advisor (Railway) on Full-Time Contractual basis.

For details, applicants may kindly visit Career Section → Recruitment Notices at www.dvc.gov.in

Closing date of submission of online application – 15.08.2024. Interested applicants meeting the eligibility criteria have to register ONLINE and submit the application at the DVC website only. Any further information/corrigendum/ amendment in this regard shall be made available at the DVC website.

Executive Director (HR) For & on behalf of DVC
INF&PR/58/Recvt./24-25

Your feedback will keep us Cleaner, Sharper and Bolder

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Or write to us at customercare@thehindu.co.in

Scan the QR code to register your feedback

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FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR **you@world** THE HINDU

RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT PRASARAN NIGAM LIMITED
Notice Inviting Bid

Bids for Transportation with Loading, unloading & stacking (including weighing bills, toll taxes, Transit insurance) of Galvanized/non-Galvanized line/GSS material equipments from RVPN store at Jaipur/Bawar/Jodhpur to 220KV GSS Sakatpura, Kota in District-Kota and vice versa, Erection and Dismantle of 132KV and 132KV Circuit Breaker and Erection and Dismantle work for shifting of 132KV Bay of 220/132KV 160MVA Tr-1 on 132KV Bay No-17 to 18 (Spane Bay) at 220 KV GSS Sakatpura, Kota. Lilo of de-oll-sangod line are invited from interested bidders. Other Particulars of bid may be available on the Procurement Portal (<http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>) of the state; and RVPN departmental website: <http://energy.rajasthan.gov.in/rvpn>

UBN - VPN24255S0B00941, VPN2425WS0B00942, VPN2425WS0B00943, VPN2425WS0B00967 Superintending Engineer (T & C), Kota
Raj.Samwad/C/24/2717 RRVPN/TR-6271/2024

KARNATAKA STATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
No.1, Dr. Siddalaha Puranik Road, KHB Colony, Magadi Road, Bengaluru - 560079, Phone: +91-80-29619801, E-mail: md.ksmscl@gmail.com

TENDER NOTIFICATION
Ref: 1) Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/FW/HEARING AID/TND/10/2024-25 Date: 24-07-2024
Ref: 2) Tender Notification No: HFW/KSMSCL/EQPT/FW/HEARING AID/TND/10/2024-25 (IND-0145)Date:24/07/2024.

Nationwide Tender is invited through e-Tendering system under KTPP Act 1999 and Rules 2000 for the following tenders:

- Tender for Supply of Hearing Aid Under Family welfare Programme (Cochlear implant Scheme) programme.

The tenderers who have registered under e-Procurement department may participate through e-tendering system.

Details regarding EMD, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the Tender Document, which can be downloaded from the website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from 24-07-2024. The eligible tenderers shall submit their e-tenders under e-procurement platform for above mentioned tender. Further information if any may be obtained from this office.

Sd/- Managing Director
KSMSCL, Bengaluru.

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

The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Keylong (H.P.) invites e-tender on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following works through Online Process:-

Job No.	Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest Money	Time of completion
1.	Construction of Lift Irrigation scheme Dallang and Thorang in GP Gondhla Distt. L&S (HP) (SH-Site development, C/O infiltration gallery, C/O Sump well, C/O Desilting tank, C/O Delivery tank, C/O outlet chambers, C/O pump house (ie sanitary, electrical, septic tank and soakpit), Providing , laying, jointing and testing of rising main of various dia and C/O anchor block, Providing laying jointing and testing of HDPE pipe 140mm dia for main distribution and main stage, Supplying erection installation and testing of pumping machinery for booster and main stage.	3,42,76,789/-	3,75,268/-	Twelve Months

Date of submission of e-tender From 24/07/2024 at 10:30 AM to 05/08/2024 at 05:00 PM.

Physical submission of tender fee if not paid online Upto 05.00 PM 05/08/2024

Date of opening of Eligibility Criteria 06/08/2024 at 11:30 AM

The tender forms and other detailed conditions can be downloaded from the portal <http://hptenders.gov.in>

Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Keylong
HP / 1014/24-25 HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPARK

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT
Mr. N SELVA KUMAR
PH: 9820350726
selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

South East Central Railway
E-Tender Notice for miscellaneous work
Srl. No. (1) E-Tender No.DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-73-24-25, Date: 15/07/2024.
Work: Execution of Civil Zonal works between Akaltara (Ex) to Baradwar (Ex) under the jurisdiction of Sr. Section Engineer (Works) Champa for the period ending 30.06.2025.
Tender Value (In Rs.): ₹ 1,02,23,677/-, EMD (In Rs.): ₹ 2,01,100/-, Completion Period: Upto 30/06/2025.

Srl. No. (2) E-Tender No.DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-74-24-25, Date: 15/07/2024.
Work: Execution of Civil Zonal works between Champa (Ex) to Gevra Road (In) under the jurisdiction of Sr. Section Engineer (Works) Champa for the period ending 30.06.2025.
Tender Value (In Rs.): ₹ 90,22,330/-, EMD (In Rs.): ₹ 1,80,500/-, Completion Period: Upto 30/06/2025.

Srl. No. (3) E-Tender No.DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-75-24-25, Date: 15/07/2024.
Work: Execution of Civil Zonal works between Baradwar (In) to Robertson (Ex) under the jurisdiction of Sr. Section Engineer (Works) Raigarh for the period ending 30.06.2025.
Tender Value (In Rs.): ₹ 70,31,408/-, EMD (In Rs.): ₹ 1,40,600/-, Completion Period: Upto 30/06/2025.

Srl. No. (4) E-Tender No.DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-76-24-25, Date: 15/07/2024.
Work: Execution of Civil Zonal works between Robertson (In) to Raigarh (In) under the jurisdiction of Sr. Section Engineer (Works) Raigarh for the period ending 30.06.2025.
Tender Value (In Rs.): ₹ 99,78,339/-, EMD (In Rs.): ₹ 1,99,600/-, Completion Period: Upto 30/06/2025.

Srl. No. (5) E-Tender No.DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-77-24-25, Date: 15/07/2024.
Work: Execution of Civil Zonal works between Raigarh (Ex) to Belpahar (In) under the jurisdiction of Sr. Section Engineer (Works) Brajrajnagar for the period ending 30.06.2025.
Tender Value (In Rs.): ₹ 90,00,285/-, EMD (In Rs.): ₹ 1,80,000/-, Completion Period: Upto 30/06/2025.

Srl. No. (6) E-Tender No.DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-78-24-25, Date: 15/07/2024.
Work: Execution of Civil Zonal works between Belpahar (Ex) to Jharsuguda (Ex) under the jurisdiction of Sr. Section Engineer (Works) Brajrajnagar for the period ending 30.06.2025.
Tender Value (In Rs.): ₹ 90,00,285/-, EMD (In Rs.): ₹ 1,80,000/-, Completion Period: Upto 30/06/2025.

Start date of Submission of Tender: From 26-07-2024, Last date of Submission of Tender: Upto 11.00 hrs. on 09-08-2024. The complete information of above e-Tender, Notices is available over websites [https:// www.ireps.gov.in](https://www.ireps.gov.in) Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders.

Div. Railway Manager (Engg.) S.E.C.Railway, Bilaspur
CPR/10/PR/148



Cleansing NEET

Next year, the test must have safeguards against malpractice and inefficiency

What comes undone is best redone. The latest development in the prolonged National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2024 saga has played out in the court, and will answer the question raised initially – the unusually high number of toppers this year. The Supreme Court of India's ruling on the right answer to a particular physics question in the NEET paper, based on the expert opinion of IIT Delhi professionals, has brought down the number of toppers from 61 to a more reasonable number – 17. The wrong answer for the disputed question was chosen reportedly by four lakh students, including 44 in the list of toppers. As a result, all these students will lose five marks each. Ruling that there could be only one correct answer, the Court directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to revise the scores based on the correct answer. It also emerged during the hearing that the wrong answer for the question was actually present in the older (until 2021) NCERT textbooks. The Court had earlier refused to cancel the entire NEET, which over 23 lakh applicants took. While the scheduled date of counselling, July 24, is past already, and with the NTA having to re-tally the marks with the revised answer, the counselling has been delayed again, but will take place as soon as possible.

While the scenario, as it stands today, seems ostensibly resolved sufficiently to let the process move forward, the truth is that an unprecedented number of violations have occurred in a manner that vitiated, possibly for good, the faith in NEET as a fail-safe entrance route. From charges of paper leaks, giving out the wrong question papers, damaged answer keys, impersonation by students, and an analysis of marks that showed an unusually high number of toppers from certain centres in the country, NEET-UG 2024 has been a string of bad news this year. Notably, the interventions to right the course have come mostly from the judiciary, with the executive stopping short of initiating significant or decisive action required to clean its Augean stables. For starters, the extraordinary emphasis that has come to be placed on medicine as a career choice, with over 23 lakh students hoping to compete for over one lakh MBBS seats, will have to be dialled down, with a healthy promotion of other scientific streams as viable career options. The government also has no option but to unwind the entire spool, and cast it out if it must, reorienting all systems so that the next NEET can be conducted professionally, and with adequate safeguards in place to prevent malpractice or inefficiency.

Not in order

The directives on display of names on Kanwar Yatra route must be withdrawn

The Supreme Court of India on Monday stopped the enforcement of directives issued by the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments that required food stalls on the route of the *Kanwar Yatra* – an increasingly popular pilgrimage that Shiva devotees undertake – to prominently exhibit the names and other identity details of their owners and employees. Petitioners argued that the directives would result in discriminatory outcomes, besides negating the secular character of the country. The Court accepted the need for urgent judicial intervention in the matter and issued notices to the States that fall in the route – Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh. The case will come up for hearing again on Friday. The *yatra* takes place during the Hindu month of Shraavan when those who worship Shiva – popularly known as *Kanwariyas* or *Bhole* – walk hundreds of kilometres carrying pots of Ganga *jal*, known as *kanwar* (a structure made of bamboo that has containers suspended on both sides of a pole), to the temples in their home town. The *yatra* is increasingly popular, particularly among the Dalit and Other Backward Classes in the Hindi heartland. The police in Muzaffarnagar, western U.P., were the first to issue the controversial directive last week, which they said was done to 'prevent any untoward incident'.

The discriminatory nature of this move became clear soon, and was criticised by the Opposition and National Democratic Alliance allies. Amid the criticism, U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended the requirement across the entire route of the pilgrimage in the State. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in neighbouring Uttarakhand followed suit. Reports emerged of Hindu hotel owners being asked by the administration to remove their Muslim workers; there were also accounts of harassment of meat shop owners. BJP allies, the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and the Janata Dal (United), joined the Opposition Congress and the Samajwadi Party in calling out the brazenly communal move of the BJP governments. Many pilgrimages in India are undertaken and organised jointly by people of different faiths, and as it turns out, there are Muslims too who trek with Hindus to take part in this unique form of Shiva worship. All along the route, they have, for years, been served by Muslim shop owners and even volunteers. Muslim artisans make a living by making the *kanwar* in some parts. The economic, cultural and social aspects of the *Kanwar Yatra* – as with any other pilgrimage – are shared by people of various sects and religions. The government directive was unreasonable and achieved nothing other than promoting communal enmity. U.P. and Uttarakhand should withdraw their directives without waiting for the decision of the Court.

Budget 2024 — long on intent, short on details

The short Budget speech by the Union Finance Minister is marked by clarity on three aspects. First, the intentions and vision for Viksit Bharat@2047 are spelt out through the nine priority areas, a long-term vision, to which we expect that subsequent Budgets would adhere, to accomplish these goals. Second, there is an explicit recognition of the problem of unemployment in the economy. Addressing this has been a challenge and the Budget devotes considerable space in listing out initiatives towards generating employment. Third, the compulsions of a coalition government surface in parts, but are hidden in some of the specificities. These three have guided the strategy and the approach of the Budget. On the face of it, the policy slant reveals good intentions, but the ways and the means to accomplish the ambitious goals set out are not divulged, casting a shadow on the possibility of realising the targets set.

A signal of continuity

The fiscal arithmetic and the macro-policy stance in the Budget signal continuity and a carrying on with fiscal consolidation efforts. The overall fiscal deficit has been lowered to 4.9% compared to 5.1% targeted in the interim Budget. A large part of the surplus received from the Reserve Bank of India has been used to buttress fiscal prudence. The anticipated reiteration of the reduction in the fiscal deficit to below 4.5% of GDP in FY2026 is welcome. The new medium-term fiscal consolidation path has been linked to a reduction in the debt/GDP ratio instead of continued compression of the fiscal deficit/GDP ratio. This will allow the government flexibility to chart an appropriate fiscal course that builds in higher capital spending as well as support to meeting climate goals in an uncertain global environment.

The size of the Budget has gone up only marginally. This also means that the overall borrowing programme of the government is almost unchanged – in fact, it has come down marginally though the cut in borrowings is smaller than what could have been possible with the buoyant revenue collections.

While there has been a slight increase in overall expenditure, capital expenditure remains more or less unchanged. There are two



M. Suresh Babu

Director, Madras Institute of Development Studies

The policy slant highlights good intentions, but the ways and the means to accomplish the ambitious goals set out are hazy

discomforting trends on the expenditure side. First, the Budget estimates for 2024-25 show only marginal increase in allocation in most of the items of expenditure compared to that of 2023-24. In fact in some of the key items, it shows a decrease. In the case of commerce, industry and energy, we find a decline in Budget estimates for 2024-25. Second, in many items of expenditure, the revised estimates for 2023-24 are lower than the Budget estimates for the same year. Social welfare and scientific departments are notable in this context.

Effective capital expenditure, which is capital expenditure plus the grant in aid for creation of capital assets, have come down when we compare revised estimates and provisional actuals for 2023-24. The decline in revised estimates compared to Budget estimates is an indication of the lack of capacity of the government to spend, which is likely to undermine the expected multiplier effects of such expenditures. Thus, we need to wait and watch as to how much of the proposed outlays are utilised. Further, the same levels of capital expenditure imply that the government would bank more on private investments, as indicated in the Economic Survey, which has not yet registered a significant increase in recent years.

Consumption and employment

The Budget relies on two measures to bolster demand and increase private consumption. It takes the route of tinkering with the new income-tax regime to leave slightly more disposable incomes for a section of taxpayers, which is expected to stimulate demand. Given the growth in indirect tax collections, there was more room for income-tax reliefs, which could have been useful to not only stimulate demand but also increase dwindling household savings. This is an opportunity missed. Second, the Budget expects employment growth to take place, imparting more incomes, and, hence, higher demand in the economy.

The internship scheme, the direct thrust on channelling funds to first-time employees with commensurate benefits to companies to incentivise a hiring of more people and providing salary top up for first time employed are unlikely to create more jobs as they do not address the

questions of social aspirations and technological changes which directly impinge labour market outcomes. Moreover, implementing these schemes is not straightforward. The internship scheme has the additional risk of becoming a short-term urban employment programme, which only creates a pool of the unemployed in the future.

Employment growth is also expected to take place with the revival of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector through the credit route with a guarantee scheme being launched, besides asking banks to have their own models for lending that is not linked with collateral. Assistance to States such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand is also expected to give an indirect push to investment and employment along with the thrust to housing in urban and rural areas.

It needs to be noted that MSMEs need to have not only credit but also a conducive environment to operate for their growth. Hence, the efficacy of providing only credit and leaving the rest to market forces might not generate the desired results.

The omissions

Barring the announcement of tax benefits for Indian start-ups and their investors, including scrapping the contentious angel tax for all classes of investors and aligning capital gains rates between listed and unlisted equity and the increased limit of Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency Ltd. (MUDRA) loans from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh, the big push for the industrial sector is conspicuously absent in the Budget. Neither was there any mention of the Railways, PLI Scheme, Gati Sakthi and the Census. The list of omissions could be longer, but a lack of clear initiatives towards the education and health sectors to tap demographic dividend might not augur well with the vision of 2047. Equally important is to strike a balance between cities and rural economy and to make a distinction between jobs and internships. With the macroeconomy well poised at the moment, some bold steps and details of the journey to 2047 could have been outlined.

The views expressed are personal

An outlining of urban transformation strategies

Cities are home to about 50 crore people, accounting for about 36% of India's population. The urban population has been growing at a steady pace of 2% to 2.5% annually. The ever-growing pace of urbanisation in India calls for sustained investments, with a vision and determination. The maiden Budget of the new government has recognised cities as the growth hubs and offered many options and opportunities for the planned development and the growth of cities.

The issue of housing

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) has been under implementation since 2015 and has provided as many as 85 lakh housing units to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)-Middle Income Groups (MIG) categories of population, with an investment of about ₹8 lakh crore. Of this, a quarter has been provided by the central government and the remaining by the beneficiaries and State governments. The Budget has proposed to give a further push to the scheme by announcing support for the construction of another one crore such units in urban areas with an investment of ₹10 lakh crore, which will include central assistance of ₹2.2 lakh crore in the next five years, against which ₹30,171 crore has been provided in the Budget for the current year. A part of this allocation will be available to provide interest subsidy to facilitate loans at affordable rates.

The migrant population working in industries has been surviving in general in slums and yearning for a roof over their heads and a functional housing unit close to their workplaces. The Budget has announced new rental housing with dormitory-type accommodation for industrial workers. This is envisaged to be developed in public-private partnership (PPP) mode with upfront financial support under the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme. This is to the extent of 20% from the central government, with the possibility of similar support from the State government.

The core infrastructure requirement for cities includes water supply, sanitation, roads and sewerage systems. Specific to the cities, the Atal



Sudhir Krishna

former Secretary, Urban Development, Government of India

State governments, their municipalities and also citizens will have to take forward the provisions outlined in the Budget

Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) provides ₹8,000 crore, which, by itself, may not appear to be very substantial. However, the Finance Minister has announced the availability of the VGF window, provided that the project is taken up as a commercial venture in PPP Mode. Most cities have, over the years, got exposed to the PPP model, and it should be possible to speed up the development of such core infrastructure, where it is unavailable and upgrade it where it exists but is inadequate.

The Budget Speech also mentions a huge investment of ₹11.11 lakh crore for capex in infrastructure. While this would include highways and many other sectors, cities can also make efforts to partake a share in it. Similarly, a provision of ₹1.50 lakh crore is made available to States as an interest-free loan for infrastructure development. States could use this window also, for cities.

The Smart Cities Mission, that was launched in 2015, was provided budgetary support of ₹8,000 crore in 2023-24, which has been scaled down to ₹2,400 crore in 2024-25, to take care of the remnant commitments. However, a new window, the National Urban Digital Mission (NUDM), has been opened in this Budget, with a provision of ₹1,150 crore, with a focus on the digitisation of property and tax records and their management, with GIS mapping. These will help urban local bodies in managing their finances better, and also help property owners.

On city planning

The Budget has declared the intention of focusing on the planned development of cities. Municipalities would get the normal 'Finance Commission Grant' of ₹25,653 crore. In addition, a provision of ₹500 crore has been made for the incubation of new cities. With the development of mass rapid transit systems, cities can embark on transit-oriented development, wherein transit hubs can be surrounded by denser development without creating a traffic overload on roads. Moreover, a well-designed mobility plan can conveniently connect cities with their peri-urban areas and 'new cities'. Accordingly, the Budget

has announced an enhanced focus on economic and transit planning, with the orderly development of peri-urban areas utilising town planning schemes. The Budget has also proposed encouraging electric bus systems for cities and has provided ₹1,300 crore for it. E-buses offer an economical and eco-friendly operating system, but the main challenge is their higher upfront cost. However, with this budgetary support, it should get going.

Solid waste management

Solid waste management (SWM) is perhaps the biggest challenge that most cities face today. The Budget has announced a special thrust to introduce bankable projects for SWM in collaboration with State government and financial institutions. States and municipalities can also make use of the VGF for this purpose. Cities such as Indore, Madhya Pradesh, have shown the way in making SWM a financially viable proposition.

The Street Vendors Act, 2014, was enacted by Parliament to regulate street vendors in public areas and protect their rights. It also envisaged the preparation of street-vending plans and the creation of street-vending zones, with a view to make street-vending a healthy and safe option for consumers and vendors. The Budget has proposed to develop 100 weekly 'haats' or street food hubs in select cities. Perhaps States need not feel constrained with the number and can facilitate all cities in preparing street-vending plans and developing street vending 'haats' in various parts of the city, according to felt needs.

While the Budget has made a slew of provisions, financial as well as procedural, to push for planned urbanisation, cities, represented by the municipalities, and guided by the respective State governments, will have to show the vision and the determination to incorporate all the resources coming not only from the Union Budget but also augmented by their own resources.

Above all, the participation of citizens would remain the bedrock for the success of any city's development strategy.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Union Budget

The Budget does have some trace of political optics. Though the tax regime does give some relief to the tax-payer, the question remains whether the new tax regime encourages the 'saving tendency', as in the old regime where savings did occupy a good space. It is an undeniable fact that savings are a must for a robust economy.

S. Seshadri,

Chennai

In a visual nutshell

The Budget issue (July 23) was a treat with its detailed

analysis on the pros and cons of the Union Budget. But the one thing that caught my attention on opening *The Hindu* in the morning was the lead cartoon. In his uncanny whimsical manner in depicting political characters, the visualiser has brought out the feelings of the common man on the Union Budget.

Saravanan Krubapuri,
Chennai

In the jungle of write-ups and dry statistics, peppered with reactions from industry leaders showering praises

on the Budget, most of which are presumptuous anyway, it were the cartoons that came as a breath of fresh air. While each one of these cartoons deserves praise for its message and artistry, the pocket cartoon ('Social sector' page, Page 7) deserves special mention.

P.S. Lourdenadhan,
Bengaluru

Despite all the analyses, it was the pocket cartoons that succeeded in effectively conveying the concerns of the general public and the youth. The cartoonist

deserves much praise.

Jiji Panicker K.,
Angadickal, Alappuzha, Kerala

More than the write-ups, your cartoons conveyed the pith and the substance of the Budget. You proved that a picture is worth a thousand words.

K. Pradeep,
Chennai

C.T. Kurien

Professor C.T. Kurien was a legend who was productively invested in so many students, especially the poor and the marginalised from rural India. Though an alumni of the Madras Christian College (MCC), but not his student, I am one of many who admired him. Alumni,

even today, shower praise on him for his contributions to the cause of India's speedy development. It was the first Indian Principal of MCC, Chandran Devanesan, hailing from then rustic Palayamkottai in Tamil Nadu, who recognised the spark in this great intellectual – as one eager to improve the lot of the toiling masses.

Albert Devakaram,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Corrections & Clarifications

The last paragraph of a report, "Urban, rural land reforms by Centre; land records to be digitised with GIS mapping" (Budget 2024, 'Infrastructure', July 24, 2024), mentioned the expert's name as Deepa Jha. It should have been Deepika Jha.

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A Budget that places health on the margins

With the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic behind us (though the World Health Organization warns that the virus has still not vanished), the Union Budget expectedly shifted focus to levers of economic growth such as infrastructure and employment. It was also hoped that the recognition of population health as a vital investment for accelerating as well as protecting economic growth would see continued investment in strengthening our health systems. In the Interim Budget, the Finance Minister had announced the government's plans to "encourage" HPV vaccination to girls (to prevent cervical cancer), create a U-WIN programme for improving coverage of the routine immunisation programme, and include ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers as be-

neficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) health insurance programme. These have not been elaborated or presented as line items in the main Budget presented on June 23.

Comparisons

An increase in programme allocations from Budget to Budget must be calculated by comparing the budgetary estimate (BE) of this year with the BE of last year and not with the revised estimate (RE) for last year, which also features in the Budget. RE is the money actually spent, and indicates inability of the programme to efficiently spend the money, and not the actual need. A comparison of the BE for health in this year's Budget with the RE of last year suggests that there was an increase of nearly 12%, which is an erroneous estimate of what the programme will



A hospital in Alluri Sitarama Raju district, Andhra SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

actually get as a raise.

By comparing only the BEs of 2023-24 and 2025-25, we note an increase of only 1.98% for the overall Health Ministry budget, 1.16% for the National Health Mission (NHM), and 1.4% for PMJAY. Given the need to expand coverage and enhance the impact of these two flagship programmes of Ayush-

man Bharat, these increases are disappointingly modest. Many of our national programmes are steered by NHM, which is also responsible for strengthening rural and urban primary care as well as the district hospitals. Apart from the need to make child immunisation universal, the danger of tuberculosis (for which India has set an aspirational elimination date of 2025) and the rapidly rising rates of non-communicable diseases require a better resourced and structurally strengthened NHM.

The goal of having every Indian protected by universal health coverage (our target for 2030) cannot be realised if even the government-funded PMJAY programme is unable to become more inclusive. The recent announcement that it will be extended to cover all elderly persons appears untenable if the programme has a minimal

The goal of having every Indian protected by universal health coverage cannot be realised if even PMJAY is unable to become more inclusive

budgetary increase.

A missed opportunity

While an increase in new medical colleges was mentioned, the need to invest in building a large multi-layered, multi-skilled workforce was not acknowledged. The energetic thrust for employment generation and skill-building must recognise that the health sector represents an area of great need and opportunity, especially for young persons.

It is laudable that customs duties have been waived on three an-

ti-cancer drugs. Price controls are also needed for many other drugs. Pooled procurement, with monopsonic power of price negotiation, can markedly reduce the prices of drugs procured not only by public sector institutions, but also by private healthcare institutions which are accredited to government-funded health insurance schemes. The Budget missed an opportunity to establish such mechanisms.

Investment in climate-resilient agriculture is a welcome budgetary commitment, at a juncture where the quantity and quality of staple crops are likely to be severely affected by global warming. Diversification of agriculture to climate-resilient crops will not only provide nutrition security, but will also be climate smart in reducing the use of water, pesticide, energy and release of greenhouse gases.



K. Srinath Reddy

honorary distinguished professor at the Public Health Foundation of India

The government's focus is on ease of paying taxes

While providing primacy to growth with inclusion, the Budget attempts to infuse a new momentum to the economy and strengthen India's resilient ecosystem so that the country emerges as a growth engine of the world.

An overarching theme

An important focus of the Budget is simplification and rationalisation of the tax structure. The document has spelled out the contours to achieve this, while trying to minimise disputes and expand the tax net. 'Ease of doing business' is an overarching theme behind the Budget tax proposals.

In the interest of moving towards a common understanding on the OECD BEPS (Base Erosion and Profit Shifting) Action Plan, the government has withdrawn

the equalisation levy of 2% on e-commerce transactions. This demonstrates the government's participation in the initiative to create an international framework to combat tax avoidance. The proposals to expand the scope of safe harbour rules, streamline transfer pricing assessment procedure, and reduce the corporate tax rate on foreign companies from 40% to 35%, as suggested by CII, are expected to promote ease of international taxation, improve investor sentiment, and further attract foreign investments in the economy.

The angel tax has outlived its utility and has rightly been abolished. This move will ensure the orderly growth of the Indian startup ecosystem, resolve the problem of dip in funding, and give confidence to investors and entrepreneurs to invest and build from India, as suggested by CII to the go-



Gold jewellery at a shop in Kolkata. AFP

vernment before the Budget.

CII has been advocating the rationalisation and simplification of the Withholding Tax regime under the Income Tax Act. Decriminalisation of some TDS (tax deducted at source) offences; the SOPs (standard operating procedures) and compounding guidelines for TDS

defaults; and rejig in the existing TDS rates under certain categories are welcome moves in this direction, thereby enhancing ease of doing business.

The changes in the capital gains tax regime have been brought in the interest of rationalisation. So far as the removal of indexation benefit in the calculation of long-term capital gains tax is concerned, industry would look forward to seeing this move help the agenda of tax certainty and simplification.

Raising the standard deduction and increasing the tax slabs under the new regime, while increasing the deduction for family pension and the new pension scheme are positive steps towards providing tax relief to middle-class individuals, thereby pushing consumption and demand in the economy.

As a push towards the govern-

'Ease of doing business' is the overarching theme behind the tax proposals in the Budget

ment's agenda for simplification and rationalisation, the new scheme of block assessment for search cases and reducing the time limit for which reassessment can be done are pertinent. The proposal to introduce the 'Vivad se Vishwas Scheme, 2024' for settlement of pending appeals would go a long way in reducing litigation and releasing amounts stuck under tax disputes. Digitisation of major taxpayer services is a welcome move, in light of the increased need for digitisation and ease of doing business.

Customs duty rates

On the customs front, the govern-

ment continues to focus on promoting domestic manufacturing and helping India get onto the global value chain, thereby boosting exports. Continuation of rationalisation of customs duty rates and simplification of compliance would enhance ease of doing business, removal of duty inversion, and reduction of disputes.

CII applauds the government for accepting industry's call for waiver of interest and penalty on late payment of GST (Goods and Services Tax) and exclusion of cash balance lying in the cash register of the taxpayers for calculation of interest.

The Budget ticks all the boxes for boosting competitiveness, growth, and promoting tax reforms. Overall, the Budget has delivered beyond expectations, while keeping an eye on much-warranted realism.



Chandrajit Banerjee

Director General, CII

A big step towards the transformation of various sectors

The 2024-25 Budget is a forward-thinking proposal with several commendable initiatives aimed at driving India's economic growth and social progress.

Against the backdrop of 8% GDP growth in FY24, the Budget allocated ₹1.48 lakh crore towards job creation, employment and skilling. While the focus of earlier Budgets was on manufacturing, it is heartening to see that skilling took centre stage this time. This shows a decisive step towards creating an economy that is built strongly around the service sector.

The past success of strong services and the highly successful Global Capability Centres have shown that the service sector can not only drive GDP growth, but also elevate per capita income. Importantly, it can enhance em-

ployees' health and well being.

The Budget also paved the way for India's energy transformation. It focused on a range of initiatives - from solar panel manufacturing and installation to a strong push for nuclear energy. As it allocates ₹89,287 crore towards crucial sectors, this Budget represents a significant step towards the transformation of various sectors, and thereby towards the creation of an inclusive and dynamic economy.

Accessibility and affordability

We applaud the government's decision to exempt certain goods from customs duty. Three life-saving cancer medications have been exempted from customs duty. This will make essential treatments and technologies more accessible and affordable. It will greatly aid the patient and reduce for them the



An X-ray. GETTY IMAGES

barrier of cost in accessing time-bound, life-saving solutions.

Customs duty has also been exempted for components of X-ray tubes and digital detectors for advanced medical equipment. This move is expected to make these technologies more affordable and

accessible, while also enhancing domestic capabilities and keeping pace with global advancements. The emphasis on aligning customs duty with domestic capacity addition under the phased manufacturing programme will further create a more conducive environment for startups, fostering growth and innovation.

The Budget introduced a framework with nine priorities focusing on leveraging advanced technology and fostering collaboration between the government and private sector to promote growth and innovation. A crucial element of these reforms is the incorporation of state-of-the-art technology and the creation of databases to enhance efficiency and accessibility. By staying current with technological developments, these measures are poised to bring substan-

Internships and research are important to develop a highly skilled workforce

tial benefits to providers and consumers alike. Effective collaboration between private organisations will be essential for realising the full potential of these reforms. India spends just 0.7% of its GDP on research. The private sector needs to see that as a huge space and collaborate with the government to co-create the future.

Women's participation

According to a report by McKinsey, India can increase its 2025 GDP, estimated at \$4.83 trillion, by 16%-60% simply by enabling women to participate in the economy on par with men. The government's focus this Budget on boost-

ing women's participation in the workforce with targeted initiatives such as hostels, creches, and skilling programmes is an encouraging and right step in that direction.

The focus on skilling is particularly noteworthy. Internships and research are important to develop a highly skilled workforce. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and hands-on experience, the Budget aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application.

This Budget reflects the government's commitment towards building a healthier and stronger economy. By prioritising our demographic dividend, encouraging public-private partnerships, and investing in research and development, the government is laying the foundation for sustainable economic growth.



Suneeta Reddy

Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group

Prioritising inclusivity and fiscal prudence

There was a lot of anticipation before this Budget. As the first major public policy announcement of the new government, it was expected that the Budget would lay down a plan of action for the following five years of the government's approach towards the larger national vision of Viksit Bharat@2047. Further, while the economy is performing well, there were admittedly a few areas that merited attention, employment being the foremost.

The Finance Minister announced that the Budget would focus on employment, skilling, MSMEs, and the middle class. With the nine priority areas that followed, she articulated the economic policy framework through which the government wishes to bring in the transformation that would accelerate the journey towards Viksit Bharat@2047. By addressing the near-term challenges while keeping an eye on the long term, the government has ensured that this Budget is growth-oriented, inclusive, and will create op-

portunities for all sections.

Areas of focus

The first is the focus on agriculture. The world over, the impact of climate change is seen the most in the farm sector. With rise in inflation of agri-products being linked to adverse climate events, it was pertinent that India double up efforts on developing climate-resilient seed varieties. The Budget brings in this focus with a comprehensive review of agri-research set up in the country to increase productivity and introduce climate-resilient seed varieties. Additionally, national missions for pulses and oilseeds will be strengthened and greater impetus would be given to set up large-scale clusters for vegetable production near major consumption centres. These steps would help in building self-reliance, bring in stability in the incomes of farmers, and also benefit consumers by arresting the occasional price spikes due to import dependence and fragmented supply chains domestically.

The second is the priority ac-



National missions for pulses and oilseeds are to be strengthened THEE HINDU

corded to employment and skilling. The government has announced a comprehensive package of three schemes that offer employment-linked incentives. These will boost employment generation both in the manufacturing and services sectors and benefit lakhs of youth.

Additionally, the initiative to set up many more working women hostels in the country and creches for care support in partnership with the private sector will facilitate greater participation of wo-

men in the workforce. An increase in female labour force participation rate can be an additional lever for our country's growth, and FICCI had suggested strengthening of the care economy ecosystem in the country in its economic agenda for the new government.

The third is the comprehensive set of measures outlined for the MSME sector. Finance is the lifeblood for any industrial unit, and this is more so for the MSMEs. In a national survey that FICCI undertook last year amongst MSMEs, availability of credit on reasonable terms and without collateral were the keys asks. By announcing a new credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs in the manufacturing sector, guiding public sector banks to develop internal assessment models for credit evaluation of MSMEs basis their digital footprints, and having a mechanism in place that would ensure flow of credit to MSMEs even during periods of stress will provide a lot of comfort to MSME units. FICCI is of the view that with these changes, underwriting models will improve

The Budget shows the government's approach towards the larger national vision of Viksit Bharat@2047

and the cost of credit to MSMEs will come down. Another notable inclusion, which is also a FICCI suggestion, was the lowering of annual turnover threshold for registration on TreDS platform from ₹500 crore to ₹250 crore.

The fourth area includes proposals that focus on sustainability. Promotion of small modular reactors for nuclear energy, continuous support to the national roof top solar programme, dedicated projects for water supply, sewage treatment and solid waste management in large cities are all welcome measures. Additionally, the setting up of a Critical Minerals Mission will ensure that we are able to access with certainty these minerals which are important for meeting our sustainability goals.

The fifth is the partnership with

state to broaden and deepen factor market reforms. FICCI has ardently advocated the need to work closely with States for ushering in reforms in areas like land, labour, and power. These have a bearing on the overall cost of production in the country and we are encouraged by the government's indication to pursue the next generation reforms with State governments as partners for promoting overall national development.

Deftness on fiscal side

Finally, the government needs to be congratulated for the deftness displayed on the fiscal side. The downward revision in projected fiscal deficit for 2024-25 to 4.9% from 5.1% announced in the Interim Budget reflects the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation. This will bode well for India's external ratings.

The Budget has articulated a clear vision and identified priorities which will be the foundation for India's continued growth and development. The focus must now shift to implementation.



Subhrajant Panda

Immediate Past President, FICCI

Text & Context

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NEWS IN NUMBERS

Jump in intraday stock traders between FY2019 and FY2023

300 In per cent. The number of intraday traders in India's equity cash market jumped 300% between fiscal years 2019 and 2023 when seven out of 10 were making losses, SEBI said. REUTERS

The losses of BSNL narrow in the fiscal year of 2024

5,371 in ₹ crore. As a result of measures taken by the Centre, BSNL/MTNL have started earning operating profits from FY2020-21, Minister of State for Communications said. PTI

Amount saved in cybercrime cases via new reporting system

2,400 in ₹ crore. Over ₹2,400 crore was saved in more than 7.6 lakh cyber crime cases due to 'Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System'. PTI

The number of schools closed in Pakistan due to heat

1 in lakh. Temperatures in Pakistan peaked at more than 50°C in parts of rural Sindh. Despite contributing less than 1% to greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan has experienced severe weather-related disasters recently. AFP

Amount for depositors of Sahara Group of Coop Societies so far

362 in ₹ crore. Cooperation Minister Amit Shah informed Parliament that the amount was disbursed to over 4.2 lakh depositors. PTI

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On increase in electricity tariff in T.N.

Has tariff rise become a constant practice? Why are Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises protesting the rise in electricity tariffs in Tamil Nadu? Apart from tariff hikes, why was the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited in the limelight recently?

EXPLAINER

T. Ramakrishnan

The story so far:

In July 15, the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC) announced an average hike of 4.83% for domestic and all other consumers. The increase came into effect retrospectively from July 1. The Commission waited for the Lok Sabha and Vikravandi Assembly byelection results before announcing the tariff increase, even as it indicated, in its tariff order of September 2022, that the new tariff will come to effect from July 1 every year. Even though the previous increase of 2.18% was made effective from July 1, 2023 for various types of consumers, the State government absorbed the burden of the increase for most of the consumers, including in the domestic category, which accounts for around 2.3 crore consumers.

Why has the tariff been increased?
The genesis for the present revision can be traced back to the TNERC's tariff order of September 2022 when it was decided to adopt a multi-year tariff framework, beginning from FY2022-23 to 2026-27. The Commission had noted that considering the trend in Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) rates which were in the range of 4.9% to 6.3%, between 2018 and 2022, the CPI index seemed to be a convenient fit. At the time, the panel also decided that irrespective of the inflation rate, the actual annual increase would be capped at 6%. Besides, the State government's support to the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited or TANGEDCO (now called Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited or TNPDC) has been on the rise for the last few years. For instance, the figures of tariff subsidy and grants, which were at ₹8,876.36 crore and ₹11,671.06 crore (totally ₹20,547.42 crore) during 2021-22, rose to ₹14,976.42 crore and ₹17,127.18



Feeling the heat: AIADMK cadres stages a demonstration condemning the government for the electricity tariff hike in Madurai on July 23. ASHOK R

crore (₹32,103.6 crore) during 2023-24. An official said the increase would fetch an additional revenue of ₹2,720 crore and that the power utility was still expected to end the year with a loss of ₹12,280 crore assuming that there is no significant increase in demand during the year.

What has been the impact?
The State government asserts that about one crore domestic consumers have been spared of the increase. There is no change in the scheme for free consumption of 100 units bi-monthly for the domestic category or the free power supply scheme for huts and agriculture.

However, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which are over 25 lakh in number (as per official registration) and provide employment to the local youth, have protested strongly against the increase, saying that it puts a heavy burden on them. According to the segment of open end spinning mills, the higher electricity charges mean ₹25,000 additional outgo a month. The mills would have to shell out ₹0.35 a unit as additional tariff and ₹35 per KVA (Kilo-volt Ampere) as additional maximum demand charges. The power charges went up by ₹75,000 a month last year. Such frequent increase in power cost is making the

textile industry of Tamil Nadu "uncompetitive," G. Arulmozhi, a representative of the industry, complains. Even though many political parties have condemned the tariff increase, the government has remained unfazed.

For what else was the State power utility in the news recently?

Early this month, the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) registered a preliminary inquiry into allegations of serious irregularities in the tender conditions and import of coal by the erstwhile TANGEDCO which caused a huge loss to the State exchequer. This followed the government's nod. Arappor Iyakkam, a Chennai-based anti-corruption body, had alleged, in its complaints to the government at different points of time, that there was massive corruption in the import of coal involving TANGEDCO officials, Adani Global Pte Ltd. and others to the tune of ₹6,066 crore between 2012 and 2016. The allegation centred around both the cost and quality of power supplied.

Even though there has been no statement from the government on this score, the policy note of the State Energy Department for 2024-25 states that the Tamil Nadu Power Generation Corporation Limited (TNPGL), an entity formed out of the former TANGEDCO only to handle production from fossil fuel, has their coal quality wing headed by a superintending engineer to monitor the quality of domestic and imported coal. The Quality Council of India and the Central Power Research Institute (CPRI) are being engaged to sample and analyse domestic coal at the mine end and imported coal at the discharge end.

In the middle of this month, there were reports in a section of the media that industrialist Gautam Adani visited Chennai and held meetings with people whose identities have not yet been revealed publicly. The Adani group was said to be keen on implementing the Parandur airport project and expanding the Kattupalli port.

THE GIST

On July 15, the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC) announced an average hike of 4.83% for domestic and all other consumers.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which are over 25 lakh in number (as per official registration) and provide employment to the local youth, have protested strongly against the increase, saying that it puts a heavy burden on them.

The State government asserts that about one crore domestic consumers have been spared of the increase.

Is immunity for the President and Governors absolute?

Does Article 361 grant absolute to the Governor even against criminal charges?

Krishnadass Rajagopal

The story so far:

A three-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud has impleaded the Union government and sought assistance from the Attorney General of India to decide if a "blanket" immunity granted under Article 361 to the President and Governors, while in office, from criminal proceedings undermines fairness, constitutional morality and violates fundamental rights to equal protection of the law and fair trial.

What is the case?

The question came up in a petition filed by a contractual woman employee with the Raj Bhavan who has accused West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose of sexual harassment and molestation. The woman, identified as 'XXX' in Supreme Court records to protect her identity, said the "absolute immunity" given to the Governor is based on the

victorian belief that the "King can do no wrong". She said the police have treated her complaint against the constitutional authority in a "cavalier manner" citing the immunity clause. She said the only option left to her is to wait for the Governor to demit office for the investigation to commence on her complaint of gender violence. She, however, fears that the delay in the criminal investigation against such a powerful person may eventually deny her justice during trial. She has urged the court to mandate the State of West Bengal through its police machinery to carry out an investigation. The employee has also asked the court to frame guidelines and qualify the extent of the immunity.

Do Governors have immunity?
Article 361 (1) provides that the President and Governors are not answerable to any court for acts done in exercise and performance of their powers and duties. However the first proviso to Article 361(1) allows the conduct of the President

to be reviewed by any court, tribunal or body designated by either House of Parliament for the investigation of a charge under Article 61 (impeachment for violation of the Constitution). The second proviso to Article 361(1) holds that the immunity cannot stop a person from suing the Centre or State concerned.

The clause in question before the Supreme Court in the current case is clause (2) of Article 361 which mandates that "no criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be instituted or continued against the President, or the Governor of a State, in any court during his term of office". The apex court has decided to interpret clause (2) of Article 361 to determine when exactly could criminal proceedings be instituted against a President or Governor. In short, the court has decided to rattle the protective cover of immunity to see if it is "unfettered or unbridled".

Interestingly, the Constituent Assembly debates on Article 361 (Draft Article 302) in September 1949 show that a Member had indeed found the language of clause

(2) vague. The discussion concerned the phrase "during the term of his office" in Article 361(2). The Member had queried if this would mean the President or a Governor could enjoy immunity by continuing in office despite committing a criminal act. The question was left open.

What are the arguments raised?

The petitioner argues that a bar on criminal proceedings under Article 361(2) does not extend to illegal acts or those which "strike at the roots" of a citizen's fundamental rights. The alleged actions of Governor Bose infringed upon her right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution, she submitted. The immunity under Article 361 cannot impair the police's powers to investigate the offence or even name the perpetrator in the complaint/FIR. No part of the powers of the Governor provide for him to sexually abuse employees, the employee said.

The Supreme Court, in *Rameshwar Prasad vs. Union of India*, had interpreted that 'civil immunity' under Article 361(4) did not take away the power of citizens to challenge the actions of the President or Governors on the ground of 'malafides'. An analogy could be drawn to interpret criminal immunity the same way. The petition referred to a Madhya Pradesh High Court ruling in *Ram Naresh vs State of Madhya Pradesh*, which had held that the immunity would not impair the police's powers to investigate an offence, which included recording the Governor's statement.

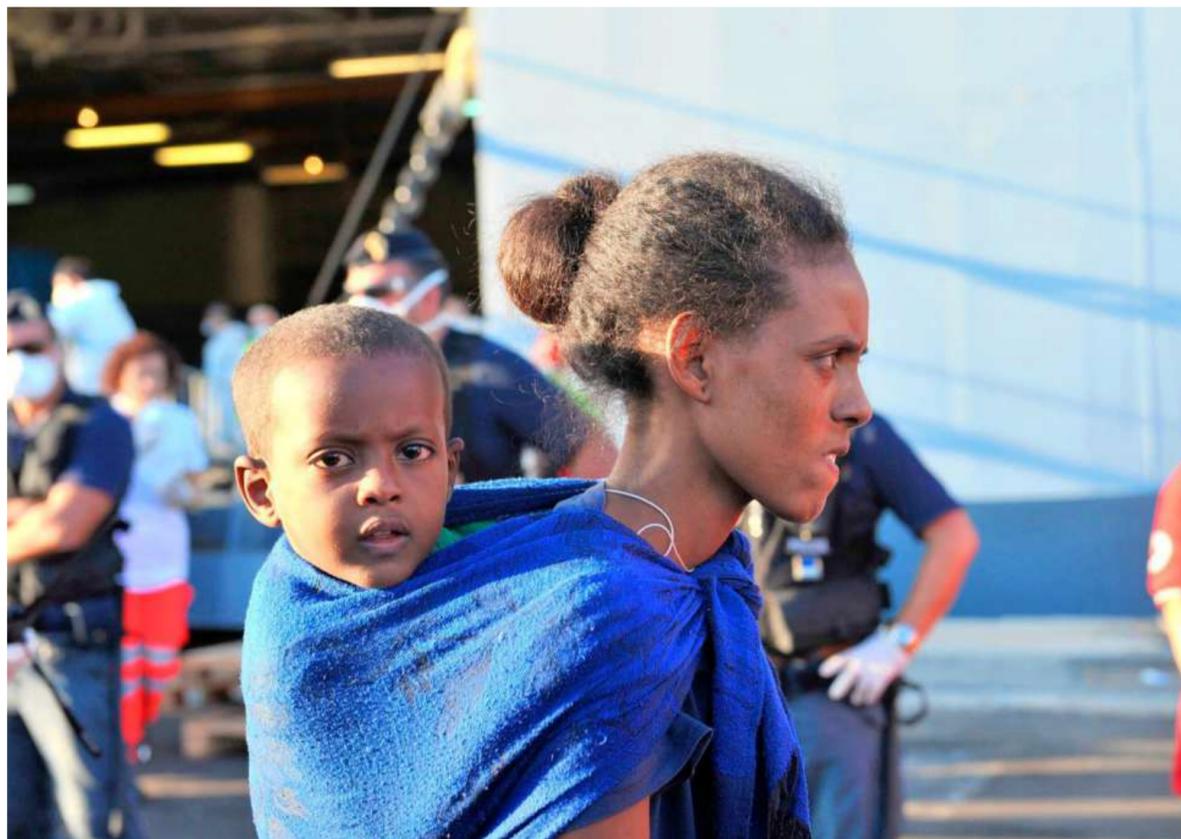
THE GIST

A three-judge Bench has impleaded the Union government to decide if a "blanket" immunity granted under Article 361 to the President and Governors, while in office, from criminal proceedings undermines fairness and constitutional morality.

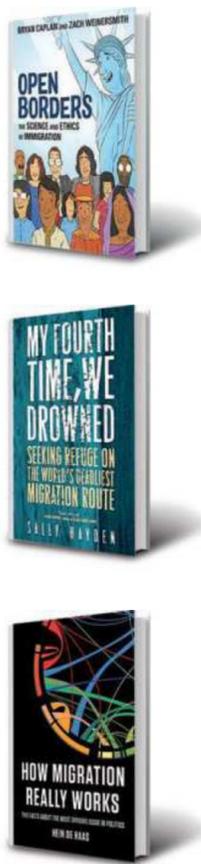
The question came up in a petition filed by a contractual woman employee with the Raj Bhavan who has accused West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose of sexual harassment and molestation.

The petitioner argues that a bar on criminal proceedings under Article 361(2) does not extend to illegal acts or those which "strike at the roots" of a citizen's fundamental rights.

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Dangerous journey: A woman and child, part of a group of more than 1,370 immigrants, disembark from an Italian ship in the port of Crotona, southern Italy, in 2014. AFP



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

“The meaning of the word ‘valetudinarian’ (P. V. Sathyanarayana, Pithapuram).”
 “This is a formal word. A valetudinarian is a ‘person who pays excessive attention to preserving his health.’ Such a person worries about his health all the time. Even when he is perfectly normal, he imagines that there is something wrong with him. Another word which is used more often to refer to such people is ‘hypochondriac’. ‘Vale’ in ‘valetudinarian’ is pronounced like the word ‘valley’. The ‘tu’ is pronounced like the ‘tu’ in the word ‘tube’. The fourth syllable ‘di’ is pronounced exactly like the ‘di’ in the word ‘dinner’. The ‘a’ which occurs in the fifth syllable ‘na’ is like the ‘air’ in ‘pair’. The ‘ri’ sounds like the ‘ri’ in ‘reply’ and the final ‘an’ is pronounced like the ‘an’ of ‘another’. The stress is on the fifth syllable of the word ‘na.’ The word is from Latin ‘valetudinarius’ which means ‘in ill health.’”
 “Meaning of the word ‘Civvy Street’ (P. Ramesh, Gandhigram).”
 “This is a slang expression used in British English. Civvy Street refers to ‘ordinary life and work which is not connected with the armed forces.’ ‘Civvy’ is an abbreviation of ‘civilian’. If someone says that he/she is in Civvy Street, it means that he/she is leading the life of civilian.”
 “Major Gundappa says he has a very secure job in the army. His son who is in Civvy Street keeps changing his job every two months.”
 “Men,” said the Captain, “We have certain rules here. And rules are meant to be strictly followed. Remember, you’re no longer in Civvy Street.”
 “Meaning of ‘He is about to start’ (K. Raj Mohan, Kodaikanal).”
 “‘He is about to start’ means he is on the point of starting.”
 “She came in when I was about to ring her up.”
 “‘Be about to do something’ is an idiom which means ‘intend to do something immediately, be on the point of doing something.’ The negative of the idiom means ‘not likely or keen to do something.’ ‘I am about to leave’ means I am on the point of leaving. ‘I am not about to leave’ means ‘I am certainly not leaving.’ Often the negative is used to express one’s unwillingness emphatically. It was first used in this sense in American English and is now used in British English also.”
 “‘Are Fowler’s comments on ‘galore’ still valid?’ (M. N. Roy, Agra).”
 “Here is what Fowler says about ‘galore’ in his Modern English Usage: ‘An Irish or Gaelic word, and no part of the Englishman’s natural vocabulary, except as a jocular colloquialism (whisky galore!), is chiefly resorted to by those who are reduced to relieving dullness of matter by oddity of expression.’ No. This Irish word has become assimilated into the mainstream of the language. It has found its way into dictionaries. Nowadays the word is used in informal contexts. The word means ‘in plenty’. It always follows a noun. Garlands galore. Legends galore. Chairs galore.”
 Published in *The Hindu* on October 5, 1992.

Europe bound: on the myths surrounding migrants and asylum seekers

From overcrowded boats, hostile politics, taunts of encroachment, and detention centres, writers lay down the facts on the influx of refugees and immigrants, and why countries in Europe must do better for the people flocking its shores

Joan Sony Cherian

Migration was a key issue in Europe’s recent elections. In April, the European Union (EU) had voted for reforms in its migration policy to tackle how the bloc handles the influx of refugees fleeing conflict zones in Africa and Asia. From international organisations such as the United Nations to the media which show us overcrowded boats of immigrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea or politicians who ring the death knell of the ‘European way of life’ due to massive ‘encroachment’ of ‘illegal’ immigrants, migration policies have been at the top of every electoral agenda in the EU in the recent past.

One of the main factors being attributed to the resurgence of the right-wing in Europe and elsewhere in the Global North is ‘uncontrolled’ immigration. An issue which compounded after the migrant crisis of 2015-16, post the civil war in Syria, has been used by right-wing parties and groups to stoke fears of replacement, unemployment, invasion, culture clashes, crime, religious fanaticism and so on. Even sections of the left have raised apprehensions of jobs being taken over by immigrants who might be willing to work for cheaper rates and longer hours.

Not a new spectacle

However, is migration really a new phenomenon in Europe? Why do immigrants make the risky journey putting their lives at stake? Scholars are grappling with these questions and trying to spread awareness and quell fears on

the impact of migration on Europe.

One such scholar, Hein de Haas, tackles these questions head-on in his book *How Migration Really Works*. He places the debate historically and states that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in the era of colonisation of the Global South by various European nations, Europe was a region of net out-migration, a continent of emigrants flowing to different colonies. Haas talks about how people from the colonies were first forced to immigrate to European countries or other colonies as indentured labour, especially after the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade post the American civil war. It is only after the Second World War and the establishment of the welfare state that emigration from Europe stopped.

Analysing the current situation, he deconstructs the myth that Europe is going through a phase of unprecedented migration. Using global migrant population data from the Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2017 Revision database, compiled by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, he states that the percentage of migration as a share of world population has remained stable at 3% from 1960 till 2017. This effectively means that there has been no sudden rise in immigration, it has just increased with the increase in global population, making the rate constant. The only novelty is that the flow of migration has changed – where now instead of immigration to the Global South, it’s the reverse.

On human rights

The road to Europe is fraught with

dangers. Fleeing repressive governments and inhumane conditions, immigrants from West Asia and North Africa try to reach the European continent via sea in overcrowded boats. These boats are mostly provided by illegal smugglers who extort huge sums of money from refugees in order to get them to Europe. However, even then safe passage is not guaranteed. Most of these boats are intercepted and routed back while some even drown in the perilous sea. Since 2014, the International Organization of Migration has recorded over 20,000 deaths in the Mediterranean Sea.

To place a deterrent for illegal immigrants coming via boats, the government of Italy has struck a deal with Libyan coastguards to stem the influx of immigrants. The EU pledged a sum of almost 100 million euros to train and equip these coastguards over the years. These coastguards are authorised to intercept these boats and take the people in them to detention centres in Tripoli, the capital of Libya, indefinitely.

In *My Fourth Time, We Drowned*, Sally Hayden chronicles the lives of people held for years in such detention centres without any clarity, and most often undergoing torture, hunger and sexual violence. She documents how the EU and the UN are complicit in the human rights violations such detention centres commit. Hayden tells us the story of Kaleb, an Eritrean refugee fleeing an oppressive government, and his journey – not only from Libya via sea to Italy but also his journey from Eritrea to Libya via Ethiopia and Sudan. Braving smuggling rings, trafficking attempts and the moral apathy of international humanitarian

organisations, hundreds of refugees like Kaleb make the journey hoping for a better life somewhere else.

A melting pot boiling over

It is not only Europe that is rallying against the boogeyman of immigration. Even in the U.S., illegal immigration has been the top agenda in the ongoing electoral race. Former President Donald Trump’s ‘Build the Wall’ campaign and his Muslim travel ban is testament to the fact that U.S. society is growing increasingly intolerant of immigrants and refugees.

In the light of increasing polarisation around the issue, economist and graphic novel aficionado Bryan Caplan attempts to break down myths regarding immigration and its history via data and numbers through the visual medium of a comic book. *Open Borders: The Science and Ethics of Immigration*, written by Caplan and illustrated by Zach Weinersmith, advocates for complete freedom for people to move and work wherever they want without restrictions.

People fleeing repressive governments or aspiring to increase their economic stature are never a threat to democracy or prosperity.

After all, countries of the Global North still depend on their labour.

As these books clarify, it is easy for politicians and the media to point fingers at immigrants for a country’s fiscal irresponsibility and incite fears of invasion and lack of integration.

There needs to be a clear restructuring about how one talks about immigration – from a perspective of fear to one based on human rights and dignity.

THE DAILY QUIZ

The Olympic Games also has its fair share of family drama. A quiz on the Olympic achievements of star-studded families

Soorva Prakash. N

QUESTION 1

Identify the husband and wife duo who hold the record for having won the most Olympic Medals (17) from a single family.

QUESTION 2

Identify the father-son duo who hold the record of winning the most medals in Olympic history for a father and son duo.

QUESTION 3

Which Indian family has an overall haul of six Olympic medals?

QUESTION 4

Which father and son duo from India won one bronze medal each in the Olympic Games?

QUESTION 5

In Athletics, which family had three of its members win an overall haul of 12 medals in the Olympic Games?

QUESTION 6

Identify this family which had three generations winning nine Olympic medals?

QUESTION 7

Identify the family from Ethiopia which had three sisters winning Olympic medals.



Visual question: Identify this couple who have achieved the feat of a Golden Slam in Tennis?
GETTY IMAGES

Questions and Answers to the July 23 edition of the daily quiz: 1. The number of Democrat nominees who have been elected U.S. Presidents. **Ans: Sixteen. Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) was the first Democrat nominee to become President.**

2. The number of women who have been named Democrat nominees for the U.S. Presidency. **Ans: Only Hillary Clinton in 2016**

3. The Roosevelt who was a Democrat. **Ans: Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945)**

4. The three Democrat U.S. Presidents to win the Nobel Prize. **Ans: Woodrow Wilson, Jimmy Carter, and Barack Obama**

5. The 35th President of the U.S. who was assassinated. **Ans: John F. Kennedy**

6. This individual has been the only Democrat to have been a vice president with the President being a Republican. **Ans: Andrew Johnson under Abraham Lincoln**

Visual: Name this Democrat U.S. President. **Ans: Grover Cleveland, the only President to serve two non-consecutive terms**

Early Birds: Seema Das| Animesh Mohan| Kevin Toms Skaria| M. Suresh Kumar| Sadhan Kumar Panda

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

Word of the day

Inimical: not friendly

Synonyms: ill will, hostility

Usage: The policy was inimical to the country’s interests.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/inimicalpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɪˈnɪmɪkəl/

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

From Page One

Opposition slams Budget as 'unfair'

Later in the afternoon, initiating the debate, former Finance Minister and Rajya Sabha MP P. Chidambaram criticised the special treatment to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar in the Budget. "I don't grudge at all that you are giving relief to Andhra Pradesh or Bihar, but what about the other States? We are a federal country. This is the death knell of federalism if you pick and choose among States. You are the Union of India, you are the Union government, you are the government of all the States. You cannot pick and choose one State and deny relief to another State," Mr. Chidambaram said.

While unemployment is the biggest challenge for the government, Mr. Chidambaram said that the government's latest employment-linked scheme did not instil confidence and will be another election *jumla* (insincere promise).

On inflation, he said the Finance Minister had dismissed the subject in 10 words. "Is inflation such a trivial subject?" Mr. Chidambaram asked, citing data from the government on inflation. He said the bank rate set by the Reserve Bank of India is a good measure to know where inflation is moving, and added that the Centre was unable to reach the target of 4% inflation in the last four years.

"I think what the Chief Economic Adviser said in the Economic Survey [on inflation] is injury, and the honourable Finance Minister dismissing the subject in 10 words is adding insult to injury," he said.

In the Lok Sabha, too, the Opposition levelled a similar charge. Initiating the debate in the Lok Sabha, Congress MP Kumari Selja termed the budget a collection of "jumlas", cautioning NDA members Nitish Kumar and N. Chandrababu Naidu that they, "may celebrate today for getting a large share" but time could change.

Earlier in the day, before the two Houses sat down for business, the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc members staged a protest.

India committed to FTA with the U.K., says Modi

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy refers to 'unique living bridge' between the two countries, and says they are working together on climate action and creating opportunities for businesses

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India is committed to concluding a Free Trade Agreement with the United Kingdom, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, after meeting the visiting Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy – the highest ranking official from the United Kingdom to visit India since the Labour government won a landslide victory in the recent election.

"[I] appreciate the priority accorded by PM Keir Starmer to broaden and deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Remain committed to elevating the ties. Welcome the bilateral Technology Security Initiative and the desire to conclude a mutually beneficial FTA," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Lammy was hosted by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar for a round of talks where the two sides exchanged ideas on a wide range of issues. Mr. Jaishankar said the two sides should cooperate on "global matters on global plat-



Strengthening ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a meeting with U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy, in New Delhi on Wednesday. ANI/@NARENDRAMODI/X

forms", indicating that India is seeking collaboration with the U.K. to deal with globally relevant issues like climate action.

"We are both countries which have a big global presence in different ways. So I think it's also important India and the U.K. work together on global issues and in global platforms," said Mr. Jaishankar.

After meeting Mr. Modi, Mr. Lammy referred to the

"unique living bridge" that connects India with the United Kingdom and said the two sides are building on "climate action while creating opportunities for British and Indian businesses". India and the U.K. have been discussing the FTA for several years now and have been caught up in a protracted negotiation.

"I am travelling to India in my first month as Fo-

reign Secretary because resetting our relationship with the Global South is a key part of how this government will reconnect Britain for our security and prosperity at home," Mr. Lammy had said in a statement ahead of his departure, calling India the "emerging superpower of the 21st century", one of the fastest growing economies, with the world's largest population.

Review rule denying maternity leave for third child: Delhi HC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has suggested that the Centre reconsider Rule 43 of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, which denies 180 days of maternity leave to women government employees with more than two children.

A Bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Girish Kathpalia noted that though Rule 43 was enacted in tune with the government's two-child policy, it must pass muster of Article 14 of the Constitution.

"Of course, the two-child policy aimed at population control is a laudable policy. That being so, we certainly do not advocate to incentivise more than two children. But the steps to disincentivise more than three children must be addressed to the parents and not to the children," the Bench remarked in its July 22 judgment.

The High Court made the observation while rejecting an appeal filed by the Delhi police challenging a decision of the Central Administrative Tribunal directing it to grant maternity leave to a woman constable who already had two children.

"In order to achieve suc-

cess in population control, the government may take any appropriate innovative steps in order to dissuade the citizens from giving birth to more than two children. But once a third child comes into existence even in the womb, her rights cannot be trampled over," the court said.

The Bench also reminded that for population explosion, government servants are not the only class to be held responsible.

The woman constable had joined the Delhi police in 2006. From her first marriage, she had two children. However, the marriage ended in divorce with mutual consent in 2015, with the father gaining custody of the children. The woman then remarried in 2016 and had a child in 2018, prompting her to request maternity leave.

DoPT opinion

The Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) rendered its opinion in her case in March 2019. It said, according to Rule 43, a woman government servant is entitled to maternity leave for 180 days if she has less than two surviving children. Relying upon the DoPT opinion, the Delhi police had rejected her maternity leave application.

UPSC set to revamp examination system

The UPSC will provide the data and images submitted by applicants during the online registration process to the service provider for the Aadhar-based fingerprint authentication and facial recognition systems to verify candidates on the day of the exam. To rule out attempts at impersonation, fingerprint scanners and facial recognition devices will be used at the examination centres, it said.

The Commission has proposed a real-time attendance monitoring system along with GPS coordinates to ensure that enrolment is done during the stipulated shift. "QR code on the Admit Card [containing roll number of the candidate] should be scanned to auto-fetch the candidate's details from Application Database [provided by UPSC]. In case QR code on Admit Card is not scannable, then manual entry of candidate's details from Admit Card has to be done," the UPSC said.

The Commission said it has decided to "implement CCTV/video surveillance with recording and live broadcast system to monitor various activities of the candidates and other persons deployed to conduct the Commission's Examinations at the various centres and venues across the country under a secure environment."

The service provider will also have to make arrangements for remote live viewing of the CCTV footage at the UPSC's own control room.

The Commission conducts 14 examinations every year, including the Civil Services Examination (CSE) and a number of recruitment tests and interviews for induction to Group 'A' and Group 'B' posts of the Government of India.

BJP demands apology from Rahul after SC's order on NEET-UG

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after the Supreme Court dismissed pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG), holding that there was no evidence of a "systemic breach" of the sanctity of the exam, the BJP demanded an apology from Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi.

Lok Sabha member and former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad at a press conference on Wednesday said that the Opposition, especially Mr. Gandhi, had tried to defame India's examination globally with his strong words. "His choice of words is violative of Parliament's dignity and the dignity of the office of the



Ravi Shankar Prasad

Leader of the Opposition," Mr. Prasad said.

Defending the government's actions on the NEET row, Mr. Prasad said that the probe in the matter had been handed over to the CBI.

"Mr. Gandhi was using words like 'fraud' to attack the entire examination and now the court has made it clear that there was no systemic breach in the sanctity of the test," Mr. Prasad said. "Will Rahul Gandhi apologise?" he asked.

A half-burnt paper scrap proves vital clue for CBI probe into NEET-UG leak

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A half-burnt scrap of a printout from a leaked NEET-UG question paper, with its unique bar code intact, helped to unravel the conspiracy and *modus operandi* of a gang whose leader is yet to be caught.

The story behind the leak of the medical entrance examination paper was narrated by the CBI Additional Director A.Y.V. Krishna in the Supreme Court before a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud during a full-day hearing on Tuesday.

According to the 1995-batch IPS officer, the gang started their work three months ahead of NEET. Their members started contacting parents of candidates and authorities of

"vulnerable" exam centres who would not mind giving them access to the sealed question papers in return for a tidy sum.

Mr. Krishna said that the gang hit the jackpot with the Oasis School at Hazaribagh in Jharkhand. On May 5, once the papers were stored in the examination 'control room' at the school, one of the gang member, identified as 'Pankaj', sneaked in.

It took Pankaj exactly one hour and 20 minutes to pry open the trunk, unseal the plastic wraps and click pictures of the question paper. It was then resealed in its plastic wrap using a cigarette lighter and placed back. The photographs were sent to a gang member waiting with eight 'problem solvers' and 'beneficiary' students.

Hard copies of the

solved sheets were then given to the students to memorise before they left for their exam centres. Students had been divided into groups in Patna and Hazaribagh.

The burnt scrap was found on the ground at a high school where the Patna group had converged to memorise the questions and answers. The gang had tried to burn the question papers after the students had left.

However, the unique number on the burnt scrap had led the CBI to the girl student to whom the question paper was actually assigned. "She was genuine. She had noticed the burnt mark on the resealed plastic wrap covering her paper but had kept silent. She later made a statement to us," Mr. Krishna narrated to the court.

Two Russian stealth frigates for Indian Navy launched

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The first of two advanced frigates, which is under construction by the Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) with technology transfer from Russia for the Indian Navy, was launched into water on Wednesday.

India had contracted four frigates from Russia in October 2016, two of them to be built in Russia and two at the GSL.

"In keeping with maritime tradition, the ship was launched by Rita Sreedharan, to the invocation from *Atharva Veda*, in the presence of P.S. Sreedharan Pillai, Governor of Goa. The ship has been named *Tripur*, after the mighty arrow, representing the indomitable spirit of Indian Navy and its ability to strike far and deep," the Navy said in a statement.

No progress on UN Security Council expansion, say former Ambassadors

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Despite consistent efforts by India and other countries, the move for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform and expansion has made "no progress" so far, conceded two former Indian Ambassadors to the United Nations, stressing that India must, however, continue to push its demand for inclusion in the top global decision-making body.

The lack of progress has been the subject of considerable frustration ahead of this year's Summit of the Future at the UN (September 22-23) that is expected to bring in more than 150 world leaders to discuss plans to "reboot" the UN, with India and its partners in the G-4 (Brazil, Germany



and Japan), all of whom claim a permanent seat at the UNSC, lashing out in recent statements about the proposed "Pact of the Future" that will be released. "The short answer to whether there is progress in concrete terms, is no," said India's former Permanent Representative to the UN Ruchira Khambhoj (2022-2024), who retired at the end of June, at a seminar organised at the India International Centre (IIC)

Since 2023, there has only been movement in making the Inter-Governmental Negotiations process on UN reforms transparent

RUCHIRA KHAMBOJ
Former Indian Ambassador to UN

in Delhi. She added that since 2023, there has only been movement in making the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) process on UN reforms more transparent.

"You now have a live broadcast of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations. This wasn't the case until last year, and there's also a digital repository where you can put your proposals, and India's proposals are very much there on ex-

pansion and reforms on their website, but in terms of real progress, let's be very honest... the answer is no," Ms. Khambhoj said.

Last week, India's Acting Permanent Representative R. Ravindra delivered a sharp address during an open debate at the UNSC, blaming the failure of the multilateral system on the "1945-vintage binary outlook reflected clearly in the composition of the Security Council", referring to the fact that the five permanent members of the Security Council, or P5, are still those who are considered "victors" of the Second World War.

"Disillusionment with the existing multilateral system has led member states to consider various alternatives," Mr. Ravindra said.

Facets of governance and the preparatory journey towards IAS

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Unacademy and *The Hindu* jointly held a two-day summit for civil services aspirants during the weekend in which over 30,000 aspirants participated. The speakers touched up on many aspects of governance and what UPSC aspirants should expect in their preparatory journey.

The summit had former cricketer and Indian coach V.V.S. Laxman, actor Shefali Shah, Congress leader and MP Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Jairam Gadkari, former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan and All India Congress Committee general secretary Sachin Pilot, political activist and academic Yogendra Yadav, In-



dian Olympic medalist Mary Kom, Additional Director-General of Police, Law and Order, Telangana, Mahesh Muralidhar Bhagwat; Diplomatic Affairs Editor of *The Hindu* Suhasini Haidar, and senior IAS officer in Tamil Nadu J. Radhakrishnan.

Positive mindset

Ms. Shah spoke about her film career and the importance of believing in oneself.

Mr. Laxman engaged the participants in an interactive session urging candidates to have a positive mindset.

Mr. Ramesh dwelt on the environmental chal-

lenges in India that are impacting the health of people. "COVID-19 was also a reflection of imbalance and loss of habitat and biodiversity that increased the vulnerability of humanity."

Speaking on "What will India's infrastructure look like in 2030?", Mr. Gadkari said the country was undergoing a massive transformation, and pointed out that a pilot project with electric vehicles for public transport was under way in Nagpur.

Dr. Radhakrishnan spoke about the role of an IAS officer and the challenges in disaster management and public policy.

Ms. Kom spoke of her

boxing journey and gave tips on tackling stress.

Mr. Bhagwat, a police officer, explained the various career paths through UPSC exam and the responsibility of Indian youth. He offered tips on preparation; time management and challenges students may face while preparing for the career.

Mr. Yadav spoke about the idea of India, the challenges and the way forward. Mr. Pilot's talk was on Indian democracy in the 21st century with the challenges and opportunities in the country.

Ms. Haidar said the country's cultural exports such as yoga and Bollywood, along with its educational influence and proactive diplomatic engagements, continued to enhance its soft power.

SC suggests forming panel to hold talks with farmers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday suggested the constitution of a "neutral" panel to resolve the "trust deficit" between agitating farmers and the Union government that had led to months of a tense stand-off and blockades on the Shambhu barrier linking Punjab and Haryana.

The Bench asked Mr. Mehta and the Advocate-General of Punjab to get instructions from the two State governments within a week on a proposal to constitute an independent committee to reach out to the agitating farmers, the Union of India, the State governments and other stakeholders.

The case was posted for August 2. The hearing was based on an appeal filed by the Haryana government against a Punjab and Haryana High Court direction to remove the blockades.

Farmers to intensify protests, seek Rahul's help to get statutory MSP

'Our manifesto promised a legal guarantee for MSP, we will put pressure on government to ensure that farmers get their right,' says Leader of the Opposition; the SKM says the Union Budget has paved the way for corporatisation of agriculture

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after the presentation of the Union Budget, various farmers' organisations on Wednesday decided to step up their protests against the Narendra Modi government.

While the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) decided to burn the copies of the Budget to mark their protests, a splinter group of it met Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and urged him to support their demand for statutory minimum support price (MSP).

Mr. Gandhi told the delegation that he would raise its demands in Parliament.

The delegation including Jagjeet Singh Dallewal, Sarvan Singh Panther, Ab-



Unfair treatment: Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, along with farmer leaders, speaks to the media at Parliament House on Wednesday. PTI

himanyu, Nallamala Venkateswar Rao, Tejvir Singh and others met Mr. Gandhi and other senior MPs of the Congress. "Our manifesto promised a legal guarantee for MSP. We have done a full assessment and

it is feasible. We had a meeting and it was decided that we will have a discussion with INDIA bloc leaders and will try and put pressure on the government to ensure that the farmers get a legal guaran-

tee for MSP," Mr. Gandhi told presspersons. He added later that a legal guarantee for the MSP is the right of farmers. Mr. Dallewal said INDIA bloc had promised all support for the protests and demands.

Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal, former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Warring, Congress leaders Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Gurjeet Singh Auja, Dharamvir Gandhi, Amar Singh, Deepender Singh Hooda and Jai Prakash were present in the meeting.

"In our meeting with farm union leaders, we discussed the urgent need for a legal MSP guarantee, justice for protesting farmers who suffered at the hands of the Haryana government, and various other issues concerning the farmers today," Mr. Venugopal said on X.

Leaders of the SKM told reporters in a press conference that the Union Budget is for corporatisation of agriculture.

INBRIEF



Opposition should apologise to people of A.P., Bihar: BJP

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday said the Congress-led Opposition should apologise to the people of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh for "mocking" the Budget announcements made for the two States. BJP leader G.V.L. Narasimha Rao said the Opposition resorted to "immature" and "negative" statements, whereas the Budget was welcomed by "one and all". Saying that "balanced development" as a primary objective had been the hallmark of all the Budgets presented in the past 10 years of the NDA government, Mr. Rao said special focus was being given to certain States, particularly in the eastern region, in order to achieve the goal.

Gangopadhyay, Gogoi engage in fiery exchange over Godse

A former judge of the Calcutta High Court and BJP MP from West Bengal, Abhijit Gangopadhyay, got into a fiery exchange with Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi during his maiden speech on the Union Budget, with some words uttered by him expunged from the record later. The exchange took place when Mr. Gangopadhyay was being urged to conclude his speech, at which he told the restive Opposition benches that he had not asked them to stay to hear him out. At this, Mr. Gogoi responded asking Mr. Gangopadhyay about his views on Godse. He retorted with a pejorative reference to Mr. Gogoi, and added that Mr. Gogoi "knew neither about Gandhi nor Godse".

Congress MP Praniti Shinde raises issue of caste census

Congress MP Praniti Shinde on Wednesday made a strong case for a caste census, and asked the Union government to negotiate with activist Manoj Jarange-Patil to find a solution to the Maratha-Dhangar reservation issue at the earliest in Maharashtra. Ms. Shinde, the MP for Solapur in Maharashtra, was speaking during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha. She said Mr. Jarange-Patil had been on a fast and the Dhangar community wanted to be included in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category. "The government is adding to the existing tensions in Maharashtra. The BJP is in government in Maharashtra and at the Centre. Why can't there be a negotiation to find a solution to it?" she said.

Highlight raw deal to States not ruled by NDA, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday told 20 Congress MPs, who are slated to speak during the debate on the Union Budget, to ensure they highlighted the raw deal meted out to the States ruled by parties outside the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), rather than lament the heavy allocations for Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.

This was the first such meeting Mr. Gandhi had with his colleagues after taking over as the Leader of the Opposition in the

Lower House.

In a 10-minute short chat, according to sources, Mr. Gandhi asked them to maintain a careful balance between regional concerns and the party's national line.

This Budget is a "kursi bachao (save the chair)" exercise, and the speeches must reflect that, Mr. Gandhi is learnt to have told the members.

"What Andhra Pradesh or Bihar got is not your issue, what the other States were deprived of, is the real problem. We are a national party and must behave like one," he reportedly told the members.

Budget sops used as an insurance for fragile coalition: Opposition MPs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Battle lines appeared drawn in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday over the Union Budget, with the Opposition terming the allocations to the States ruled by National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituents as an "insurance" to save a fragile coalition under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Treasury benches asserting that the Budget had addressed all sections and regions.

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee said the ruling coalition was so uncertain and fragile that it could implode any time. He repeatedly used the



INDIA bloc MPs stage a protest in front of Parliament. ANI

phrase "waqt badal raha hai (time is changing)" on the Modi government's reduced numbers in the Lok Sabha. The pressures of the coalition were demonstrated by the Budget, he added. "After yesterday, one thing is clear, coalition

means appeasement and compensation."

He accused the Modi government of depriving West Bengal and other parts of the country of various benefits, including MGNREGS and housing scheme funds. "Since you have failed to defeat us politically in West Bengal, you are now conspiring against the people of the State," he alleged.

Dayanidhi Maran of the DMK launched a scathing attack on the government. "Lakhs of crores of public money were spent to promote 'Modi ka guarantee' before the Lok Sabha polls. After the election, 'Modi ka guarantee' is replaced with 'Modi ka insurance'. Pre-

mium is being paid by the people to ensure he continues as PM," he said.

Biplab Deb, BJP MP from Tripura, said the NDA would remain in government till 2047 and "will take India to newer heights".

He said the interests of all States and all sections had been taken care of. An additional ₹4.82 lakh crore share has been allocated for the States, he added. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee is still there, it is there in the Budget also," he said.

Mr. Deb also hit out at the Congress and other Opposition parties for alleging that the Constitution is under threat.

Economist C.T. Kurien no more; tributes pour in

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

C.T. Kurien, distinguished economist and former Professor at Madras Christian College, is no more. He died from age-related ailments at 11 p.m. on Tuesday. He was 93.

Professor Kurien received a Master's degree in economics from Madras Christian College in 1953. He had pursued economics as a major field of study in college with the hope that through its study, he would be able to understand the causes of poverty and contribute to its eradication. But he was disappointed with mainstream economics as there was no serious discussion on poverty and decided to pursue higher studies in the discipline. He secured a Ph.D. from Stanford University (1958-1963) on the topic "Factor market structure and technological characteristics of an underdeveloped country: an Indian case study".

Professor Kurien was a Visiting Fellow at Yale University in 1968-69. He served as a Professor at Madras Christian College between 1962 and 1978, and at the Madras Institute of Development Studies from 1978 to 1991, where he also served as Director from 1978 to 1988.



C.T. Kurien

National Fellow at the University Grants Commission and the Indian Council of Social Science Research. He served as president of Indian Economic Association in 2000.

He authored 15 books on various aspects of economics and approached economics from the viewpoint of fighting poverty. "From the very early days in my life, I was aware of the grim poverty that surrounded my rather comfortable life," Professor Kurien said in an interview published in *The Hindu* on July 31, 2021.

"Poverty has been the dominant theme in my writings. I knew it was wrong to proceed on the assumption that as growth takes place, poverty would be automatically eradicated," he said.

N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Publishing Group and former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, described him as an outstanding

scholar, a beloved teacher, and a progressive public intellectual who always spoke out on issues that matter.

Historian and writer A.R. Venkatchalpathy lauded Professor Kurien as an institution builder.

Madras Christian College paid rich tributes to him. The college lost one of its most powerful advocates for poverty eradication through his brilliant work in economics, a statement said.

"His tenure in various administrative responsibilities in MCC bore his stamp of originality and inclusive leadership," it added.

U. Sankar, former Director of Madras School of Economics, remembered him as "a very good scholar, original-minded who cannot accept conventional economics and questions everything".

J. Jayaranjan, Vice-Chairman of the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission, who was his last doctoral student, remembers his Professor as a patient man. "He was a man of great values. He will make you conceive the position and write it out. He made me write the introduction to my thesis 20 times. On the day of the viva, he said, 'Now you will know why I made you write 20 times,'" he recalled.

RSS leader asks Amit Malviya not to troll people

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Ratan Sharda, an RSS leader, on Wednesday came down heavily on Amit Malviya, the head of the Bharatiya Janata Party's IT cell, for trolling social media users who criticised the Union Budget.

Terming it a "serious problem", Mr. Sharda, who is also a columnist in the RSS's English mouthpiece *Organiser*, said the IT cell should instead focus on simplifying the government's schemes for citizens.

In a post on X, Mr. Malviya flayed those complaining about the Budget proposal to eliminate indexation on long-term capital gains from property sales. "Everyone is an indexation specialist tonight," Mr. Malviya wrote in a post which he deleted later.

"This attitude of BJP IT Cell is a serious problem. Instead of coming up with simplified communication about good points of #Budget2024, he ends up trolling citizens. Answer their fear, don't insult them dear Amit Malviya," Mr. Sharda wrote.

The RSS maintained that Mr. Sharda's articles expressed his personal opinion and did not reflect the views of the Sangh.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF WIND ENERGY
(An Autonomous R&D Institution under Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India)
Velachery-Tambaram High Road, Palikarai, Chennai - 600100, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. Tel: +91-44-22463982/83/84

Walk-in-interview for PROJECT ENGINEER Post (On Contract)

Advt.No. 02/2024
National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) is the technical arm of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Govt. of India established to serve as a technical focal point for orderly development of Wind Power deployment. This Institute proposes to recruit four (4) posts of **Project Engineer on contract basis**. Details of essential qualification, experience, age limit, other terms & conditions are available in the website: <https://niwe.res.in/careers.php> Interested candidates are requested to attend **Walk-in-Interview at 09:00 a.m. on 29.07.2024** at National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE). Candidates reporting later than 10.30 a.m. will not be considered for interview.
Additional Director (Finance & Administration)

APPOINTMENT

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA SERVICES BOARD, MUMBAI
www.rbi.org.in
Advt. No. 01/2024-25

Applications are invited for lateral recruitment to the following post on regular basis:

OFFLINE APPLICATION PROCESS:

Sr. No.	Post	Vacancy
1	Chief Archivist in Grade 'D' in the Reserve Bank of India Archives	01

For all other details such as age, qualification, selection procedure, remuneration, mode of application and other instructions, please refer to the detailed advertisement published on **July 22, 2024** on the Bank's website (www.rbi.org.in) and in the Employment News/Rozgar Samachar issue dated July 27, 2024/subsequent issue.

IMPORTANT DATE:
Last date for receipt of application: Completed application should reach the Board's Office on or before **6.00 PM on August 12, 2024**.

NOTE: Corrigendum, if any, issued on the above advertisement will be published only on the Bank's website (www.rbi.org.in). (Hindi version of this advertisement will be available in Dainik Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar and Navbharat Times)

KERALA WATER AUTHORITY e-Tender Notice

Tender No : SE/PHC/NPM/34-38,40,44/2024-25. Jala Jeevan Mission Malappuram District. 37MLD WTP, 39LL, 20LL OHSR in Tripangode, Mangalam, Purathur, Talakad, Vettam Panchayats, Cherimundam, Urakam Balance FHTC, Munnipur, Chelembra, Thenipalam, Vallikunnu, Karulal, Amarambalam, Mothadadam, Chokkad Panchayats Electro Mechanical Work and Pumping Main Pump Sets Transformer Supply Installation, Balance Supply Pipeline Installation and related Works. EMD : Rs. 100000-500000. Tender fee : Rs. 8270-16540. Last Date for submitting Tender : 01-08-2024 03:00 pm. Phone : 04832974671
Website : www.kwa.kerala.gov.in, www.etenders.kerala.gov.in
KWA-JB-GL-6-258-2024-25 Superintending Engineer
PH Circle, Malappuram

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
CMG, SDSC - SHAR SRIHARIKOTA - 524124**

Brief E-TENDER NOTICE : CORRIGENDUM-B
No:SHAR:CMG:CIVIL:MAINT:E-PT-02(B)/24-25 Dt:24.07.2024

Kindly refer to E-Public Tender-02/24-25 dt 10.06.24 "Structural repairs works at SMPC Unit-II, SDSC SHAR" (T/C-24-007, Est. cost ₹ 14.63 Lakhs). Sale period extended up to 12.08.2024. Interested tenderers may visit www.isro.gov.in or www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO for details.
Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CMG/SDSC SHAR

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Wholly Owned by Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
CIN - U04010KA2002SGC030438

Brief Tender Notification
(Through KPP Portal)

BESCOM invites tenders through KPP Portal from eligible Bidders for "Replacement of existing HT/LT Overhead lines passing through the Schools/Colleges/Hostels premises and passing by the side of compound walls and in other hazardous locations by Covered Conductor/LT AB Cable in Ramanagara Division and Kanakapura Division, BESCOM Jurisdiction for a period of one year on Total Turnkey Percentage Quoting Basis."

Sl. No.	Description	Enquiry Nos.
1	Ramanagara Division BESCOM Jurisdiction	BESCOM/2024-25/EL/WORK_INDENT173
2	Kanakapura Division BESCOM Jurisdiction	BESCOM/2024-25/EL/WORK_INDENT174

Bid Documents available : 26.07.2024. **Last date for Bid Submission :** 26.08.2024 15:00 Hrs. **Opening of Bid Document :** 27.08.2024, 15:15 Hrs.

The Tenders can be obtained through KPP portal web-site <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. Aspiring Bidders need to register on KPP portal. Further Bidders can take assistance with KPP help desk contact numbers (+91-8046010000, +91-8068948777) or email at support@eprocurementdesk.com.

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IN BRIEF



DRDO tests Phase-II ballistic missile defence system

The DRDO on Wednesday successfully flight-tested the Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system demonstrating the indigenous capability to defend against ballistic missiles of 5,000-km class. Phase 1 of the BMD, which can intercept ballistic missiles with a range of 2,000 km, has already been deployed. The maiden test of the Phase-II BMD was carried out in November 2022. "The Target Missile was launched from LC-IV Dhamra at 1620 hrs mimicking adversary ballistic missile, which was detected by weapon system radars deployed on land and sea and activated the Air Defence (AD) interceptor system," DRDO said in a statement.

Body of missing naval sailor of INS Brahmaputra found

The body of Leading Seaman Sitendra Singh, who went missing after the fire on board *INS Brahmaputra* that also tilted to a side, has been found after intensive diving operations, the Navy said on Wednesday. A fire had erupted on the guided missile frigate on Sunday. After the fire was doused, the ship tilted to the left. "Following the unfortunate incident of *INS Brahmaputra* in Naval Dockyard Mumbai, Adm Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), visited Mumbai on Tuesday. The body of Sitendra Singh, Leading Seaman, has been found after intensive diving operations," Commander Mehul Karnik, spokesperson of Western Naval Command said.

Right to shelter is a fundamental right, says SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday urged a balance to be struck between railway infrastructure development at Haldwani, considered to be the doorway to the hills in Uttarakhand, and the fundamental right to shelter of nearly 50,000 people accused of illegally living on railway land. "They are also human beings," a Bench headed by Justice Surya Kant observed.

The court said while it cannot be ruthless about the fate of these families, its orders cannot also be misinterpreted as a note of encouragement for future encroachments.

The hearing was based on an application filed by the Railways to modify a 2023 top court order staying a Uttarakhand High Court direction to evict these families within a week. It said a flooding Ghaula river has disrupted railway operations in the region. The railway needed more land urgently to lay new tracks.

It asked the State Chief Secretary to meet with the Railway authorities and the Ministry of Urban Affairs to iron out a "fair and equitable" rehabilitation project for the families.

Grasslands in Kutch likely to host cheetahs from Africa

While the Gandhi Sagar sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh is the preferred location for the next lot of imports, Banni in Gujarat is also getting readied to house some of the big cats to land in India

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Some of the next batch of cheetahs being brought in from Africa, as part of the next phase of Project Cheetah, may be sent to a cheetah-breeding and conservation centre being built in the sprawling grasslands of Banni in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, senior officials in the Environment Ministry told *The Hindu*.

While the Gandhi Sagar sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh is the preferred location for the next lot of wild cats, with Banni being considered a potential habitat for over a decade, officials say there is a surge in activity to set up basic infrastructure in Banni and get it ready this year.

"The next [lot of] animals will go to Gandhi Sagar. However, the Gujarat government is setting up suitable enclosures in Banni where cheetahs can be bred. If all goes to plan, there is no reason [the site] cannot be readied in the next six months and some animals sent there," an official told *The Hindu*.

Banni is a vast grassland in the southern part of Kutch and extends to near-



Banni is a vast grassland in the southern part of Kutch and extends to nearly 3,500 sq. km. VIJAY SONEJI

ly 3,500 square kilometres. While that is plenty of space, more than that available in Kuno and Gandhi Sagar, there is barely enough prey to sustain a viable population.

Antelope species such as chinkara and blackbuck – the prey for the cheetah – are present in the Banni landscape but not enough for the big cat. "It will take years for enough prey, and practically this means chital – the main prey for the cheetahs in India – needs to be brought into these grasslands. There isn't an official plan yet but it is a site that is under consideration," the official added.

While the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department is tasked with managing the

cheetahs at Kuno in Madhya Pradesh, an expert steering committee gives scientific input on managing the programme. This includes recommending future sites for introducing fresh batches of cheetahs at regular intervals.

Of the 20 adult cheetahs brought to Kuno since September 2022, 13 survive. Additionally there are 13 cubs, making it 26 animals overall. However, the maximum capacity (in terms of available prey) of the Kuno reserve is for 21 adult animals.

The government's estimate is that India will need to import anywhere between 10 and 12 adult cheetahs every year for the next five years to groom a sus-

tainable breeding population. "One attractive aspect of Banni is that there are no leopards. So with enough prey, we can over time sustain a larger population. But this is a long-term plan," an official said.

In October, all of the cheetahs in Kuno are expected to be released into the wild. Currently, most of them are in the bomas, or large enclosures that are a kilometre wide and long. These animals were brought in after infections and acclimatisation problems led to fatalities. Following the release of all the animals into the wild, preparations for the next batch are expected to begin – again from South Africa and Namibia.

Aadhaar enrolment ID for PAN to be disallowed

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

Come October 1, the option of quoting the enrolment ID of the Aadhaar application form at the time of applying for a Permanent Account Number (PAN) or filing return of income will be withdrawn.

It is imperative to discontinue the option since any allotment of PAN against the enrolment ID of the Aadhaar application form may lead to duplication and misuse of PAN, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed in the Budget 2024-25 documents tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

It is further proposed that every person who has been allotted PAN on the basis of the enrolment ID of the Aadhaar application form should intimate his/her Aadhaar number on or before a notified date to the Income Tax authorities.

The option of quoting the enrolment ID in the application form for allotment of PAN or in the return of income was introduced in 2017. Since then, coverage of Aadhaar has been increasing and encompassed a majority of the population, the Finance Minister said in the documents.

ICMR ready to transfer technology of a 'breakthrough' TB detection system

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has begun work on spreading an affordable, faster and easy-to-use testing technology for detection of tuberculosis.

The council has invited an Expression of Interest from organisations, companies and manufacturers for "transfer of technology" for commercialisation of "a CRISPR Cas-based TB detection system".

Developed by the ICMR Regional Medical Research Centre, Dibrugarh, the technology is touted as the "world's cheapest TB testing system". It can detect the TB bacterium using DNA from saliva at a very low cost. It can identify the bacterium with preliminary symptoms, and test over 1,500 samples within two hours.



Over 1,500 samples can be simultaneously tested within two hours.

"It is so simple that it can be used even in the primary health centre of a village," say researchers at the centre.

TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year or over 1,400 patients every day. Additionally, the country has more than a million "missing" TB cases annually, which are not notified. Most remain either undiagnosed, or unaccountably and inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.

A senior Health Ministry official had noted that India's efforts to achieve rapid decline in the burden of TB morbidity and mortality, towards the elimination of the infection by 2025, have plateaued.

He added that there is now a move to rework the protocol to tackle the disease, specifically TB medication and its duration, to reboot the TB-free initiative with zero deaths, disease, and poverty resulting from the disease.

Expert guidance

The ICMR has developed the "CRISPR Cas-based TB detection system" and is lawfully entitled to enter into any form of exclusive or non-exclusive agreements with eligible manufacturing companies through a defined agreement for licensing and commercialisation of the system, which shall be go-

governed by the ICMR IP Policy, it said.

Listing out its role, the council has noted that the Dibrugarh centre will provide expert guidance and technical support for the production of the system in all phases.

"The ICMR through its institutes would provide support and facilitation to conduct the R&D/clinical study of new technology/product in India, in collaboration with the company/institutions in a professional and mutually agreed upon manner and timelines, which will be decided later under the Agreement. It will also provide technical support in development of technology/product and will also facilitate the validation as per the terms & conditions of the agreement. It shall have no financial implications unless otherwise specified," it said.

Centre defends fact-check unit, says right to correct information important

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Defending the formation of a fact-checking unit (FCU), the Union government said in the Bombay High Court on Wednesday that the right to know factually correct information and the right to not be misled were equally important as the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a).

Stand-up artist Kunal Kamra, the Editors Guild of India, and the Association of Indian Magazines have challenged the constitutionality of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023 that permit an FCU of the Union government to identify "fake or false or misleading" online content "related to the business of the Central Government" and



The Centre will continue its arguments in the Bombay High Court on Thursday.

demand its removal. Tie-breaker judge Justice A.S. Chandurkar is hearing arguments in the case after a Division Bench of the High Court delivered a split verdict on January 31.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the Union government, said the FCU would prevent people from false information.

"This approach represents the least restrictive method to counteract fake, false, and misleading infor-

mation. Private companies and individuals also maintain fact-checking units and the government is similarly justified in providing accurate information to the public. In many instances, the government acts as the adjudicator and beneficiary. However, in this context, my [government's] role is simply to identify and highlight instances of falsehood or misinformation," he said.

The petitioners completed their argument in April, contending that the amendment enables the government to be the "prosecutor, the judge, and in that loose sense, the executioner" of what constitutes the "truth" online, thereby violating the cardinal principles of natural justice. They also pointed out that the "over-broad and vague" nature of the rules created a "chilling effect" on the freedom of speech

and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

Mr. Mehta said the argument of "chilling effect" was incorrect.

"(We government) are not the final arbiter here. Just like individuals, the government can also intimate. The FCU is a methodical way of doing that. And being a statutory regime, it has consequences. We are not the arbiter. The first arbiter is the intermediary, the final arbiter is a court of competent jurisdiction. The right to be informed correctly is necessarily inherent in my right under Article 21. Because, if somebody's freedom of speech incites violence or threatens public order, it directly infringes my right under Article 21," Mr. Mehta added.

The government will continue its arguments on Thursday.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14236 (set by Bruno)

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

Across

- Snoring in the middle of stripped down popular English crossword, perhaps? (6)
- Computer from American city functions essentially when dropped in soda (6)
- Harvest of farmer ultimately stolen by policeman (4)
- Queen in USA too surprised with last president's references (10)

Down

- One recently became rich - built unapproved pod outside (7)
- Lively and fast - gets last batsman out for zero (5)
- One in Barcelona that visits Louvre often for a drink (7)
- One form of a tax - a revenue, mainly (6)
- Family of bears in Montana migrating (9)
- Water transport leaving river quickly - reaching edges of ocean (7)
- Iconoclast fits norm? Mainly conservative? No, no! Eccentric! (13)
- Refer to mob uprising around Iran's and Russia's capitals at different points to get facial recognition measurement? (9)
- Oil producer's products leach ecstasy on river when going upstream (7)
- King may suppress joke (7)
- Orator's point gets limitless press coverage, when brought up (7)
- Keenness of upper classes to live in London, for example (6)
- Wet duck seen in fog (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

MADGALDEEP SCENT 3in1

FAITH

The greatness of Guru

Only four people matter in this world: Mata, Pita, Guru, Deivam (God). Man's ultimate goal is to reach God, but it is not possible to realise that without the guidance of a Guru. Vaishnavites consider Lord Narayana as their first Guru, followed by Mahalakshmi, Visvakshena and then Namazhwar. Guru Purnima is dedicated to offering our salutations and gratitude to all the spiritual masters of the past and present.

In the Hindu tradition, the Guru is revered at the highest position. It is the Guru-Sishya parampara that has preserved the Hindu civilisation as a living tradition to this day, said Swami Mitranandaji. Adi Sankara described the Guru as someone who knows the truth, can articulate the scriptures and is always concerned about the well-being of the student.

Sage Viswamitra was a powerful ascetic who had brought all three worlds to a standstill with his penance. The sage donned the role of a guru to Rama and taught Him everything there was to learn. Gurus hail from varying backgrounds. Vyasa, the son of a fisherwoman, compiled the Vedas, wrote the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Without him, Hinduism would not possess the extensive spiritual literature it does today. His birthday is celebrated as Guru Purnima, in honour of all Gurus.

VIEWPOINT

SUMANT SINHA
Founder, Chairman & CEO of ReNew



Financing India's 'green' future

Centre's commitment in the Budget reflects a smart approach to integrate climate finance into energy transition

Through the Union Budget 2024, the Government of India has demonstrated increased political and public finance commitment towards climate change. It was encouraging to see energy security as one of the nine Budget priorities, along with the 60% increase in allocation towards the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy from ₹12,850 crore in the interim Budget to ₹19,100 crore. It is well recognised that most of the climate action will be private sector funded. The targeted measures announced in the Budget that span across the entire clean energy value chain will spur investor confidence and create substantial opportunities for the movement of both domestic and international finance to India, moving us to a low-carbon economy. Notably, four major initiatives stood out.

First, the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana. It is a visionary initiative that will empower millions of households in residential solar adoption. The overwhelming response of 1.28 crore registrations underscores the immense potential of solar energy in India. This surge in demand will facilitate further investments into the solar sector, fostering innovation, and job creation.

Second, the imposition of duties on goods like solar glass and removal of duties on equipment for manufacturing of solar cells and panels will help to boost domestic manufacturing across the full supply chain for solar energy. Many Indian companies, including ReNew, have now ventured into solar manufacturing sector to fulfil the

The targeted measures announced in the Budget that span across the entire clean energy value chain will spur investor confidence

government's 'Make in India' vision and to make India the future manufacturing hub for solar energy components. The policy measures announced will reduce production costs for manufacturing in India, make it more competitive globally and thereby attract private capital. Third, the announcement by the Finance Minister on Critical Mineral Mission. This will be a key component in ensuring energy security. As we pivot towards renewable technologies, the exemption of basic Customs duty on 25 essential minerals used in renewable energy technologies such as copper, silicon, and vanadium, will secure our domestic supply chain and make it globally competitive. We need significant capital and technological expertise to develop a processing and refining industry for critical minerals and the duty exemptions will go a long way towards that.

Finally, the development of climate finance taxonomy is a crucial step in channelling investments towards climate-friendly projects. Raising capital for climate adaptation and mitigation signals the serious commitment of this government in achieving its renewable energy targets. It also aligns with the G20's recommendation in their Sustainable Finance Report about the expansion of domestic capital flows for adaptation and mitigation projects.

By establishing clear definitions and standards for climate finance, this initiative will provide transparency and assurance to investors, facilitating the flow of funds into sustainable projects and supporting India's climate commitments. Moreover, it will also accelerate the emerging green bonds market in India, which has faced challenges in lowering its cost of issuance.

'Reviews of I-T Act, Customs may be ready by next Budget'

Officials are, however, uncertain if a final policy stance will be firmed up before February 1, 2025, especially given that the Finance Minister has proposed a 6-month window for the crucial reviews

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

The reviews of India's Income Tax Act and the Customs duty rate structure, announced in this Budget, could likely be completed in time for the 2025-26 Budget, while the GST Council is expected to restart parleys on rationalising the multiple rates next month, a top government official indicated.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed a comprehensive review of the Customs duty



Tax overhaul: Comprehensive reviews of the Customs duty rate structure and the 1961 Income Tax are on the anvil. THE HINDU

rate structure for ease of trade and to slash disputes, along with a review of the 1961 Income Tax law to make it concise and easy to

understand. Both these, she had said, would be completed in six months.

Asked if the reviews, and a policy decision

based on it, may find mention in the next Budget, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "it is also possible that it may take a little longer than planned, and we can't be certain if a final policy decision is reached on both these taxes before the Budget," adding the exercise would be concluded by the end of this financial year.

Ms. Sitharaman had also said in her speech that the Centre would strive to further simplify and rationalise the GST structure and "endeavour to expand it to remaining sectors".

Federal Bank Q1 net profit grows 18.3% to ₹1,010 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Federal Bank Ltd. reported Q1 FY25 net profit rose 18.3% year-on-year (YoY) to ₹1,009.53 crore. Total business rose 19.9% YoY to ₹4,86,871.33 crore, the lender said in a filing.

Net advances rose to ₹2,20,806.41 crore, from ₹1,83,487.41 crore in the year-earlier period. Net Interest Income rose by 19.5% to ₹2,291.98 crore.

Deposits rose to ₹2,66,064.69 crore, from ₹2,22,495.50 crore YoY.

RBI tightens cash pay-in, payout norms

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday tightened cash-payout norms, making it mandatory for the remitting bank to keep a record of the name and address of the beneficiary.

The decision was taken after a review of Domestic Money Transfer framework, making it tougher for customers to transfer money via the banking channel from November 1.

For cash pay-in service, remitting banks/business correspondents (BCs) will need to register the remit-



ter's details based on a verified cell phone number and a self-certified 'Officially Valid Document (OVD)'.

"Every transaction by a remitter will be validated by an Additional Factor of Authentication," the RBI said. Remitting banks and BCs must conform to the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Axis Bank Q1 net profit rises 4% to ₹6,035 cr.

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Axis Bank reported first-quarter net profit rose 4% year on year (YoY) to ₹6,035 crore compared with ₹5,797 crore in the year-earlier period.

Core operating profit for the quarter grew 16% YoY to ₹9,637 crore. Operating profit rose 15% YoY to ₹10,106 crore.

Net interest income (NII) for the quarter ended June 30 rose 12% YoY to ₹13,448 crore. Net interest margin (NIM) for Q1 of FY25 stood at 4.05%, Axis Bank said in a filing.

L&T Q1 PAT rises 12% to ₹2,786 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Larsen & Toubro Ltd. reported first-quarter consolidated net profit grew 12% year-on-year (YoY) to ₹2,786 crore on higher revenue.

The engineering and construction major posted a 15% YoY increase in consolidated revenue to ₹ 55,120 crore on the back of robust execution at its Projects & Manufacturing (P&M) portfolio and a large order book.

International revenues at ₹26,248 crore constituted 48% of the total revenue.

Further, L&T said it had received orders worth ₹70,936 crore at the group level during the quarter, registering a YoY growth of

8% aided by strong momentum in West Asia.

During the quarter, orders were received across multiple segments like the offshore vertical of the hydrocarbon business, renewables, transmission & distribution, roads, nuclear power, hydel & tunnel, ferrous metals, health, and the precision engineering sectors.

International orders

International orders at ₹32,598 crore comprised 46% of the total order inflow.

The consolidated order book of the group as on June 30, 2024, was at ₹4,90,881 crore, a growth of 3% over March 2024 and 19% YoY. With the share of international orders at 38%, L&T said in a filing.



Debadatta Chand

'Govt. will adhere to FRBM path'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The major takeaway from the Budget is that the government will be adhering to the fiscal responsibility and budget management (FRBM) path, which will ensure that the fiscal deficit reaches 4.5% next year and moves further downwards towards the 3% mark subsequently, said Debadatta Chand, MD & CEO, Bank of Baroda.

Budget cuts TDS on life-cover payouts, policy commission

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

The Union Budget proposed to slash the rate at which tax will be deducted at source (TDS) on life cover policy pay-outs, to policyholders, and insurance commission payable, to agents, from 5% to 2%.

The proposal to cut TDS on life insurance insurance policy, including on the sum by way of bonus, by amending Section 194DA of the Income Tax Act would come into force from October 1, Budget documents showed.

Likewise, the Budget

has proposed amendment to Section 194D, pertaining to TDS on payment of insurance commission.

The amendment would take effect from April 2025.

The Budget also proposed an amendment providing any expenditure not admissible under the provisions of Section 37 of I-T Act in computing profit and gains to be included to profit and gain of life insurance business. This amendment would take effect from April 1, 2025. The proposal comes amid instances where non-business expenses have been claimed by life insurers.



Mallika Srinivasan

Farm outlay to spur tractor sales: TAFE

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Union Budget's allocation of ₹1.5 lakh crore to the agriculture sector will provide a fillip particularly for entry level tractors and two wheelers which are vital to Indian small farmers, TAFE CMD Mallika Srinivasan said in comments on the Budget.



Flash PMI signals uptick in services, factory output

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Combined output for manufacturing and services sectors grew in July, led by an uptick in manufacturing sector activity, on new orders and increased business activity, as per HSBC Flash Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) from S&P Global Market Intelligence.

The reading came in at 61.4 in July against 60.9 in June. PMI value above 50 indicates an expansion in business activity.

"The rise in output in July was led by a further increase in business activity in the manufacturing sector, while the pace of expansion in services output also accelerated and remained well above its long-run average," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist, HSBC.

Hiring in July improved due to capacity pressures in firms, with manufacturers performing better than the service providers.

Firms saw a rise in input costs in July due to improved demand.

"The rate of input-cost inflation continued to trend higher in both sectors, which has driven firms to keep raising sales prices," said Ms. Bhandari.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	80,149	-0.35
US Dollar	83.71	-0.02
Gold	71,650	-0.89
Brent oil	81.97	-

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2970.70	-24.65
Adani Ports	1484.80	-22.55
Apollo Hosp.	6422.60	-19.00
Asian Paints	2912.80	-15.70
Axis Bank	1239.25	-24.00
Bajaj Auto	9260.20	-122.30
Bajaj FinServ	1579.25	-39.60
Bajaj Finance	6607.15	-119.95
Bharti Airtel	1455.20	-10.50
BPCL	314.95	-8.95
Britannia Ind.	5629.50	-115.25
Cipla	1503.50	-5.60
Coal India	493.80	-6.80
Divis Lab.	4551.60	-24.60
Dr Reddys Lab.	6820.15	-44.85
Eicher Motors	4915.35	-4.20
Grasim Ind.	2806.90	-16.15
HCL Tech	1583.70	-14.65
HDFC Bank	1604.05	-14.35
HDFC Life	672.80	-28.55
Hero MotoCorp	5417.75	-95.80
Hindalco	651.60	-1.90
Hind Unilever	2717.05	-49.30
ICI Bank	1223.00	-3.75
IndusInd Bank	1396.65	-16.55
Infosys	1833.95	-2.95
ITC	494.05	-1.85
JSW Steel	881.35	-12.60
Kotak Bank	1746.20	-22.70
L&T	3515.45	-18.60
LTMindtree Ltd.	5665.15	-23.45
M&M	2805.50	-15.85
Maruti Suzuki	12487.25	-141.80
NestleIndia	2541.40	-40.15
NTPC	392.60	10.15
ONGC	319.55	5.40
PowerGrid Corp.	337.15	2.90
Reliance Ind.	2991.40	15.60
SBI Life	1632.95	38.10
State Bank	852.00	-11.90
Shriram Finance Ltd.	2724.25	-14.95
Sun Pharma	1619.45	17.85
Tata Consumer/Prod.		
duct.	1231.25	-25.65
Tata Motors	1027.70	25.90
Tata Steel	160.31	-0.29
TCS	4306.25	-3.90
Tech Mahindra	1533.30	39.90
Titan	3478.40	11.55
UltraTech Cement	11453.40	-92.40
Wipro	500.10	-0.45

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 24

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	83.52	83.84
Euro	90.58	90.93
British Pound	107.81	108.23
Japanese Yen (100)	54.04	54.25
Chinese Yuan	11.48	11.52
Swiss Franc	94.16	94.53
Singapore Dollar	62.11	62.36
Canadian Dollar	60.56	60.80
Malaysian Ringgit	17.87	17.95
Australian Dollar	55.09	55.31

Source: Indian Bank

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RAMALLAH

Two men, including a customs officer, killed by IDF in West Bank



REUTERS

Palestinian officials said the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) killed two men, including a customs officer, in separate raids in the West Bank on Wednesday, the latest violence to rock the occupied Palestinian territory. The raids were carried out before dawn in Qalandiya and the town of Tubas, residents and officials said. AFP

TOKYO

Russia bans entry of top Japanese executives including Toyota chief



AFP

Russia has banned the head of Toyota and 12 other senior Japanese business figures from entering the country, prompting a protest by Tokyo on Wednesday. The list includes Toyota chairman Akio Toyoda, Rakuten chief Hiroshi Mikitani and Akihiko Tanaka, president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency. AFP

NOUAKCHOTT

25 migrants killed, dozens missing as boat capsizes off Mauritania



AFP

At least 25 migrants died and dozens are missing after their boat capsized off Mauritania, the country's news agency AMI said. The Mauritanian Coast Guard "saved the lives of 103 illegal immigrants and recovered 25 bodies, following the sinking of their boat off the coast of the capital Nouakchott", AMI reported. AFP

BERLIN

Germany bans 'Islamist' group over alleged Hezbollah, Iran links



AFP

Germany on Wednesday banned the Hamburg Islamic Centre, an association that has been under investigation over its alleged support for Lebanon's Hezbollah group and its links to Iran. Tehran summoned the German Ambassador to Iran to condemn a "hostile action". Germany in turn held talks with Iran's Ambassador. AFP

Protests in Washington ahead of Netanyahu's speech to U.S. Congress

Around 200 held on charges stemming from a sit-in at the Cannon House Office Building; demonstrators want U.S. govt. to cease all arms shipments to Israel; Biden, presidential candidates Harris and Trump are scheduled to meet the Israeli PM

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

The arrival of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has touched off a flurry of protests in the nation's capital, including a sit-in at a congressional office building that ended with multiple arrests.

Some of the demonstrations have condemned Israel, but others have expressed support while pressing Mr. Netanyahu to strike a cease-fire deal in the war with Hamas and bring home the hostages.

The Capitol Police said about 200 people were arrested on Tuesday on charges stemming from



Trail of protest: Ultra-Orthodox Jews demonstrate in support of Palestinians at the Capitol Hill on Wednesday. REUTERS

the sit-in at the Cannon House Office Building. Jewish Voice for Peace said many more than that were arrested, rabbis among them.

Workers on Wednesday

erected a black metal fence around the White House as Washington braced for more protests ahead of Mr. Netanyahu's speech before a joint session of Congress. The police have significant-

ly boosted security around the Capitol and closed multiple roads for most of the week.

Dozens of protesters rallied outside Mr. Netanyahu's hotel on Monday evening after his arrival in Washington, and on Tuesday afternoon, hundreds of demonstrators staged a flashmob-style protest in the Cannon building, which houses offices of House members.

'Never again'

"I am the daughter of Holocaust survivors, and I know what a Holocaust looks like," said Jane Hirschmann, a native of Sauger-ties, New York. "When we say 'Never Again,' we mean

never for anybody."

The demonstrators turned much of their ire on the Biden administration, demanding that the President immediately cease all arms shipments to Israel.

"We're not focusing on Netanyahu. He's just a symptom," Hirschmann said. "But how can (Biden) be calling for a cease-fire when he's sending them bombs and planes?"

Mr. Biden and Mr. Netanyahu are expected to meet on Thursday. Vice President Kamala Harris will also meet Mr. Netanyahu separately that day.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said he would meet with Mr. Netanyahu on Friday.

Kyiv seeks 'common ground' with China on ending Russia war

Associated Press
BEIJING

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba has said he is seeking "common ground" in talks this week with his Chinese counterpart on ending his country's war with Russia.

Mr. Kuleba met on Wednesday with Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Guangzhou, a major commercial and manufacturing centre in southern China. It is the first visit to the country by a Ukrainian Foreign Minister since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has strained Ukraine's relations with China.

"I am convinced that a just peace in Ukraine is in China's strategic interests, and China's role as a global force for peace is impor-



Dmytro Kuleba

tant," Mr. Kuleba said in opening remarks.

China's importance

China did not participate in a peace conference in Switzerland last month that did not include Russia.

Mr. Kuleba's visit reflects a calculation that any peace deal favorable to Ukraine would likely be a non-starter without China on board.

Two persons wounded in Moscow car bombing

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Two persons were wounded in a Moscow car bombing on Wednesday, with investigators probing the incident amid conflicting reports over whether a Russian military official and his wife were involved.

Officials said an unidentified explosive device tore apart a car in a residential courtyard in the north of the capital.

"Two people were wounded. The victims were taken to a medical facility by ambulance," Interior Ministry spokeswoman Irina Volk added in a post on Telegram, without providing further details.

Citing unnamed sources in law enforcement, the state-run TASS news agency and several other outlets initially reported that a Russian military official named Andrei Torgashov — identified as a "serviceman and participant in the special military operation" in Ukraine — and his wife were hit.

But hours later that version was brought into question when several state outlets and Telegram channels reported they had spoken to Mr. Torgashov and his wife, who were unaffected.

"It's a complete fake. This explosion has nothing to do with me," RIA Novosti cited Mr. Torgashov. He said the car was not his and that he lived in a different part of the capital.

Several Russian military and pro-Kremlin public figures have been targeted in car bombings since Moscow launched its offensive on Ukraine in February 2022.

Bangladesh crawls back to normalcy after deadly unrest

Press Trust of India
DHAKA

Bangladesh crawled back to normalcy on Wednesday after a five-day nationwide violent student protest over quotas in government jobs with rush hour traffic returning to streets in the capital, and limited reopening of banks, garment factories and Internet services.

A nationwide Internet blackout since last Thursday has restricted the flow of information in the country. Limited connectivity

was restored on Tuesday night.

Mobile phones have started working, but users say the Internet is slow, while mobile Internet and sites such as Facebook remain suspended.

The curfew was relaxed for seven hours in the capital.

However, schools and other educational institutions remained shut.

The violence claimed dozens of lives, including that of students, with some media tally suggesting the toll to be as high as 184.

Typhoon Geami triggers heavy rainfall in Philippines

Agence France-Presse
MANILA

Relentless rain drenched the northern Philippines on Wednesday, triggering floods in Manila and deadly landslips as Typhoon Gaemi intensified the seasonal monsoon.

Rescuers were deployed across the densely populated capital to help evacuate people from low-lying homes after downpours turned streets into rivers, trapping vehicles.

"The disturbance it caused is great. The waters reached the second floor of our house," Nora Clet, a resident, said.

A state of calamity was declared for Manila, un-



Helping hand: Residents in Quezon city in Manila being rescued on Wednesday after Typhoon Gaemi hit Philippines. GETTY IMAGES

locking funds for relief efforts.

Government offices were shut and classes suspended, more than 100 domestic and international

flights were cancelled, and tens of thousands of customers lost power because of the weather.

Some shopping malls and churches offered tem-

porary shelter to people affected.

Typhoon Gaemi, which has swept past the Philippines as it heads towards Taiwan, intensified the southwest monsoon rains typical for this time of year.

'Not unusual'

"Usually the peak of rainy season is July and August and it so happens that there is a typhoon in the eastern waters of the Philippines that enhances the southwest monsoon," senior weather specialist Glaiza Escullar said.

More than 200 mm of rain fell in the capital in the 24 hours to Wednesday morning, Ms. Escullar said,

which was "not unusual".

More heavy rain was expected on Thursday.

Landslips killed a pregnant woman and three children in Batangas province, south of Manila, and a woman and her five-year-old child in Pampanga province, north of the capital.

That takes the death toll from heavy rains over swaths of the country in the past two weeks to at least 14, as tens of thousands sheltered in evacuation centres.

President Ferdinand Marcos ordered disaster response officials to ensure they had sufficient stockpiles of food for the hardest-hit areas because "their situation is critical".

Sport

Fiji men's rugby 7s team, the pride of i-Taukei, will look to make it a historic hat-trick of Olympic golds



Jonathan Selvaraj
PARIS

The Fiji men's rugby 7s team goes into the Paris Games as defending champion. It also won gold, Fiji's first-ever at the Olympics, in Rio 2016, when Rugby 7s was first introduced in the Olympic roster.

Nearly 40% of the popu-



Dream team: The Fiji men secured the nation's maiden Olympic gold when rugby 7s was introduced in 2016. GETTY IMAGES

lation of Fiji are of Indian origin.

"The almost ethnic national imagery of Fiji is the muscular indigenous Fijian, in a traditional dress. You rarely see the Indian-Fijian in popular Fiji cul-

ture. This is true particularly in sport with a couple of exceptions - probably Vijay Singh in golf and (ISL player) Roy Krishna in football," says Dr. Jack Sugden, lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University and the

author of 'Untangling complexity: The ethnic, gender and class dimensions in Fijian sport and society'.

"The indigenous tribal population was mostly left to themselves while Indians were brought over to work as indentured labourers on sugarcane plantations. The land itself was owned either by the state or by the native Fijians. Indeed, the native Fijians prefer to be identified as i-Taukei - which literally means owners of the land.

"When Fiji won its independence in 1970, the British left a power vacuum that people assumed would be filled by indigenous Fijians. But the economic power was in the hands of the Indian Fijians

because when the sugarcane plantation owners left, they left the keys in the hands of the Indian workers. That set the scene for success in business for one group, whereas indigenous Fijians were kind of left there, almost directionless in terms of economics," says Sugden.

In that cultural uncertainty, where other avenues for progress seemed closed for them, rugby, introduced by the British in the early 1900s eventually became a source of i-Taukei identity and pride.

Only two players, that too of part-Indian ancestry - Jack Prasad and Ben Volavola - have ever represented Fiji at the international level.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin and his indelible link to Paris

Y.B. Sarangi
PARIS

Before his heart was placed in Olympia and his body laid to rest in Lausanne, Pierre de Coubertin's soul belonged to Paris.

"The father of modern Olympics", who signed off satisfactorily after witnessing the Games being staged in his home city in 1924, would have loved to see the return of the quadrennial show-piece, now a truly global event, to the French capital with several novelties after a hundred years.

Paris has to be the undisputed second home of the Olympics as Coubertin held the first Congress at the Sorbonne University

here to convey his idea of reviving the Games in 1894. Initially, Paris was considered as the host city for the inaugural Games before Athens got the honour to hold it. Paris hosted a forgettable edition in 1900 before Coubertin made sure that the city organised it properly in 1924.

Even though the contribution of Coubertin is not played up now, it's only befitting that Paris has some distinguished sites in his memory. Named after the illustrious sports administrator, Stade Pierre de Coubertin, an indoor multi-sport arena built in 1937, is now the home of PSG handball team. It will be used as the goalball competition venue in the 2024

Paris Paralympics.

Besides, there is a playground named Avenue Pierre de Coubertin and the Pierre de Coubertin French Committee in the honour of the great man, who was an educationist and historian as well.

Normandy too bears some memories of Coubertin in the form of his childhood home, which finds a place in the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. Besides being an opportunity to show the neo-modern face of France to the world, the hosting of the 2024 Paris Olympics is a marker of Coubertin's genius to provide a so variedly-divided world a unique platform to be at one place even though once in four years.

SPARKS FLY

Morocco beats Argentina in contest marred by controversy



Morocco beat Argentina 2-1 in their opening game of the men's Olympic football, but only after a late equaliser for the South American side was disallowed and the final minutes were played out in an empty stadium following crowd trouble. Spain edged Uzbekistan 2-1 in another contest.

THROAT TROUBLE

Jannik Sinner pulls out of the Paris Games due to tonsillitis



Jannik Sinner has withdrawn from the Olympics. "I am saddened to inform you that I will not be able to participate... after a good week of clay training I started to feel unwell. I spent couple of days resting and during a visit the doctor found tonsillitis and strongly advised me against playing," wrote the Italian on X.

ILL TREATMENT

Video shows suspended Dujardin whipping horse's legs



The video footage that led to Britain's joint-most decorated female Olympian Charlotte Dujardin pulling out of the Paris Games shows her whipping a horse's legs multiple times. The three-time Olympic champion, who was provisionally suspended on Tuesday, said it was an 'error of judgement' and did not reflect how she trained.

TENURE CONTINUES

Nita Ambani unanimously re-elected as IOC Member



Nita Ambani was re-elected as the IOC member from India, winning unanimously with 100% vote, at the ongoing 142nd IOC session in Paris. "This re-election is not just a personal milestone but also a recognition of India's growing influence in the global sporting arena. I share this moment of joy and pride with every Indian," said Nita.

India's athletics aspirations rest on the golden arm of Neeraj

The reigning Olympic champion insists he is on course for another big performance despite a dip in form; steeplechaser Sable needs to be tactically smarter to finish in the medal bracket; the men's 4x400 relay team's will be watched closely



Uthra Ganesan

When Neeraj Chopra threw to 87.58m on a wet and windy August 7 evening in 2021 in conditions less than ideal to sporting excellence, there were few to applaud the significance of a maiden track and field gold, nay medal, for independent India in the history of Olympics.

Since then, however, the man with the golden arm has not only become one of the most recognised and loved Indian athlete across the world but also the most written about.

Keeping pace

To be fair, his achievements have kept pace with his rising popularity, making Neeraj the most obvious medal prospect at Paris.

Despite some struggle



History beckons: Neeraj will look to emulate his Tokyo heroics and become the first Indian individual to win back-to-back gold medals in the Summer Games. FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

with achieving and maintaining optimum fitness ahead of the big event and few competitive outings, Neeraj has insisted he is on track for another big one.

Pushing hard

There are not guarantees though, with Tokyo silver medallist Czechia's Jakub Vadlejch pushing hard in both performance and consistency.

There are others, in-

cluding the German duo of Julian Weber and teen sensation Max Dehning, Finn Oliver Helander, Anderson Peters, compatriot Kishore Jena and of course, Arshad Nadeem.

But Neeraj has been known to bring out his best at big-ticket events and it doesn't get bigger than the Olympics.

On the field, there are a few others who can genuinely surprise, with Ab-

dulla Aboobacker being the lone possibility in triple jump. And while hoping for an Indian medal might be far-fetched in most other track and field disciplines, there are genuine contenders expected to at least make the finals of their respective events, none so more than Avinash Sable in the 3000m steeplechase.

Despite impressive otherwise all through, Sable

has fallen short in big competitions, often due to lack of experience or smartness in switching tactics or diffidence on the track.

This time around, India's best steeplechaser ever has admittedly worked more on his strategies and mindset and unless he has a terrible day, should make the finals.

Parul, Jyothi in focus

On the women's side, the consistently improving Parul Chaudhary can be expected to do the same.

And if she has a good day, Jyothi Yarraji might just surprise everyone in the 100m hurdles.

There is also the men's 4x400m relay team. The quartet of Anas, Ajmal, Amoj Jacob and Rajesh Ramesh made the world sit up and take notice during the World Championships last year, pushing powerhouse USA all the way in the heat and finishing fifth in the final, running under three minutes both times.

Although they haven't been able to replicate the same, the recent outing Poland saw the Indians run quick, with Rajesh Ramesh clocking a season's best returning from injury that augurs well for a team that can make the finals.

India has a tough passage to traverse in its group

HOCKEY

Uthra Ganesan

Three years back, in front of an empty stadium in a world so wrecked by Covid that sports seemed almost an afterthought, the Indian men's hockey team finally overthrew the giant albatross of glorious Olympic history of eight gold medals (with two bronze and a silver) and scripted its own success story with a bronze medal.

Even though 11 of the 16 players from the side that took the podium in Tokyo head to Paris hoping to get a second medal, this time of a different colour, the current Indian side is very different.

There is a new coach in Craig Fulton, who has had just over a year to adjust, adjudge and prepare for the biggest challenge.

He has brought in a new playing style, one that embraces defensive control against the earlier offensive chaos, a style that on paper might be less exciting but more effective but not exactly in the Indians' arc of comfort.

That India managed to adapt to his structure with two titles, including the crucial Asian Games, is a positive sign.

Then again, there are few challenges for India within the continent now, the main opposition lying



Big ask: The Indian team's first priority would be to make the quarterfinals and that is easier said than done. X@THEHOCKEYINDIA

in Europe and Australia, also in Group B with India, making it a tricky first round.

Getting through to the quarterfinals should be India's first target and that is easier said than done.

Strong opponents

Along with defending champion Belgium, doughty New Zealand - which stunned India in shootouts in the group stage during the 2023 World Cup, at home, leading to Graham Reid's resignation - tricky former champion Argentina, and a dangerously rising Ireland, the Indian men have their task cut out to finish among the top four in the group, after which will be the knockout challenges.

Pool A has Netherlands, Spain, Germany, France, Britain and South Africa - and while there can be guesses on the top-four, none of them will be an easy opposition for India.

Then again, there can be no easy games at the Olympics.

Some of the key members from Tokyo are no longer there. The experienced Rupinderpal Singh has since retired, leaving captain Harmanpreet Singh to largely shoulder the burden of scoring on his own. Simranjeet Singh and Dilpreet Singh have fallen out of favour and Sunder Kumar is no longer the defender he used to be.

There are new faces up-front in Abhishek and Sukhjeet, both extremely intelligent and talented. There is Jarmanpreet Singh at the back with Sanjay and Rajkumar Pal as playmakers in the middle. And then there is P.R. Sreejesh, having declared his retirement after Paris and hoping to go out on a high one last time.

But the combination of youth and experience is a tricky one and Fulton would be hoping he has got the balance right.

The path to glory will not be straightforward, but the shuttlers will have to persevere

BADMINTON

Ashwin Achal

If P.V. Sindhu climbs onto the podium at Paris, she will create history as the first Indian to win three Olympic medals in an individual sport.

The path to glory, however, is not straightforward. Sindhu has not been in good form this year, with a silver medal at the Malaysia Masters counting as the lone bright spot. The 29-year-old will also have to overcome a tough draw at Paris, which includes potential clashes with World No. 8 He Bingjiao and reigning Olympic champion Chen Yu Fei in the last-16 and quarterfinal respectively.

H.S. Prannoy and Lakshya Sen need to play at their very best to make a mark in the men's singles. World No. 13 Prannoy's last noteworthy performance came in January, when he won a bronze in the Yonex Sunrise India Open. Early exits



Golden opportunity: Sindhu will aim to become the first Indian to win three Olympic medals in an individual sport. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

have plagued the 32-year-old since.

While Prannoy should have no trouble advancing from the group stage, Lakshya faces an early minefield. The 22-year-old, semifinalist at the All England Championships and French Open, must surpass World No. 3 Jonatan Christie in Group 'L'. Christie has the wood over Lakshya, having won their last four meetings.

Sindhu and Lakshya will benefit greatly from having Indian legend Prakash Pa-

dukone by their side. Padukone will travel to Paris as the squad mentor.

Genuine shot at a medal

The rise of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty as a formidable men's doubles pair adds strength to India's badminton squad. The French Open and Thailand Open champions, Satwiksairaj and Chirag present a genuine chance of claiming a Paris medal. The pair has broken new ground, having won bronze at the 2022

World Championships and gold at the 2022 Asian Games, apart from powering India to a Thomas Cup title.

Satwiksairaj-Chirag, coached by Danish doubles stalwart Mathias Boe, must first focus on a tricky Group 'C' match against World No. 6 Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Rian Ardianto.

To even make it to the Olympics women's doubles main draw is an achievement for Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto. The duo, who only started playing together in January last year, put up excellent shows to force their way into contention. Ashwini, 34, makes her return to the mega event after her last appearance in the 2016 Rio Games.

Ashwini-Tanisha is up against it in Group 'C', drawn alongside World No. 4 Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida (Japan), and Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong (South Korea).

Indian challenge in other sports

Y.B. Sarangi

The Indian representation will be limited to just one or a few athletes in several disciplines in the Paris Olympics.

Weightlifting: Mirabai Chanu, who bagged a silver in the Tokyo Olympics, will compete in her third consecutive Games. The Indian, who has been troubled by injuries in recent years, has recovered well after her hip injury in the Asian Games last year and will be eager to bag a medal in the 49kg category.

Mirabai, who totalled 184kg in the IWF World Cup in April after a five-month injury layoff, needs to lift more than 200kg in Paris to ensure a medal. China's defending champion Hou Zhihui is the overwhelming favourite to win the gold.

Tennis: Doubles star Rohan Bopanna will be the centre of attraction at Roland Garros. Bopanna, who won the Australian Open with Matthew Ebden earlier this year, has chosen Sriram Balaji to partner him as the latter has the experience of playing on clay courts.

Singles player Sumit Nagal achieved his career-best world ranking of 71 to



Lifting hopes: Mirabai will look to provide the thrust to India's Paris campaign with a medal. FILE PHOTO: SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

qualify for his second Olympics.

Golf: Aditi Ashok, competing in her third Games, will be keen to improve on her fourth place finish in the Tokyo Games. Diksha Dagar, a Deaflympics gold medallist and a two-time Ladies European Tour winner, will also bank on her Tokyo experience.

Multiple professional title winners Shubhankar Sharma and Gaganjeet Bhullar should not find it difficult to adapt.

Sailing: Vishnu Saravanan and Nethra Kumanan, who will take part in men's and women's dinghy, will appear in their second Olympics.

Swimming: Srihari Natraj and 14-year-old girl Dhinid-

Archers begin campaign, bank on WC showing

Y.B. Sarangi

PARIS

The Indian men and women archers will trust their hard training while trying to overcome last-minute distractions due to the absence of Korean coach Baek Woong Ki and psychologist Gayatri Madkekar as they begin their campaign with a hope to win India's first archery medal at the Games.

While the women's competition will be staged in the morning, the men's competition will take place in the afternoon in the grand backdrop of Invalides.

The men's team of B. Dhiraj, Tarundeep Rai and Pravin Jadhav will take confidence from its World Cup Stage-1 gold medal win in Shanghai where it upstaged the elite Koreans.

The women's side, comprising the seasoned Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur, performed well in the World Cup Stage-3 in Antalya and will look to continue in the same vein.

INBRIEF



Gauff joins LeBron as USA's flag-bearer at Paris OC

Tennis star Coco Gauff will be the woman flag-bearer for the USA at the Opening Ceremony (OC) of the Paris Games. The reigning US Open champion will join NBA superstar LeBron James as the US flag-bearer for Friday's ceremony along the Seine River. "I never thought in a million years I would have the honour of carrying the American flag for Team USA," Gauff said.

Five Aussie women's water polo players test COVID-19 positive

Five players of Australia's women's water polo team for the Paris Olympics have tested positive for COVID-19. Anna Meares, the chef-de-mission for the Australian team in Paris, said the cases have been confined to the water polo team. She said the affected players have been cleared to practice when they feel well enough to train.



French fencer Thibus confirmed for Olympics

Ysaora Thibus, one of the favourites for gold in the foil event, was confirmed in the French fencing team for the Olympics, but she could later be stripped of any medal as an appeal from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is hanging over the 32-year-old. Thibus was suspended by the International Fencing Federation (FIE) in February after testing positive for the banned substance Ostarine before being cleared of any wrongdoing by the governing body in May.



'Have to take advantage of the absence of star Indian players'

Sri Lanka should take maximum advantage of the absence of the star Indian players who have recently retired from T20Is and compete strongly in the upcoming three-match series, Sri Lanka's interim coach Sanath Jayasuriya said on Wednesday. "Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are best players in the world. Their absence will be loss to the Indian team and we have to take maximum advantage out of that."

Injured Chameera ruled out of series against India

Sri Lanka pacer Dushmantha Chameera has been ruled out of the upcoming home series against India after suffering an injury, *ESPNCricinfo* said. Speaking at a press conference, Sri Lanka's chief selector Upul Tharanga confirmed Chameera will miss both the T20I and ODI series against India.

Indian men finish 6th, women 7th in World junior squash

India finished sixth and seventh in the men's and women's sections respectively in the World junior squash championships in Houston, USA.

The Results: Men: India lost to England 1-2 (Shaurya Bawa bt Yusuf Sheikh 3-11, 11-6, 11-8, 11-7; Yuvraj Wadhvani lost to Bailey Malik 11-5, 9-11, 8-11, 14-16; Ayaan Vazilalli lost to Dylan Roberts 11-6, 9-11, 9-11, 7-11).

Women: India beat New Zealand 2-1 (Shameena Riaz lost to Ella Lash 7-11, 12-10, 13-11, 4-11, 4-11; Nirupama Dubey bt Anabel Gemmill 9-11, 11-6, 11-4, 8-11, 11-9; Unnati Tripathi bt Ella Hill 11-4, 11-3, 11-6).

LIVE TELECAST

Paris 2024: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD), Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 1 p.m.

India's paddlers keen to prove a point

With big challenges ahead of the contingent spearheaded by flag-bearer Sharath Kamal, it would be intriguing to see as to how the stars underline the country's progress in the sport



Amol Karhadkar

Archana Sharath Kamal, featuring in his fifth and the last Olympics, will be the Indian contingent's flag-bearer at the opening ceremony. Thanks to its maiden qualification for the team championship in the men's and women's sections, a record eight paddlers will represent India at the quadrennial extravaganza.

No complacency

It appears to be a perfect recipe for the C-word to set in, in the contingent. But complacency is not even on the minds of any of the India's paddlers, who checked in to the Olympic village after a rigorous training camp in Germany.

In fact, they are hungry to underline that they belong on the biggest stage and are desperate to go one notch higher. In To-



Last hurrah: Sharath would be keen to bow out on a high in Paris. RITU RAJ KONWAR

kyo, Manika Batra became the first Indian female to win two matches at the Olympics while Sharath stretched the eventual gold medalist – the legendary Ma Long – before going down in the round of 32.

This time around, Manika – seeded 18th – has been training hard and eyeing a place at least in the pre-quarterfinals, if not the quarterfinals. Ditto is the case with Sreeja Akula (16th seed), who has

overtaken Manika as the highest-ranked Indian female in the world just before her maiden appearance.

As for the men, Olympics debutant Harmeet Desai is desperate to score an upset or two. The road for Harmeet – seeded 49th – is definitely going to be much tougher than veteran Sharath, seeded 25th. Having had an extensive four-month preparation the 42-year-old veteran will



Once you make it to the quarterfinal, it can be anybody's game

– SHARATH KAMAL

be eager to end his Olympic sojourn on a high.

Does that mean India's paddlers are nowhere close to being on the podium. It looks like the case, at least in singles. But it's the team championship where India is hoping to create ripples by going past the pre-quarterfinals.

In a knockout draw of 16, the men and women are seeded 14th and 11th, respectively. Both teams will be keeping their fingers crossed to not being pitted against champion China first up.

The teams are eager to go past the first hurdle – a tough task in itself. Then on, as Sharath told *The Hindu* recently: "once you make it to the quarterfinals, it can be anybody's game."

Can Indian table tennis' progress be underlined with an impressive outing – albeit not a podium finish – in table tennis? If it does, it will definitely be a historic fortnight for the paddlers in blue!



Having fun: Olympic volunteers take time out for a photo session with the Olympic rings in Paris. AP

The City of Light is all set to host the Summer Games

Y.B. Sarangi
PARIS

After landing in the 'City of Light', the bright smiles of the volunteers, dressed in green uniforms, made one forget the long and tiring journey that one had made from the 'City of Joy'. Their gesture was apt – to make the visitor comfortable and help him overcome the initial hiccups one experiences after arriving in a new country.

The design, colours and motif of the Games, subtly embellishing the Charles de Gaulle airport, Stade de France and the aquatics centre across it on the way to the heart of the city underscored that Paris is ready for the Games to open.

Excited people

The French people are excited about the Olympics. Whether fans dressed up in Gallic Rooster costumes on the footpath, or flocking the Stade de France to witness the home team take on USA in a men's rugby sevens match on the first day of the competitions of the 33rd Olympic Games.

The walk from the St. Denis metro station to the stadium didn't feel long because of the fans' enthusiasm. "Follow the crowd," an ecstatic gentleman guided us without understanding the place we were looking for. Numerous friendly

The walk from the St. Denis metro station to the stadium didn't feel long because of the fans' enthusiasm. Reed Scott is an avid pin collector who has covered most of the Winter and Summer Games and continues to pursue his passion

people along the way were always eager to extend assistance to a foreigner despite the language barrier, making one feel at home amid the Games atmosphere.

Ultimate pilgrimage

For pin collectors, the Olympics is the ultimate pilgrimage. Several of them from different countries were seen roaming around the Games Village looking for fellow collectors. Proudly wearing the tiny jewel-like pieces all over their shirts, vests and caps, they celebrated the spirit of the Games in a different way.

Reed Scott from Atlanta is one such avid pin collector, who began his hobby when his home city hosted the Games in 1996. He has covered most of the Winter and Summer Games and continues to pursue his passion. He says this gives him an opportunity to meet and connect with people from across the world. And it goes well with the true spirit of the Games.

Nadal and Alcaraz cautious on Olympic doubles medal prospects

TENNIS

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz know they won't win anything on reputation alone playing together at the Paris Olympics, but vowed on Wednesday to do everything in their power to overcome a lack of preparation.

Nadal, the 2008 singles gold medalist, will pair up with Alcaraz in a tennis dream team at Roland Garros, looking to also add to the doubles title he won with close friend Marc Lopez at Rio in 2016.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion was keen to play down expectations though ahead of his final Olympics, with Nadal and Alcaraz teaming up for the first time. "I understand the fascination, the hope of seeing us play together, (but) let's not think that



Keeping it real: Nadal and Alcaraz insisted their star power was no guarantee of a medal. AFP

this translates into success, I think that's a mistake," said the 38-year-old Nadal.

"At the end of the day Carlos hasn't played much doubles and I haven't played much in either doubles or singles," he said at a Spanish team press conference in the Olympic Village.

Both Nadal and Alcaraz will also compete in the singles at Roland Garros, where Nadal has won the French Open a record 14 times. Alcaraz captured the title in Paris for the first time last month.

"We trust in the great moment that Carlos is in," said Nadal. Alcaraz re-

tained his Wimbledon crown 10 days ago, landing his fourth Grand Slam at the age of 21.

"We're going to give our all to try and at least leave with the peace of mind of having done everything possible," added Nadal.

Alcaraz said it was "a dream" to be able to make his Olympic debut in doubles alongside Nadal.

He too sounded a note of caution and insisted their star power was no guarantee of a medal.

"What I can say is that we're going to do give the best of ourselves... with great enthusiasm, let's hope we can enjoy it and play well," said Alcaraz, who beat Novak Djokovic again in this year's Wimbledon final.

Djokovic, who won singles bronze in 2008, will also be in Paris as the Olympic tennis tournament is held on clay for the first time since Barcelona in 1992.

Sumit Nagal bows out in pre-quarterfinals of Kitzbuhel ATP event

TENNIS

Sports Bureau

Fourth seed Pedro Martinez of Spain beat Sumit Nagal 7-5, 7-5 in the pre-quarterfinals of the €651,865 ATP tennis tournament in Kitzbuhel, Austria, on Wednesday. The 26-year-old Nagal, who had reached a career-best rank of 68 last week, collected 25 ATP points and €10,165.

The results: €651,865 ATP, Kitzbuhel, Austria: Pre-quarterfinals: Pedro Martinez (Esp) bt Sumit Nagal 7-5, 7-5. €579,320 ATP, Umag, Croatia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Guido Andreozzi (Arg) & Miguel

Reyes-Varela (Mex) bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Arjun Kadhe 6-2, 6-2.

\$115,000 WTA, Warsaw, Poland: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Jessie Aney (USA) & Lena Papadakis (Ger) bt Carole Monnet (Fra) & Ankita Raina 6-2, 6-1.

€148,625 Challenger, Zug, Switzerland: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan & Vijay Sundar Prashanth bt Jakob Paul & Damien Wenger (Sui) 6-7(5), 6-4, [10-5].

\$25,000 ITF men, Astana, Kazakhstan: Singles (first round): Sai Karteek Reddy bt Ivan Denisov 6-3, 2-6, 6-2; S.D. Prajwal Dev bt Alexey Aleshchev 6-0, 7-5; Karan Singh bt Sab Purtseldze (Geo) 6-4, 4-6, 7-6(7); Aoran Wang bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-2, 6-3.

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Alafia Ayeni (USA) & Sai Karteek Reddy bt Iliyas Maratuly & Yerassyl Murat (Kaz) 6-1, 3-6, [10-3].

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Chirag Duhan & Yurii Dzhavakian (Ukr) bt Alexander Chepik & Danil Panarin 6-1, 7-6(2).

\$15,000 ITF men, Rognac, France: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Robin Catry & Jules Leroux (Fra) bt Naoya Honda (Jpn) & Raghav Jaisinghani 7-6(2), 6-3.

\$100,000 ITF women, Figueria da Foz, Portugal: Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Evalina Laskevich & Vasanti Shinde bt Anastasiya Gureva & Polina Kudermetova 7-5, 2-6, [11-9].

\$40,000 ITF women, Dallas, USA: Singles (first round): Robin Anderson (USA) bt Sahaja Yamalappali 6-2, 6-2.

\$25,000 ITF women, Astana, Kazakhstan: Singles (first round): Vaidehi Chaudhari bt Anastasiya Sukhotina 6-2, 6-1.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Vaidehi Chudhari & Ksenia Laskutova bt Arian Gogulina & Anastasiya Krymkova (Kaz) 6-0, 6-0.

\$25,000 ITF women, Casablanca, Morocco: Singles (first round): Zeel Desai bt Tess Sugnaux (Sui) 2-6, 7-5, 6-3; Deborah Chiesa (Ita) bt Vaishnavi Adkar 6-1, 6-0.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Malak El Ailami & Aya El Aouni (Mar) bt Zeel Desai & Ekaterina Kazionova 3-6, 6-2, [13-11]; Sofia Rocchetti (Ita) & Celine Simunye (Irl) bt Vaishnavi Adkar & Rinko Matsuda (Jpn) 6-2, 6-3.

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir, Tunisia: Singles (first round): Jana Salah bt Tanisha Kashyap 6-4, 6-4.

Weaving through his troubles

Shahrukh, who significantly improved his batting against spin in IPL 2024, hopes to break into the national team soon; the Tamil Nadu batter has started this year's edition of the TNPL in strong fashion scoring three fifties and guiding his team to the playoffs with five wins in six games

S. Dipak Ragav

Over the last four years, M. Shahrukh Khan has been one of the most sought-after names in the IPL, securing megabuck deals despite being an uncapped player. The 29-year-old is known for his big-hitting capabilities down the order which teams value immensely. With the mega auction not far away, this year could be pivotal for the Tamil Nadu player as it could set the tone for the next three years of his career.

After a sub-par domestic season for TN in the white-ball tournaments last year, Shahrukh found a new home at Gujarat Titans in the IPL this year. He scored 127 runs at a healthy strike rate of 169.33, including a maiden IPL half-century, and the all-rounder feels the stint at the Titans has helped him evolve into a better batter.

Cast in the role of a finisher for Punjab Kings (2021-2023) and Gujarat Titans this year, Shahrukh's IPL numbers might not put him in the spotlight, considering he walks in as the innings approaches its climax and is expected to tee off from the get-go.

But looking under the hood, there is a case to be made that the swashbuckling batter has given a reasonable account of himself in the last two years of India's premier cricketing context, striking at a brisk pace. At the same time, there have been some shortcomings, indicating Shahrukh has yet to maximise his potential.

While he has shown great ability to clear the ropes effortlessly, especially against pacers in the death overs, he has found it hard to replicate the same against the spinners. But this year, he believed he has addressed it better and become a more complete batter.

"During the camp before the tournament, I worked hard on my game against spinners. Vikram Solanki and Mithun Manhas helped me improve, and it has opened up more scoring opportunities for me," said Shahrukh in a chat with *The Hindu*.

According to him, a minor technical change has enormously impacted his game. "Vikram sir asked me to have a forward press when batting against the spinners. It has helped me play off the front and back foot, opening up the possibility of playing the cut and pull shots."

"Previously, I had a stable base and relied on timing and power. It was the best way to play the quicker bowlers in the back end of an innings. But against the spinners, I had only one shot, and the bowlers looked to take pace off their deliveries to me."

"This change helped me be ready earlier for the ball. At times, when you are playing against the spinners, you can react a bit late by staying too still."

He further explained that the forward press helped him get under the ball's trajectory. "Since I am tall, I used to stand upright. As a result, I was over the trajectory of the ball, and missed its flight. Now, with the forward press, I can get under the ball, and step out when it's flighted," he added.

Shahrukh says these small changes have given him the confidence to play higher up the order, and he even batted number four for the Titans in a few matches. The numbers reflect his



On the ascent: Shahrukh has done well to identify his weaknesses and work quickly to strengthen those aspects of his game. E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

contention of being an improved player against spin.

While his overall strike rate against pace in his IPL career is 161.11, it drops precipitously to 112 against spin. But this year, his strike against pace and spin has almost converged to similar levels of 169.76 and 168.75, respectively, showing the fruit of his efforts. His boundary percentage, too, has improved, scoring one per every four balls.

As he prepares for the new season, Shahrukh has started well in the TNPL, scoring three half-centuries in six games and guiding his team, Lyca Kovai Kings, into the playoffs yet again with five wins in six games.

"I am feeling good. I have been batting well and coming up higher in the order this year because I am confident against spin. It will also help the team," says Shahrukh as he looks to lead his side to a hat-trick of titles.

He has also picked up from where he left last year in another aspect of his game. In 2023, the all-rounder topped the wicket charts in the competition and has continued to impress with his tidy off-spin bowling this year, taking 11 scalps so far, placing him second on the leaderboard.

"I have always enjoyed bowling and done a lot right through age categories. We have an excellent spin attack in TN, so I don't get to bowl a lot. But whenever I

get a chance, I have given breakthroughs. Now, I can take wickets and contain runs, which will be an advantage for me in the IPL."

In 2022, Shahrukh got to the fringes of the national team when he was called up as a back-up during a home series against West Indies, and he now feels confident that he is a more well-rounded cricketer ready to take the next step. "I think I had a good IPL and made an impact in whatever chances I got. The numbers I have must also be seen in the context of where I bat, and (Ashish) Nehra was happy with what I have done. I am 100% certain I can get back in the reckoning in the next three years."

THE GIST

After a sub-par domestic season for TN in the white-ball tournaments last year, Shahrukh found a new home at Gujarat Titans in the IPL this year

While his overall strike rate against pace in his IPL career is 161.11, it drops precipitously to 112 against spin. However, Shahrukh's strike against pace and spin has almost converged to similar levels of 169.76 and 168.75 in 2024

In 2022, Shahrukh got to the fringes of the national team when he was called up as a back-up during a home series against West Indies, and he now feels confident that he is a more well-rounded cricketer ready to take the next step

Bodhana Sivanandan — a Kohinoor in the making

P.K. Ajith Kumar

Seeded 16th, England is not expected to shake the women's event at the Chess Olympiad in Budapest in September. But the progress of one player from the English team will be followed with keen interest. Bodhana Sivanandan is just nine and is already seen as one for the future.

The very fact that she has made it to the country's senior team has already caught the attention of England sport. She is set to be possibly England's youngest to represent the senior England team in any sports event.

You would actually see players of her age competing in age group tournaments, such as Under-10 (her category at the moment).

Impressive showing

Since chess is one sport where age or gender is no bar, she has already competed in open category events and has done well, too. Last year, at the European blitz championship in Croatia, Bodhana was the best ranked female participant, scoring a creditable 8.5 points out of 13. This was despite the fact that she had to forfeit her first round as she arrived late, but she recovered from that setback, amassing four wins from her next five rounds.

Bodhana had started out as the 328th seed in a field of 559 players, 49 of whom were



Queen's gambit: Bodhana, at the tender age of nine, hopes to become the youngest Grandmaster in history. NUMBER 10 (UK PRIME MINISTER)

Grandmasters, and went on to finish 73rd overall. In the last round, she held the Romanian Grandmaster Vladislav Nevednichy to a draw. His Elo rating - which determines the strength of a chess player - at the time was 2389, while that of Bodhana was 1944.

If that is the way she performs against older, experienced players, one could imagine how she would do in an event against her contemporaries.

At the World Under-8 championships, held in Egypt and Georgia, she won the girls' titles

in classical, rapid, and blitz formats. She did that by winning all her 11 games in the three tournaments. That is what you may call Bradmanesque, or in chess terms, Fischeresque. It is never easy to win every game in a chess tournament, for half your total games will have the slight disadvantage of playing with black pieces.

There is no shortage of prodigies in chess - you will find a lot of them here in India alone - but very rarely will you come across such dominant shows in a global event. Not surprisingly, the buzz about Bodhana in England is tremendous.

Local hero

She has given a high-profile simultaneous chess display at England's iconic Trafalgar Square and had a meeting with the former Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak. Like the Prime Minister at the time, Bodhana is of Indian origin. Her parents are from Tamil Nadu.

It was an old chessboard that Bodhana came across at her London home that kicked off her interest in chess, during the pandemic.

The Covid-induced lockdown had witnessed an unparalleled growth in chess: it is easy to play online and the popular Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit* also helped the game enter the mainstream.

Bodhana, who is ranked No. 58 in the world among junior girls (under-20) with 2185 Elo points, has already set some lofty goals. She wants to be the world's youngest Grandmaster. That record belongs to another Indian-origin youngster living abroad - Abhimanyu Mishra, who represents the United States. He became a Grandmaster at the age of 12, so Bodhana has another three years.

High praise from the greats

Veteran Indian Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay says it will be nice if she does it, but it shouldn't matter much if she cannot. "I hope she will be nurtured properly, she seems a special talent," he tells *The Hindu* over phone.

"The way she claimed her three World titles, winning all her games, is extraordinary. Since she is living in Europe, I think the parental pressure will be less on her, which is not the case in India. So she will be able to play without bothering too much about the results."

Thipsay believes the Olympiad will be a wonderful opportunity for her.

"England may be fielding her on the reserve board this time and I think she will get some games," he says. "She will be a better player for the experience and within a few years, she could well be playing on the top board for England."

Ketamine pill offers hope, and risks, for treatment-resistant depression

Reports have suggested tablets that release ketamine slowly can improve symptoms of depression. Based on these reports, a team led by Paul Glue at the University of Otago, in New Zealand, proposed that patients could dose themselves safely at home using slow-release ketamine tablets

Sneha Khedkar

A new tablet that slowly releases the drug ketamine can ease treatment-resistant depression, offering an alternative to cumbersome clinic-based treatments for people with the condition, researchers have found in a clinical trial.

Ketamine, sometimes called a “party drug”, blocks the receptor for an excitatory neurotransmitter – those that cause neurons fire and send messages – called glutamate. It was originally used as an anaesthetic but researchers found that it had rapid antidepressant effects, acting within hours.

As such, health workers routinely prescribe ketamine to people with treatment-resistant depression, where antidepressants don’t improve symptoms, and with suicidal ideation.

Slipping past side-effects

It is most commonly administered intravenously (i.e. by injecting into the blood), and can also be delivered via an intranasal spray. However, in these routes ketamine can have many side effects, including headache, nausea, and drowsiness, and serious ones like increased blood pressure, loss of focus or dissociation from reality.

As a result, clinicians monitor patients who have been given ketamine for two hours while the side effects subside. This means an in-clinic treatment protocol that those suffering from depressive symptoms have said are inconvenient and render the drug more inaccessible.

Previous reports have suggested that tablets that release ketamine slowly can improve symptoms of depression with fewer side effects. Based on these reports, a team led by Paul Glue at the University of Otago, in New Zealand, proposed that patients could dose themselves safely at home using slow-release ketamine tablets.

“If ketamine is formulated as an extended-release tablet where it takes about 10 hours to release, most ketamine is broken down in the liver before it can get into the blood,” Dr. Glue told *The Hindu* in an email. Ketamine’s metabolites – the compounds formed when the liver breaks ketamine down – are the main drivers of its antidepressant effects, he explained. “However, the lower blood ketamine levels mean patients experience few or no side effects.”

An enriched clinical trial

Dr. Glue’s team developed an extended-release ketamine pill called R-107. To test its effects, they administered it to 231 volunteers recruited from 20 psychiatric clinics in New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, and Taiwan. All the participants had a major depressive disorder and whose symptoms hadn’t shown any improvement despite being treated with at least two antidepressants.

In the first stage of the study, the researchers treated all the participants with 120 mg of R-107 every day for five days. They assessed the participants’ depression symptoms after eight days. Those whose symptoms had not improved left the study at this point, leaving 168 people to proceed to the second stage of the trial.

Many clinical trials use this sort of stepped intervention – called an enrichment phase – to exclude people who don’t respond to acute treatment in



Ketamine is a drug of abuse, and unsupervised treatment in people with depression symptoms or suicidal ideation could be dangerous. Representative image. BEN WHITE/UNSPLASH

the first stage. Only those who respond to the treatment proceed to the next stage, which is double-blind, meaning neither the participants nor the researchers know which participant has received the actual treatment and which a placebo.

According to Dr. Glue, “Normally, depression treatment studies have a high failure rate of about 50%,” where there is no visible difference in responses between those treated with the drug and those treated with the placebo. “The risk of study failure drops to about 20% by using this two-stage design.”

‘Very satisfying to see the results’

The 168 people recruited to the double-blind stage received either placebo tablets or one of four R-107 doses – 30, 60, 120 or 180 mg – twice a week for three months. The participants reported experiencing minimal side effects, including headache, nausea, and anxiety. Very few reported symptoms of dissociation. While some people reported more dire side effects such as severe headache, chest pain, and suicidal ideations, the researchers were able to determine them to be unrelated to the treatment.

After the trial period, more participants treated with the tablets showed improved depression symptoms compared to those who had received placebo (as measured using a standard clinical scale to assess symptom severity). Those treated with 180 mg of ketamine reported the most signs of improvement. And compared to 43% of those who received the highest ketamine dose, 71% of those taking placebo relapsed and suffered from symptoms of depression.

These results didn’t surprise Dr. Glue, since previous early clinical data had



Researchers designed R-107 to be exceptionally hard and difficult to shatter, so people can’t crush the tablet and snort it or dissolve it in water to inject it intravenously for recreational use

revealed rapid antidepressant response to ketamine. “However, antidepressant drug trials can be unpredictable, so it was very satisfying to see the results,” he added.

Rishabh Bajaj, a psychiatrist at Asha Hospital in Hyderabad, also said the results, described in the journal *Nature Medicine* on June 24, were to be expected: “I would be surprised if people did not respond to ketamine.”

The cost question

Most participants in the double-blind stage consumed the pills at home, with brief visits to the clinic that they said did not inconvenience them. This was a sign that extended-release ketamine tablets with fewer or no side effects could ease access to treatment for the people who need it the most, Dr. Glue said.

“A ketamine-containing tablet is convenient, particularly for those in tier-three cities,” said Dr. Bajaj, since they may not have access to clinics for ketamine treatment sessions. The drug costs only about ₹ 20 whereas intravenous treatment, which is more common, can cost anywhere between ₹ 750 and ₹ 2,500 per session, he said. Nasal sprays are usually inaccessible because they are even more expensive, ₹ 10,000 to ₹ 20,000, he said.

However, he added that licensing costs might push up the tablets’ cost as well.

The major limitation of the study, per Dr. Bajaj, was the enrichment phase, which can skew the results because a significant number of people had been excluded after acute treatment. Dr. Glue expressed a similar concern: “Enrichment is fine to demonstrate that the tablets work,” but further studies in more people for regulatory approval will need to have an “unenriched” population as well.

Risk of abuse and overdose

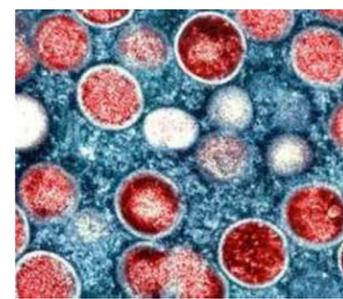
Another concern, according to Dr. Bajaj, is that ketamine is a drug of abuse, and unsupervised treatment in people with depression symptoms or suicidal ideation could be dangerous.

To address some of these concerns, Dr. Glue’s team designed R-107 to be exceptionally hard and difficult to shatter, so people can’t crush the tablet and snort it or dissolve it in water to inject it intravenously for recreational use. Fortunately, none of the trial participants reported craving the tablet either.

Dr. Bajaj agreed making the tablets shatter-proof could mitigate its abuse, but said there was still the possibility of users with severe symptoms overdosing themselves with multiple tablets. He suggested this risk could be reduced by rationing the number of tablets available to users. But the downside of this idea is that patients would have to visit the clinic to refill their prescriptions, which was the point of devising R-107 in the first place.

Having more data about the treatment in more people can make the picture clearer, Dr. Bajaj concluded. “But that is going to take time.”

(Sneha Khedkar is a biologist turned freelance science journalist.)



A coloured transmission electron micrograph of mpx particles (red) found within an infected cell (blue), cultured in the laboratory, captured, and colour-enhanced. NIAID/AP

Children at risk as mpx variant hits Congo camps for displaced

Reuters

Scars from the mpx pustules are still visible on 7-year-old Grace Kabuo’s face, as well as on a handful of her playmates at a camp for displaced people near Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Grace has otherwise recovered from the virus. Her mother, Denise Kahindo, says she is still unsure how her daughter was infected earlier this month.

“I just helplessly noticed the symptoms on her body,” she said. For disease experts, Grace’s case embodies a new concern about mpx, which was first identified over 50 years ago. Her infection was caused by a new variant that appears to be more capable of transmitting between people than previous strains.

Local doctors say they have seen 130 suspected mpx cases, almost entirely in children and adolescents, in the last four weeks at a nearby facility that treats displaced people from the camp.

“Fifty percent [of the 130 cases] are even less than five years old,” said Pierre-Olivier Ngadjjole, a medical advisor for Medair, a charity helping with treating and transporting patients from the camp near Goma to the nearby medical center in Munigi. An estimated 750,000 people have fled to the area due to fighting between the M23 rebel group and the Congolese government.

“You know the children; they play together... and in the displaced person camps, people are side-by-side,” he added.

Mpx, a viral infection that can spread through close contact, is usually mild but can lead to death in some cases. It causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions on the body.

The current mpx outbreak in Congo has already seen around 27,000 cases and

Local doctors say they have seen 130 suspected mpx cases, almost entirely in children and adolescents, in the last four weeks at a facility that treats displaced people from the camps

claimed more than 1,100 lives, most of them children, since the beginning of 2023. It began with the spread of an endemic strain, known as Clade I. But the new variant, known as Clade Ib, appears to spread more easily through routine close contact, as seems to be the case among children.

Another mpx variant, Clade IIb, prompted an international health emergency when it spread globally in 2022, mainly through sexual contact among men who have sex with men. Public health officials in the U.S. and Europe launched campaigns to promote safe sex practices and vaccinated at-risk populations to curb the spread.

In Congo, there are no vaccines or specific treatments for mpx available outside of clinical trials. Stigma, regulatory hurdles, and a lack of money, along with measles and cholera outbreaks in the displacement camps have made it a challenge for people to access medical tools, especially in densely packed locations.

Last month, the country approved the use of two mpx vaccines, but funding remains a significant challenge. Only a few countries have offered to donate shots to Congo, and WHO approval regulations remain a hurdle for international vaccine organisations.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Famous women in space

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

X has the distinction of being both the first Arab woman and the first African woman to go to space. She flew to an altitude of 107 km as part of a mission flown by Blue Origin in 2022. Name X.

QUESTION 2

Y is a doctor and famous as the first woman from France to go to space, in 1996, when she conducted experiments on biology and physiology. She is also the first female astronaut to be given command of a Soyuz capsule during reentry. Name Y.

QUESTION 3

Z is a Chinese astronaut who, in 2013,

became the second woman from the country in space. She was also only one of two women in space on the 50th anniversary of the historic Vostok 6 mission. Name Z.

QUESTION 4

Aside from becoming the first person from Iran to go to space in 2006, _____ is also the first female astronaut to fund her trip to the International Space Station. She also belongs to the _____ family, which sponsored a \$10-million prize floated in 1996. Fill in the first two blanks.

QUESTION 5

Q is the only female astronaut currently in service at Roscosmos, the Russian space agency. In October 2022, she became the first

Russian spacefarer to fly aboard SpaceX’s Crew Dragon capsule to the International Space Station. Name Q.

Answers to July 23 quiz:

1. A ratio of any two such numbers can’t express an irrational number – **Ans: Integers**
 2. Relationship between line segments the ratio of whose lengths is irrational – **Ans: Incommensurable**
 3. Founder of the Kerala school of mathematics – **Ans: Madhava**
 4. Numbers whose square roots are irrational except if they’re perfect squares – **Ans: Natural**
 5. Number of irrational value discovered by Jacob Bernoulli – **Ans: Euler’s constant**
- Visual: **Omar Khayyam**
First contact: Seema Das | Anmol Agrawal | Navaneeth K.P. | K.N. Viswanathan | Shreya Arora

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



Visual: Name this woman. She remains the youngest woman to have flown to space (at 26) and the only woman astronaut who’s undertaken a solo space mission. KREMLIN.RU

For feedback and suggestions for ‘Science’, please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject ‘Daily page’