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MONEY LAUNDERING PROBE **Baghel booked in** Mahadev app case NEWS » PAGE 4





ON THE VERGE OF VICTORY Putin poised to return for another six years WORLD » PAGE 12

BATTLE FOR DEMOCRACY The Myanmar conflict is a regional issue

ASEAN must extend support to the people

EDITORIAL » PAGE 8

DMK recieved

'lottery king'

The Dravida Munnetra

'lottery king' Santiago

crore worth of bonds

purchased by the firm

Kazhagam (DMK) received

₹509 crore in poll bonds from

Martin's Future Gaming and

Hotel Services. Of the ₹1.368

CHENNAL

₹509 crore from



REIGNING SUPREME **Royal Challengers win** WPL Season 2 title **SPORT » PAGE 16**

INSIDE



T.N. Governor stalls Ponmudy's return to Cabinet

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has refused to re-induct DMK leader and former Minister K. Ponmudy, whose conviction in an assets-related case was suspended by the Supreme Court, into the Cabinet saying it goes against constitutional morality. » PAGE 3

2 held in Gujarat for violence at university

AHMEDABAD

The Ahmedabad Police on Sunday arrested two persons in connection with violence at Gujarat University in which at least five foreign students suffered injuries in a latenight brawl on the hostel campus. » PAGE 4

Netanyahu vows not to stop war despite criticisms

TEL AVIV

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu railed on Sunday against growing criticism from the U.S. against his leadershi

Big recipients 'unable' to reveal bond donor data

submitted by parties under SC's directives

Data comes out after the EC published details

BJP, Congress and Trinamool Congress have not shared details about poll bond donors to the EC

DMK

MEIL

14

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Sun TV

Triveni

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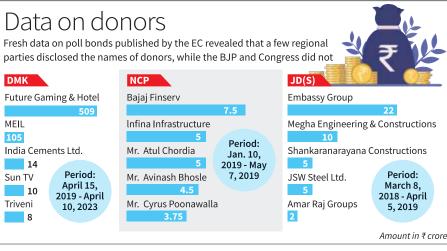
Abhinay Lakshman NEW DELHI

ost large recipients of funding electoral via bonds, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Congress, and the Trinamool Congress have not shared any details about their donors, in submissions made to the Election Commission of India (EC) under the direction of the Supreme Court in May

2019 and November 2023. This came to light on Sunday when the EC published the data previously submitted to it by political parties in sealed covers under the top court's directions. In fact, only a handful of parties have revealed their electoral bond donors' identities in their entirety; these parties in-

the

clude



Munnetra Kazhagam, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and the Janata Dal (Secular).

The BJP, the largest recipient of electoral bonds, justified its move not to reveal the names of donors by citing the rules framed under the electoral bonds

scheme that the SC has struck down as unconstitutional. These rules, it said, precluded parties from having to maintain donor details, and so it claimed these that it had not maintained a record of these particulars. Some of the other parties that did not supply do-

nor details also noted that the scheme was designed in such a way that they did not have ready access to donor information, as were essentially bearer bonds. The details will only be available with the authorised bond issuer, the State Bank of In-

between April 12, 2019 and January 24, 2024, 37% went to the DMK. » PAGE 4 dia (SBI), they said. The Congress and Trinamool Congress, in their

2019 disclosures, said that Congress. they had specifically asked the SBI to provide them with details of the donors' names. In response to the former's request, the SBI had written back in June

BJP says the rules of the scheme had precluded political parties from maintaining donor details

> 2019, saying, "The particulars of a donated EB [electoral bond] is available with the respective donee/ political party."

'Details with the bank' In their updated disclosures for the period till September 2023, the Trinamool Congress again said that the information on donors was only available with the SBI, while the Congress noted that it had requested the bank yet again to provide this information to the ECI in compliance with the SC's directions. It is not clear if the SBI responded again to that missive from

were not shared by these parties subsequently, when the court asked for updated bond receipt details for the period up to September 30, 2023. When political parties submitted their first set of information to the ECI, around May 2019, the country was in the midst of

as the Aam Aadmi Party,

the Nationalist Congress

Party, and the Janata Dal

(United) only revealed do-

nor names from the start

of the electoral bond

scheme in 2018 till May

2019. In some cases, only

some of the donors' names

were disclosed for bond

However, donor names

sales till 2019.

Regional players like the the last Lok Sabha polls. Telugu Desam party, YSR Congress, Bharat Rashtra **MORE REPORTS** Samithi, and Biju Janata » PAGE 5 Dal also did not reveal their **BONDED FAVOURS** bond donors. Others, such » PAGE 8

Formula for Kashmir

Dravida



Modi can't win polls without EVMs, CBI, ED, says Rahul

Purnima Sah **Abhinay Deshpande** MUMBAI

Launching a fierce critirism of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP go vernment, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said Mr. Modi cannot win the Lok Sabha election without electronic voting machines (EVMs), the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and the Income Tax department. Addressing an INDIA bloc rally at Shivaji Park here, he accused the ruling dispensation of subverting democratic institutions. Terming the nowscrapped electoral bonds scheme "white collar corruption", Tamil Nadu Chief





amid the war with Hamas, saying the pressure will not stop Israel from achieving "total victory." » PAGE 12

West may have to intervene in Kviv. says Macron

PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron said in an interview published on Saturday that Western ground operations in Ukraine might be necessary "at some point", days after meeting with German and Polish leaders. » PAGE 12



Fresh tracks: Drivers take part in the first ever Formula-4 car race held on the banks of Dal lake in Srinagar, on Sunday. NISSAR AHMAD

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at the INDIA bloc rally in Mumbai on Sunday. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Minister M.K. Stalin said it proved that the ruling BJP was corrupt. Mr. Stalin further described Mr. Gandhi as the future hope of India and exuded confidence that the INDIA bloc would form a secular, federal, and inclusive government at the Centre.

ty or one man, but against a shakti (power).

In a show of strength, the INDIA bloc leaders had gathered for the massive rally, but the CPI(M) and the CPI boycotted the rally claiming that it was a Congress function.

Mr. Gandhi said their fight was not against a par-

MORE REPORTS » PAGE 5

Trump warns of industrial 'bloodbath' in case he loses

Associated Press VANDALIA

Former U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that he - not President Joe Biden - will protect Social Security and warned of a "bloodbath" if he loses in November as he campaigned for Senate candidate Bernie Moreno in Ohio.

Mr. Trump, speaking on a wind-whipped airfield outside of Dayton on Saturday, praised his chosen candidate in the race as an "America first champion" and "political outsider who has spent his entire life building up Ohio communities."

Saturday's rally was hosted by Buckeye Values PAC, a group backing Mr. Moreno's candidacy. But Mr. Trump used the stage

CM YK



Donald Trump

to deliver a profanity-filled version of his usual rally speech that again painted an apocalyptic picture of the country if Mr. Biden wins a second term.

'Impact of offshoring'

"If I don't get elected, it's going to be a bloodbath for the whole - that is going to be the least of it. It's going to be a bloodbath for the country," he warned, while talking about the impact of offshoring on the country's

auto industry and his plans to increase tariffs on foreign-made cars.

Biden campaign spokesperson James Singer accused Mr. Trump of doubling "down on his threats of political violence." "He wants another Janu-

ary 6, but the American pe-

ople are going to give him

kesman Steven Cheung

said that Mr. Trump had

clearly been talking about

"Crooked Joe Biden

he

another electoral defeatbecause they continue to reject his extremism and his thirst for revenge,"Mr. Singer charged in a statement. Trump campaign spo-

the impact of a second Biden term on the auto industry and broader economy. and his campaign are engaging in deceptively, outof-context editing," said.

Where names indicate the order of birth in a family

Children of the Lisu and Singpho communities in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam are named according to the order they are born in the family, incorporating numbers into names; the names may also help identifying the clan a person belongs to

Rahul Karmakar

MIAO

yu and Agey are familiar names among explorers of the 1,985-sq km

Namdapha, India's easternmost tiger reserve bordering Myanmar. But for members of their Lisu or Yobin community, inhabiting pockets of the Miao subdivision in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, the names of the two brothers are also clear indicators of the order they were born into their family.

In the Lisu dialect, Ayu means seventh, and Agey eighth. Apart from the sequence of their birth, their names reveal that they have at least six male



Traditional affair: Members of the Lisu community taking part in a festival. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Yolisa Yobin of

Gandhigram aka Shidi,

names to indicate the

order of their birth. The

eldest girl in a family has

Ana in her name, and the

ones after her are called

•••

about 120 km from Miao.

siblings, with the eldest named Apu, followed by Adu, Akhi, Achi, Ati, and Apshi.

"I do not write 'Ayu', but members of my family, clan, and tribe call me by that name. Numbering our names is a tradition we generally adhere to," said

Angyi, Acha, Ado, Achhi, Ata, Akhu, Agu, Aju, and Apshi.

'Clearing confusion'

'We have a mechanism for clearing the numerical confusion in cases where two or more families may have an equal or almost equal number of boys and girls. This is done by prefixing or suffixing the given names to the number assigned after birth," Tifusa Yobin, the president of the Yobin Welfare Society told The Hindu.

His name, for instance, Lisu boys and girls have separate sets of numbered is derived from Ati, or the fifth male child in the family. Akhila, his brother, carries Akhi, or the number three in his name. "I should ideally have

used Atifusa but I dropped the 'A' from my name," he said.

He added that Lisu names may also reflect the names of their clans.

The Lisus belong to the Tibeto-Burman family and inhabit the contiguous hilly regions of Arunachal Pradesh, China, Myanmar, and Thailand. They number about 5,000 in India.

The tradition of numbered names is also prevalent among the Singphos, an ethnic group inhabiting 27 countries, including China's Yunnan province. In India, they mostly inhabit the Changlang and Namsai districts of Arunachal Pradesh and the Tinsukia district of Assam.

THE HINDU **States**

2



Arunachal, Sikkim vote counting date rescheduled

The Election Commission of India has rescheduled the date of counting of votes for the Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim from June 4 to June 2. The date was advanced by two days as the current term of the Houses in the two States expires on June 2. Elections to the 60-member Arunachal and the 32-member Sikkim Assembly are scheduled for April 19. The elections to two Lok Sabha seats in Arunachal and one in Sikkim would also be held that day. There will be no change in respect of the schedule for the Lok Sabha poll. PTI

Preparing voters' list was a tough exercise: Assam CEO

Assam Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel on Sunday said that preparation of the voters' list post-delimitation in the State was a tough exercise. He said the State is fully prepared to conduct the Lok Sabha election in a free and fair manner. Addressing a press conference here, Mr. Goel said, "Post-delimitation, preparation of the electoral rolls was a tough exercise. From August to December last year, our officials went through the entire process of shifting places and names in an election commission software." PTI

Modi targets YSRCP, Cong., skips contentious issues in Andhra show of strength

PM says NDA will meet 'regional aspirations' but keeps mum on Special Category Status for State, privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, accuses Congress of working on a 'use-and-throw' basis'

The Hindu Bureau CHILAKALURIPETA

n the first joint public meeting of the BJP, Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena combine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi targetted the ruling YSR Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh calling it a "corrupt government."

Mr. Modi appealed to the electorate not to make the mistake of voting for the YSRCP or the Congress, which, he said, were effectively operating as one and being led by members of the same family in collusion with one another.

Addressing the 'Praja Galam' in Palnadu district on Sunday, Mr. Modi asserted that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would meet "regional aspirations."

Mr. Modi, however, did not touch upon contentious issues such as capital Amaravati, privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu and Jana Sena Party president Pawan Kalyan at Chilakaluripet in Palnadu district on Sunday. K.V.S. GIRI

ED summons Delhi

CM in Jal Board case

Plant, Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh and Polavaram irrigation project. However, TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, who spoke ahead of the Prime Minister, raised the capital issue.

Mr. Modi did not make any specific remarks against Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, but alleged that the Ministers in the State were corrupt.

"The people of Andhra are angry with the YSRCP and want to throw it out of power," he said. Drawing a comparison between the NDA and the Congress, Mr. Modi said, "The Congress works on a 'use-and-throw' scheme, and that is the sole purpose behind the formation of the INDIA bloc. The NDA, on the other hand, moves forward with both regional aspirations and national progress in mind. With the doubleengine government of the NDA in Andhra Pradesh, development here will receive even more momentum."

Mr. Modi, in the same breath, recalled that the NDA government was paying attention to the needs of the farmers.

Under the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, farmers in Palnadu were given over ₹700 crore. During the NDA rule, leading educational institutes were inaugurated or stones had been laid for them, he said. "Elect the maximum

number of NDA MPs to effectively implement the government's Central schemes in the region. All NDA MPs will work for you with great dedication. Now, the nation is saying: '4 June ko 400 paar', ' For a developed India... 400 paar', 'For a developed Andhra Pradesh... 400 paar."

Paper leak proof of 'mafia raj' in **Bihar: Tejashwi**

Press Trust of India PATNA

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday alleged that the question paper leak of a teacher recruitment examination was proof that Bihar under the NDA rule was experiencing a "mafia raj".

The Bihar Police have already detained around 300 aspirants in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district in connection with the alleged question paper leak of the Teacher Recruitment Exam (TRE)-3 of the Public Service State Commission.

During the 17-month 'Mahagathbandhan' rule, people had never heard of any paper leak in the State, Mr. Yadav claimed.

'2 lakh jobs in 70 days' "We conducted TRE-1 and

TRE-2 without any incident of paper leak. We had provided teaching jobs to two lakh aspirants in 70 days, but there was no paper leak at all. But now under the NDA rule, the question paper of TRE-3 was leaked. This is because of mafia

Parents kill minor for falling in

No paper leaks took place when we were in power, says

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav

raj," he said.

Mr. Yadav also alleged that similar incidents of paper leaks were being reported from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the States ruled by the NDA.

The RJD leader said there was an "undercurrent" in Bihar which would lead to "astonishing" results in the upcoming Lok Sabha poll. He emphasised that the outcome of the polls would favour the 'Mahagathbandhan'.

Mr. Yadav highlighted the achievements of the previous grand alliance government in Bihar during its 17 months in power, contrasting it with what he perceived as the lack of progress during the BJP-JDU rule spanning 17 years.

Rohtak win will pave way for Cong. govt. in Haryana: Hooda

The Hindu Bureau GURUGRAM

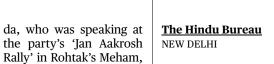
Congress Rajya Sabha member Deepender Hooda on Sunday said he himself and the people of Rohtak were the BJP's target because the result of Rohtak Lok Sabha seat would not just elect a Member of Parliament but also pave the way for the change of government in the State.

Mr. Hooda had lost the Rohtak Lok Sabha seat to BIP's Arvind Sharma by a whisker in 2019. Former Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chauta-



Congress leader Deepender Hooda at a rally in Rohtak on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

la, too, had blamed the split in BJP-JJP alliance over his party's reluctance to contest the Rohtak Lok Sabha seat, a Hooda bas-



The Enforcement Directosaid both the BJP and the JJP were reluctant to conrate (ED) has now sumtest the seat but he would moned Delhi Chief Miniscontinue to work for his ter Arvind Kejriwal for people till his last breath. questioning in a money He said the BJP has money laundering probe linked to power and media but he alleged irregularities in the has blessings of the people. Delhi Jal Board (DJB). Stating that the rally,

According to officials, Mr. Kejriwal was required held a day after the announcement of the Lok to present himself before Sabha poll schedule, the agency on Monday to marked the start of the poll provide his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. The agency has also isin the Delhi excise policy case, asking him to depose

granted him bail in a case linked to the non-compliance of ED notices in the excise policy case.

The ED's case is based on an FIR filed by the CBI alleging irregularities in a DJB contract awarded to a firm, NKG Infrastructure Ltd., for a sum of ₹38 crore

love, dump body in lake; held The Hindu Bureau The accused,

upon interrogation, claimed that they felt 'humiliated' by their daughter's actions

er's body was found floating in the lake.

Rani, Inspector, Nallur police station, who is also the investigating officer of the case, told The Hindu that the victim, a Class XI student, was in a relationship with Siva of Muthali

against the man. However, their families had agreed to perform their marriage once the girl became a major.

Yet, on the night of March 13, the victim was confronted by her parents and her aunt Meenakshi. and was warned against meeting Siva.

In an altercation and tussle that ensued, she was allegedly pushed by her aunt and her mother, and her father strangled her to death. The accused, upon interrogation, claimed that they felt "humiliated" by their daughter's actions.



tion. In an emotional appeal to the electorate, Mr. Hoo-

Hooda said the BJP had betrayed the farmers, the soldiers, and the youth.

campaign for the party. Mr.

sued him a ninth summons

even though the company "did not meet" the technical eligibility criteria.

Kamakshi - had lodged a complaint on Saturday stating that their daught-

A couple was arrested on

Sunday on charges of mur-

dering their 16-year-old

daughter, who had fallen in

love with a 25-year-old

man, and dumping her bo-

dy in a lake at Bagalur in

Tamil Nadu's Krishnagiri

district. A relative, who al-

legedly assisted them in

the crime, was also taken

According to the police,

he couple - Prakash and

into custody.

HOSUR

The two had village. eloped two years ago, and a case was registered

Rising costs, dwindling demand: weavers face a slub in Bhagalpur, Bihar's 'Silk City'

SPOTLIGHT

Amit Bhelari

As a fourth-generation weaver, Sunil Das, 55, cannot remember a time he was not surrounded by silk sarees. Now, he is tired. He bears many burdens: of low wages in the fast-dwindling market for handwoven sarees that often cost 10 times a silk, the rising costs of raw material, and the social stigma of belonging to the tanti or weaving community, classified by the Indian government under the Extremely Backward Classes.

Das lives in Bhagalpur town, once called the Silk City of Bihar, situated on the banks of the Ganga. The district with the same name, in Bihar's southernmost area, has 1,689 villages and a population of over 30 lakh, as per the 2011 Census. The sleepy town is also a centre of Manjusha painting, the green-pinkyellow hues depicting stories of the adopted daughters of Shiva and Parvati.

The Bhagalpur Regional Handloom Weavers Co-operative Union, a 25-yearold organisation, records the business of silk handlooms in the area. "Five years ago, there were about 2 lakh weavers in Bhagalpur; now there are

60,000," says Javed Saleh Ansari, 65, chairperson of the cooperative union. Soaring yarn price dwindled the business down from ₹600 crore per annum in 2015 to its current

₹150 crore, he says. "I don't know any other work. But if I don't work, what will I feed my family? There was a time we would get bulk orders and good money," says Das, as he weaves a saree of tussar, a wild silk of central India, the cocoons of which were traditionally foraged by tribes. It will take him two days to finish the natural brown-gold 6.5 metres.

Silence of the looms

Das uses a traditional pitloom, where the weaver sits on the ground, feet in a pit, with the loom at ground level, so that adequate force can be applied while weaving with a fly shuttle. He manages to make just about ₹200 to ₹250 per day, on a loom owned by Subodh Kumar, 40, a fellow weaver. He comes to Kumar's house the pandemic, from which they are still recovering. daily, walking the 2 km every morning, and working

through the day. Pinky Devi, 38, Kumar's wife, helps him by rolling the yarn used. Five years ago, Kumar's family had four pitlooms; now they operate only two. It has become hard to find weavers;



Poor returns: Fifty-five-year-old Sunil Das weaving a silk sari using pitloom at Maskand Barai; he manages to make just about ₹200 to ₹250 per day. (Right) Pinky Devi spinning the yarn that will be used in cloth-making at the same locality in Bihar's Bhagalpur district. AMIT BHELARI

most have migrated to powerlooms or simply left the profession behind. "When two looms were closed, I decided to help my husband. I finish the kitchen work and other chores early in the morning. After 12 noon, I start spinning the yarn. The more I spin, the more fabric can be woven," Devi says, at her exposed brick home that is also their place of work. The family's monthly income ranges between ₹5,000 and ₹6,000. They still remember the slowdown during

up from ₹10,000; while muga silk, from Assam's Brahmaputra valley, is at ₹8,500, previously ₹4,000. About 10 or 12 years ago, traders would buy cocoons from Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh to process the yarn over a couple of days, unwinding filaments from cocoons, drying, boiling, and reeling the thread. Now, the yarn comes from cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, and Kolkata, indicating a shift from the traditional value chain, where production took place within the central In-Five years ago, a kg of dia landscape. Often, they tussar silk thread was availwarp the Korean or Chiable at ₹3,000; now it costs nese mulberry silk, with ₹75,000. Similarly, eri, the weft being locally another wild silk from produced.

duced through sericulture,

now costs ₹21,000 per kg,

In 2013, Bhagalpur silk got the government's geographical indications (GI) tag, protecting both the

quality and distinctiveness of the product. "For a certification to be provided, the traditional process must be maintained, both in terms of sourcing materials and the way it is woven," says Sandeep Kumar, deputy director of the Weavers' Service Centre in Bhagalpur, a 50-year-old organisation under the Ministry of Textiles. There are about 1,000 weavers who have the GI certificates.

Broken chains

Bimal Kumar, 48, a powerloom owner, asserts that there was no profit in the handloom silk business, so he shifted to cotton and linen. "We hardly get any bulk buyers in Bhagalpur," Kumar says. Many weavers – about 60% are Muslim – have stopped weaving.

Nazish Ahmad, 42, shifted to construction, about a decade ago. "My father used to be a silk weaver, but there was no profit. There is no government support to expand the silk cluster, so we decided to close," says Ahmad, who himself has only dabbled in weaving.

Traditionally, every process of the value chain, from farming to weaving, was within a concentrated geographical area that formed a cluster. Today, there is a differentiation between, say, a farming

and a weaving cluster. Abid Ansari, 50, another weaver, opened a grocery shop four years ago. "I used to earn ₹8,000 to ₹10,000 a month, which was not enough for a fivemember family. My three children are studying in private schools, and I was not able to pay their fees. Now, I earn ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 a month," Ansari says.

...(

In 2022, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had announced on National Handloom Day that an integrated weavers' development scheme would be launched for weavers, which would bundle several benefits into one, so separate paperwork wouldn't have to be processed for different schemes. Nothing has come of this yet. From 2017, the Satrangi

Chadar Yojana, under

which handloom bed-

sheets in seven colours

(one for each day of the

week) began to be sourced

from weavers of cotton

cloth for government hos-

pitals and medical colleg-

es. However, there had

been no benefit for silk

weavers. This scheme, too,

collapsed after 2020, when

private players began the

"We expected the next

generation to learn silk

weaving, but seeing our

difficulties, our children

don't want to," says Javed,

sitting in his house with the

khat-khat of looms at

work. One of his sons has

migrated to Mumbai to run

a carpet business; his other

son is a weaver who owns

about 10 powerlooms, the

70% electricity subsidy be-

nefiting him. "Today, we

are labourers, not craftspe-

ople, for big traders. The

supply of bedsheets.

The drift away

and Korea has badly affected weavers," he says, adding that thousands of people used to be involved in separating silk thread from cocoons. "They are now migrants to other States, daily wagers, mostly in construction." Another problem is the fluctuating rate of silk in the market. "It feels like the share market," says Javed.

import of silk from China

Officers at the Weavers' Service Centre claim that weavers have no difficulties, and that the Ministry is giving them ample support. "We serve weavers through the National Handloom Development Programme [aimed at providing raw material, design inputs, technology upgradation]. We provide loom accessories and training, apart from arranging buyer-seller meets," says Prabhat Singh, one of the officers working there. He says they recommend the names of prominent weavers in the community for handloom expositions at the State and national levels. "We have the Samarth Scheme, a skilling programme. I don't think that the silk industry is going down," Singh says, sitting on a plastic chair in the decrepit building.

LINK TO FULL STORY

» https://rb.gy/1ki16z

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northeast India, which has

the look and feel of cotton,

was at ₹1,000, but is now

₹5,000. Mulberry silk, pro-

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ISSN 0971 - 751X



Sangita Kalanidhi award for vocalist T.M. Krishna

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

Carnatic vocalist and Magsaysay Award winner T.M. Krishna has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award of the Music Academy for 2024.

The news about the award was conveyed to Mr. Krishna by N. Murali, president, Music Academy, when the singer was performing, with his wife Sangeetha and students, at the memorial of St. Thyagaraja at Thiruvaiyaru.

The Executive Committee of the Music Academy, at its meeting on Sunday, decided to confer the award on him.

"He has been a topranking and extremely talented musician for a long time and truly deserves the award for his music. The Music Academy has thought it fit to confer on

na, who has penned a books on M.S. Subbulakshmi and history of mridangam makers.

He learnt from Sangita Kala Acharyas Bhagavatula

him the award on the basis

of sheer excellence in mus-

ing to be chosen for the

award and it is a special

moment in my life," said

Mr. Krishna, who visits the

memorial of Thyagaraja

once in a year to perform.

Iyer, said Sangita Kalanidhi

was without doubt a very

important award in the

cause the recipients of the

awardees include my

teacher Semmangudi Srini-

vasa Iyer, T. Brinda, M.S.

Subbulakshmi who you ad-

mire and look up to for in-

spiration," said Mr. Krish-

"It is also humbling be-

Carnatic music world.

Mr. Krishna, a student of

Srinivasa

"It is very overwhelm-

ic," said Mr. Murali.

Semmangudi



A file photo of T.M. Krishna (left) and Neena Prasad.

Seetharama Sarma and Chengalpet Ranganathan before coming under the tutelage of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer.

'Adherence to tradition' "Known for his powerful voice and his adherence to tradition when it comes to the art, he has experimented widely with its format. He has also worked towards expanding the lispresented to mridhangam player Parassala Ravi (V. Raveendran Nair) and vocalist Geetha Raja.

Other awards TTK Awards will go to Thiruvaiyyaru Brothers S. Narasimhan and S. Venkatesan, who are from a musical lineage that stretches back to Tyagaraja. Another artiste who will get the award is violinist H.K. Narasimhamurthy. The Musicologist Award will be given to Margaret

Bastin. This year's Nritya Kalanidhi award will be presented to Neena Prasad.

She had her training in Mohinivattam from Kalamandalam Kshemavati and Kalamandalam Sugandhi. She learnt Bharatanatyam from Sangita Kala Acharya Adyar K. Lakshmanan, Kuchipudi from Vempati Chinna Satyam and Kathakali from Vembayam Appukuttan Pillai. She obtained her Ph.D. from Rabindra Bharathi University for her thesis on Lasva and Thandava in South Indian classical dances. She was awardpost-doctoral ed а fellowship from the University of Surrey.

The Sangita Kalanidhi awardee will preside over the academic sessions of the 98th Annual conference and concerts of the Music Academy to be held between December 15, 2024 and January 1, 2025, and will receive the award, together with those selected for the Sangita Kala Acharya, the TTK and the Musicologist awards at the

Sadas on January 1, 2025. The Nritva Kalanidhi awardee will receive the award at the inauguration of the academy's 18th Annual Dance Festival on January 3, 2025.

21 fishermen from Tamil Nadu held by Sri Lankan Navy



Stringent action: One of the trawlers that were seized by the Sri Lankan Navy on Saturday night. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau RAMESWARAM

The Sri Lankan Navy on Saturday night arrested 21 Rameswaram fishermen and impounded two of their trawlers.

According to reports, the Navy personnel on surveillance duty arrested the fishers near Neduntheevu islet and took them to the Kankesanthurai port for interrogation. They were held on charges of poaching and crossing the International Maritime Boun-

dary Line. Fisheries Department officials in Rameswaram said that more than 3,000 fishermen had ventured into the Palk Bay for fishing. The 21 fishermen – 12 in one boat and nine in the second – are likely to be produced before a court in Sri Lanka and sent to judicial custody.

Fisherfolk in Rameswa-Thangachimadam ram, Mandapam were and shocked to hear about the fresh arrests.

"This [the arrest] has only shown the lackadaisical attitude of the govern-

mocratic Front (LDF), the

United Democratic Front

(UDF), and the BJP-led Na-

tional Democratic Alliance

(NDA), especially in Thiru-

The community has

rarely behaved as a homo-

genous voting bloc, given

the level of political frac-

tionalisation, chiefly bet-

ween the UDF and the LDF.

However, the ruling front

and the Opposition antici-

pate that the Church's in-

creasingly vocal concern

about rising far-right ma-

joritarianism might galvan-

ise the minority communi-

ty into adopting a more

uniform voting pattern in

about the fate of two other

University Law (Amend-

ment) Bills.

the polls.

vananthapuram.

ments here. They have not redressed our genuine grievances despite several appeals. Only last month, our leaders met Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in Chennai and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in New Delhi and submitted memoranda. However, no steps have been taken to protect us...," the fishermen explained.

Fishermen leader P. Jesu Raja told The Hindu that the arrest came within a few hours of announcement of the Lok Sabha election dates.

"We don't know where to go and plead now. Our plight is so bad that we want to give up fishing in the Palk Bay. We have doubts whether the promises made to us by political leaders [will be fulfilled]," he said.

"The Sri Lankan courts had already awarded six months, one-year and twoyear jail terms to five of our fishermen. With the model code of conduct coming into effect, neither officials nor politicians will take up our case. We are in a helpless situation...," he added.

BJP has no role in BRS MLC Kavitha's arrest, says **Kishan Reddy**

Governor stalls Ponmudy's return to Cabinet

R.N. Ravi writes to CM Stalin to remind him that the Supreme Court had only suspended the conviction as interim relief and had not set it aside; response comes a day after Law Minister said there would be no issue in the swearing-in of the DMK leader after announcement of the poll schedule

S. Vijay Kumar CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has refused to re-induct senior DMK leader and former Higher Education Minister K. Ponmudy into the Cabinet saying it would be against constitu-

tional morality to do so. In a letter to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Mr. Ravi said it was pertinent to note that the Supreme Court had suspended the

conviction by way of interim relief to Mr. Ponmudy.

It only meant that the conviction, though existent, had been made nonoperative and not set aside, sources in the Raj Bhavan told The Hindu on Sunday.

The offences for which Mr. Ponmudy was held guilty were very serious relating to corruption that he committed as a public servant. "As he remains tainted of corruption, re-induc-



tion as Minister would be against constitutional morality and hence, I am unable to accede to your re-

As he remains tainted of corruption, re-induction as Minister would be against constitutional morality and hence, I am unable to accede to your request Sources quoting R.N. Ravi

tener base of the art by tak-

ing it to varied social

settings and focusing on its

exploratory as opposed to

tightly defined structures.

He has used music as a tool

for social reform," a press

release from the academy

said. Mr. Krishna has re-

ceived several awards for

music, writing and cham-

Acharya awards will be

Sangita

Kala

pioning social causes.

The

quest," the sources quoted Mr. Ravi as saying in the letter. On his return after a three-day visit to Delhi, Mr. Ravi replied to Mr. Stalin's letter requesting time for the swearing-in ceremony of Mr. Ponmudy.

Opinion of experts He had sought the opinion

of legal experts on whether inducting him back into the Cabinet would be correct when the conviction was not set aside by the top court. Mr. Ravi's response

comes a day after the State

Law Minister said there would be no issues in the swearing-in of the DMK leader even after the announcement of the schedule for conducting the Lok Sabha elections.

Mr. Ponmudy was disqualified as MLA after the Madras High Court sentenced him to three years in jail in a disproportionate assets case in December 2023. The Supreme Court had later stayed his conviction and sentence.



Latin Catholic Church calls for action on 'intolerance'

<u>G Anand</u> THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

against the rising tide of rebloc that could sway the prospects of the Left De

Fit check: Women wearing saris participate in a 'sari run' in Hyderabad on Sunday. The first-of-its-kind event in Hyderabad was organised to encourage women to prioritise fitness. G. RAMAKRISHNA

Latin Catholic The

Church's call for action to create social awareness against increasing attacks on Christians and growing religious intolerance for minorities arguably held attendant electoral ramifications for the duelling political fronts in the runup to Lok Sabha election in Kerala, especially in the coastal districts. On Sunday, Metropoli-

tan Archbishop of the Latin Catholic Archdiocese of Trivandrum Thomas J. Netto urged the laity to observe prayer and fasting on March 22 as a benign form of protest and social action ing prejudice against minorities. The Church's message is arguably a nod to the polit-

ical narrative that the ascendancy of the Hindu farright outfits posed an existential threat to secularism, democracy, and diversity.

687 attacks in 2023

The Archbishop said that the attacks on Christians had jumped from 147 in 2014 to 687 in 2023.

According to the 2011 census, Latin Catholics constituted 13% of Kerala's Christians (18% of the total population). They remained a crucial electoral

<u>The Hindu Bureau</u> HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP chief and Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy has denied any "vendetta politics" behind the arrest of Bharat Rashtra Samithi MLC K. Kavitha by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for her alleged role in the now-scrapped Delhi liquor policy case.

A special PMLA court on Saturday remanded her in ED custody till March 23.

Mr. Reddy also accused former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's daughter of having had "dubious liquor deals" with the AAP government in Delhi.

"The ED probe into Ms. Kavitha's business deals has nothing to do with BJP or Telangana people or politics. A CBI investigation team stumbled upon evidence of her role in the illegal liquor business with the Delhi government and money laundering," he said at a press conference on

Sunday. "What is the BRS agitating against? It is shameful that the party is resorting to the burning of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's effigies when there are belt [liquor] shops everywhere much to detriment to society," he said.

KTR's visit

K.T. Rama Rao met Ms. Kavitha at the agency office

While sending Ms. Kavitha to the ED custody, the court had allowed some relatives to meet her for half an hour every day during the remand period. (With PTI inputs)

CID launches probe into POCSO case against Yediyurappa

Shreyas H.S. BENGALURU

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has launched a probe into the POCSO case against the former Karnataka Chief Mi-

nister B.S. Yediyurappa. The Sadashivanagar Police had registered a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 on March 14 based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl that Mr. Yediyurappa allegedly molested the girl when they went to his house seeking help. The State government handed over the case to the CID. The girl underwent a

YK

The police had filed a case against the former CM based on <u>a complaint</u> that he allegedly molested a 17-year-old girl

medical exam on Friday and Saturday at a private hospital in Bengaluru.

The next step in the probe is to record the statement of the victim before a magistrate. Since the complainant is the girl's mother, the victim is yet to make any statement before the authorities. As per procedure, the victim's statement will be recorded before a magistrate very soon, a senior official said.

JD(S) convenes meeting amid row with BJP over Kolar seat

The Hindu Bureau BENGALURU

As the Kolar Lok Sabha seat has become a bone of contention between the BIP and the Janata Dal (S), the latter has convened an emergency meeting on Monday to discuss the issue.

While the JD(S) had been claiming for over two months that it would get Hassan, Mandya, and Kolar seats as its share in the arrangement between the coalition partners, issues have cropped up in the Kolar reserved constituency.

The JD(S) sources say the party now believes that "invisible hands" in the local BJP unit are at work to foist a candidate, an influential former Minister

from Bengaluru, for the seat. The development comes a day after the former Chief Minister and senior JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi where the issue reportedly came up for discussion.

JD(S)'s predicament

Candidates are yet to be announced for these seats that will go to the polls in the second phase on April 26. If Kolar slips out of the JD(S) hands, it will be left with only two seats to contest, down from the seven it contested in 2019 in alliance with the Congress, and 27 it contested in its first Lok Sabha elections in 1999.

BJP candidate S. Munis-

wamy won the seat in 2019 Lok Sabha election, defeating seven-time MP and former Minister K.H. Muniyappa. Infighting in the Congress, and JD(S) cadre opposed to the alliance with the Congress had made the upset possible.

"Mr. Kumaraswamy has convened an emergency meeting to discuss the Kolar seat following pressure from party leaders. The party feels slighted at the move of the BJP State unit in foisting a candidate after the JD(S) was asked to prepare the ground in the constituency," the source told The Hindu.

Former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda is also likely to speak to the BJP Central leadership.

Kerala to move SC on President withholding her assent to Bills

K.S. Sudhi KOCHI

Kerala will soon challenge before the Supreme Court the legality of President Droupadi Murmu withholding her assent to the Bills passed by the Kerala Legislature.

The President had withheld assent to Kerala University Laws (Amendment No. 2) Bill 2022, University Law Amendment Bill, 2022, and the University Law Amendment Bill, 2021 from the seven Bills that were referred to her in November 2023. However, she gave her assent to the Kerala Lok Ayukta (Amendment) Bill, 2022. The State is yet to hear

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The move of the Kerala government will open doors for a Constitutional debate on the scope of a judicial review of the decisions of the President. The State would contend that the legality of the President's decisions and the factors that influenced

them can be judicially reviewed. The State plans to bring up the issue before the Supreme Court on March 22 when the court considers its writ petition seeking to issue a directive to the Governor to act on the Bills passed by the State Legislature.

Meanwhile, BRS leader on Sunday.

THE HINDU

Chhattisgarh EOW books ex-CM

impacting party's poll preparations; he questions 'donations to the BJP by lottery magnate Santiago Martin's company'

DMK received over ₹500 crore from firm of 'lottery magnate'

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) received ₹509 crore in electoral bonds from 'lottery king' Santiago Martin's Future Gaming and Hotel Services, the largest donor to political parties in India. Of the ₹1,368 crore worth of bonds purchased by the firm between April 12, 2019 and January 24, 2024, 37% went to the DMK.

In total, the DMK re-₹656.5 ceived crore through the electoral bond route during the same period. This includes the ₹105 crore the party received from "Mega Infrastructure". Incidentally, while the DMK has merely mentioned the name of the donor as "Mega Infrastructure", an analysis of the Election Commission's (EC) data showed that the contributor is likely to be Hyderabad-based Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), as the dates on which the bonds were purchased by the company and dates on which the equivalent sums were encashed by the DMK, match. The firm had purchased ₹966 crore worth of electoral bonds,

The DMK is one of the few parties along with the AIADMK,

the second highest in the country. Close to 10% of MEIL's total purchases went to the DMK.

It is important to note that information about donors and their donations before April 12, 2019, is not in the public domain yet. For instance, India Cements has donated ₹14 crore to the DMK through electoral bonds, but data on only ₹4 crore worth of bonds purchased by the company after April 12, 2019 was in the public domain till Saturday.

Sun TV Network Limited donated ₹10 crore; Triveni (full name not known) donated ₹8 crore; "IRB" (likely IRB MP Expressway Private Ltd.) donated ₹2 crore; and Apollo Tyres, Birla, and LMW donated ₹1 crore each. The DMK is one of the few parties along with the AIADMK, which had disclosed donor information in their letter to the Secretary of the EC's Election Expenditure Division.

which had disclosed donor information

Apart from these firms,

Shubhomoy Sikdar RAIPUR ormer Chhattisgarh

gistered by the State's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in connection with the alleged Mahadev app online betting scam, officials said on Sunday. Mr. Baghel, who is the Congress candidate for the Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha constituency, denied the

allegations, saying that they were intended to tarnish his reputation and mitigate the electoral impact of his candidacy on the Bharatiya Janata Party

Chief Minister and

leader Bhupesh Baghel has

been named in a First In-

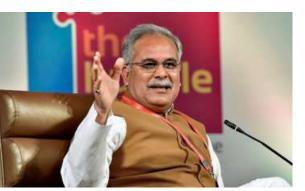
formation Report (FIR) re-

Congress

senior

(BJP). The FIR, registered on March 4, is based on a probe report submitted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

It lists 21 accused including Mahadev app promoters Ravi Uppal, Saurabh Chandrakar, Shubham Soni, and Anil Kumar Agrawal, all of whom have been booked under legal provisions pertaining to cheat-



Bhupesh Baghel.

ing and forgery.

Unnamed "bureaucrats concerned, police officials, officers on special duty (OSD), and other unidentified private people" have also been entered in the accused column.

Protection money

While it does not go into the specific allegations against the former CM, the FIR does mention that "the promoters of the Mahadev Book app received protection from various police, administrative officials, and influential political figures to prevent legal action against their illegal activities related to the online betting app. As a result, they regularly received

substantial amounts of protection money".

According to the FIR, hawala operators were used to arrange and distribute this illicit money, and police officers and employees were also used as couriers to distribute the protection money. "The amount of protection money reached police officers/employees and influential political figures through hawala operators, who then distributed it to the relevant police/administrative officials and influential political figures,"

it adds. Corruption allegations, including those related to the Mahadev app, were a major component of the

BJP's campaign against Mr. Baghel, who ruled the State between 2018 and late 2023. Days before the first phase of last year's Assembly election, a driver named Asim Das had claimed that he was tasked by Mr. Soni to deliver a substantial amount of cash (₹5.39 crore) to Mr. Baghel, who has refuted the allegations.

This is the latest in a long list of FIRs registered under the new BJP government in the State. These FIRs were linked to acts of alleged corruption during Mr. Baghel's rule, mostly linked to existing money laundering probes by the ED.

Mr. Baghel claimed that the "genie was let out of the bottle" to impact the Lok Sabha election in Chhattisgarh, questioning the content of the FIR as well as its timing.

Given this context, the BJP accusing the erstwhile "It is said in this FIR that 'protection of various pol-Congress government of ice and administrative offipatronising the Mahadev cials and influential politi-App is laughable, he adcal persons was obtained ded. "This is the same BJP to stop the legal action'. that has taken ₹1,368 crore Now the question is that as election donations from when no one's name is Future Gaming," he althere among these various leged.

people, then why did Chhattisgarh Police think of registering my name only?" he asked.

Chief Minister] Vishnu Deo

Sai's government?" he

Mr. Baghel also noted

that Future Gaming and

Hotel Services PR, headed

by lottery magnate Santia-

go Martin, was the largest

purchaser of electoral

bonds in the last five years.

asked.

Claiming that during his sisting of the second, third, tenure, he had acted fourth and fifth floors of against those running the Hotel One Continent in Mahadev App syndicate, Hyderabad, to the extent of he questioned why the app ₹43.84 crore under the was still working despite provisions of Prevention of the BJP now in power in Money Laundering Act both the Centre and State. (PMLA), 2002, in a loan "But Mahadev App is still fraud case related to the running, so the question is Punjab and Maharashtra who kept protecting it after Cooperative (PMC) Bank. our government was re-The ED initiated the investigation on the basis of a moved, [Prime Minister] Narendra Modi's government or [Chhattisgarh

First Information Report filed by PMC against Joy Thomas, Waryam Singh (Directors of PMC Bank), Rakesh Kumar Wadhawan, his son Sarang Wadhawan and unknown other persons under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

The Housing Development and Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. (HDIL), its promoters and other co-accused/ accomplices committed fraud by causing a loss of ₹6,117.93 crore against PMC Bank, the ED officials said in a statement.

So far, the ED has attached assets aggregating to ₹719.11 crore.

Modi directs Union Ministers to prepare road map for new govt.

<u>The Hindu Bureau</u> NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the Union Cabinet meeting on Sunday, asked his Ministerial colleagues to prepare a draft road map for the first 100 days and the next five years for the new government.

The Union Ministers ould hold meetings with senior officials of their departments to ensure that the road map is implemented accordingly, according to government sources. Given that the Election Commission of India has announced the schedule for the Lok Sabha election on Saturday, the Cabinet also decided to recommend to the President the



2047" (Developed India 2047) and a detailed action plan for the next five years.

'Intensive preparation' "The road map for Viksit Bharat is a result of more than two years of intensive preparation. It involved a 'whole of government' approach involving all Ministries and wide-ranging consultations with State

Foreign students attacked over *namaz* in Gujarat; two arrested

Mahesh Langa AHMEDABAD

The Ahmedabad Police on Sunday arrested two persons in connection with the violence at Gujarat University in which at least five foreign students suffered injuries in a latenight brawl on the hostel campus.

The police have booke



(voluntarily causing hurt), 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others), and 447 (punishment for trespass), among others.

Reacting to the incident, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the Gujarat Police had taken strict

ED attaches portion of **Baghel in Mahadev app scam case** hotel in PMC bank scam The Congress candidate for Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha constituency denies the allegations, claims the move is aimed at

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directo-

rate (ED), Mumbai, on Sa-

turday said that they have

provisionally attached im-

movable properties con-



Eager crowd: BJP supporters hold placards ahead of the Lok Sabha election in New Delhi. PTI

issuance of requisite statutory notifications.

Earlier this month, seeking to send a message of confidence that the BJP-led tion National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would once again come to power, the

Union Council of Ministers

led by the Prime Minister had discussed a 100-day agenda for quick implementation after the formaof the new government. The Cabinet had also de-

liberated on the vision document for "Viksit Bharat

governments, academia, industry bodies, civil society, and scientific organisations, and mobilisation of the youth for seeking their ideas, suggestions and inputs. More than 2,700 meetings, workshops, and seminars were held at various levels. Suggestions of more than 20 lakh youth were received," a source had said.

over a dozen others. Investigation is under way. The two arrested persons were identified as Hitesh Mewada and Bharat Patel. The police have formed

several teams to nab the culprits. Two students, one from Sri Lanka and another from Tajikistan, were hos-

pitalised after the violence took place in the boys' hos-

Police investigate the Gujarat University hostel campus where the students were assaulted on Sunday. PTI

tel's A-block on Saturday night.

As many as five international students, who are from Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, South Africa and Sri Lanka, were offering na*maz* when an outside mob allegedly protested and shouted religious slogans, measures.

"An incident of violence took place at Gujarat University in Ahmedabad. Two foreign students were injured in the clash. One of them has been discharged from hospital after receiving medical attention. The MEA is in touch with the Gujarat government," said MEA spokesman Randhir Jaiswal in a post on X.

Properties linked to Aaditya Thackeray's aide attached by ED

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said that their officials from the Mumbai zonal office have provisionally attached immovable properties worth ₹88.51 lakh of Shiv Sena (UBT) functionary Suraj Chavan under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 in Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) khichdi case. He is a close associate of Aaditya Thackeray.

The officials said that the attached properties were in the form of a residential flat in Mumbai and a parcel of agricultural land in the Ratnagiri district. of Maharashtra.

The ED initiated the investigation on the basis of a First Information Report registered by Agripada police station, Mumbai, under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code.



Suraj Chavan

The ED investigation revealed that Mr. Chavan played a role in "obtaining work orders in favour of M/s Force One circumventing eligibility criteria laid down by the BMC and Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai", against which he allegedly retainted funds ceived amounting to ₹1.35 crore, acquired by defrauding the BMC and the MCGM and by supplying 'khichdi' packets of lesser quantity".

Mr. Chavan was arrested for his involvement in money laundering and is under judicial custody. Further Investigation is under progress.

'Elections in India and EU holding up trade pact talks'

Ireland's Trade Minister says progress on an FTA will accelerate when there is a new European Commission in place after polls and both sides will have to compromise in some areas that matter; explaining Ireland's tough stance on the war in Gaza, he says Israel is behaving 'like a rogue state'

<u>Suhasini Haidar</u> NEW DELHI

INTERVIEW Simon Covenev The focus really has been

lections to the Euro-pean Parliament and in India this year are holding up talks for the India-European Union Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement, Simon Coveney, Ireland's Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment said, indicating that unlike the India European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed last week, the EU agreement will take at least another year to be finalised. Speaking about his talks in New Delhi this week in an interview with The Hindu, the Minister explained Ireland's tough stance on the war in Gaza, where he said Israel is behaving "like a rogue state". year in terms of goods and

What was your mission and what do you think was accomplished?

on two things. First of all, building trade and enterprise opportunities between Ireland and India, and to build political collaboration. There's a huge difference, of course, between the size of India and Ireland in terms of population. But if you look at what's happening in the Irish economy and what's happening here in India, there are a lot in common in terms of the application of technology, new digital platforms, the pharmaceutical industry, medical devices, and the semiconductor industry, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has decided to priori-

tise. Ireland is Europe's lar-

gest producer of semicon-

trade figures today are

about 10 billion Euros a

India-Ireland

ductors.



Simon Coveney

services, but we think we can create much more trade between us.

After Brexit, the EU and India fast-tracked trade talks. Yet this week, India has signed an agreement with the EFTA countries – four non-EU countries – but there is still no agreement with the EU. Where are the sticking points?

Politics is the straight answer to that question.

trade agreement between the EU and India. We think it would be hugely beneficial for India to be able to trade tariff-free with the largest consumer spending market in the world, which is the EU. We also think it would be hugely beneficial for the EU. Ireland understands the defensive interests that India has in agriculture, for example, because we also have a big agricultural industry and we would like to protect it in the context of free trade agreements.

I think in truth, there are

elections coming up in In-

dia, and in the EU, and

when you lead into elec-

tions, it's difficult to find

compromise positions. I

hope when there's a new

European Commission in

place in the late summer,

and of course, when

there's political stability,

post elections here in In-

dia, there will be an oppor-

tunity in the autumn of this

year for the EU and India

to try to accelerate pro-Ireland wants to see a free gress on an FTA.

This negotiation will be managed primarily by the

which led to an altercation

between the two groups

According to the police,

Hitesh Mewada and Bharat

Patel have been arrested

under multiple Sections of

the Indian Penal Code, in-

cluding 143 (unlawful as-

sembly), 147 (rioting), 323

and subsequent violence.

European Commission. We have a pretty intense debate within the EU, and then the European Commission gets its negotiating mandate. We do have to make compromises in some areas that matter to India, but we also expect India to compromise in some areas that matter to the EU too.

Given the global tensions and disruption to international trade that we've seen over the last number of years, from CO-VID to conflict in Ukraine, in the Middle East, and in parts of Africa, the EU is focused on the importance of trade as a stabiliser for good international relations. And we see India as a friend in this part of the world.

Ireland has taken a strong position against Israel on the war in

Gaza....did you discuss this with your Indian counterparts?

I think India has been a

strong voice calling for a ceasefire now too, and I'm sure India will be a strong supporter of the humanitarian effort that's going to be needed to try to avoid mass starvation and many other humanitarian challenges that the population that is trapped inside Gaza is feeling right now. Israel, of course, has the right to defend itself and its people. But I think what's happened in Gaza has gone way beyond self-defence stage. I've said Israel is acting like a rogue state because they're not listening to anybody, and they are not being guided by international law. We expect more from a democratic country like Israel than we expect from Hamas, which is a terrorist organisation. You cannot become a monster in order to defeat a

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A IN-X

monster.

News

CSK Cricket Ltd. is biggest donor for AIADMK

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

The All India Anna Dravida Kazhagam Munnetra (AIADMK) had received ₹6.05 crore through the electoral bond route, with the majority of the contributions coming from Chennai Super Kings Cricket Ltd. (The directors of India Cements Ltd.). All these funds through electoral bonds were received between April 2 and April 4, 2019 – in a span of two days. The party did not receive any electoral bonds in subsequent years.

The CSK Cricket Ltd. had donated ₹5 crore in all.

The party received ₹1 crore from the Coimbatore-based Lakshmi Machine Works Ltd. and ₹5 lakh from an individual, Gopal Srinivasan, of Chennai, according to the information shared by it with the Secretary of the Election Commission's Election Expenditure Division.

Did not maintain names, details of poll bond donors: BJP to EC

The party said particulars of donations were not maintained as it was not required under the then-existing legal provisions; it said the scheme was introduced to bring 'only accounted for funds' while protecting the donors from any consequences

Devesh K. Pandey NEW DELHI

he Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in its letter to the Election Commission (EC) sharing other details of the donations received through electoral bonds till September 2023, had not disclosed the names of donors, pointing out that those particulars were not maintained as it was not required under the then-ex-

isting legal provisions. According to the fresh data made public by the EC, through a letter dated November 3, 2023, it had sought the details of the donations made to the BJP through electoral bonds.

On November 15, 2023, the party wrote back to the commission sharing particulars of such donations, totalling around ₹6,987



A worker paints the BJP's symbol on a wall at Murshidabad in West Bengal in preparation of campaigns for the Lok Sabha election. PTI

crore, received from March 2018 till September 2023. However, it did not dis-

not revealing them.

full particulars of the credit

received against each

Question on duality

The question why some

political parties like the

Dravida Munnetra Kazha-

gam (DMK) revealed their

nors.

the BJP said it was required to maintain and submit the details of donations reclose the names of the doceived by it as per Section 29C of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

New provision in law However, the subsequently amended provi-Several other parties gave similar justifications for sion stated that its sub-seceither not collecting and tion (1) – which pertains to storing donors' names or donations of over ₹20,000 received from persons or In its letter to the EC, private companies - would not apply to the contributions received by way of an electoral bond. The letter said: "It is du-

ly submitted that as per the Electoral Bonds Scheme, bonds can be issued only by the designated bank to the desired person after the complete KYC [Know Your Customer] of the person has been done. Further, the payment to the bank for purchase of the electoral bonds is strictly made through the banking channels only. As such, only accounted for funds can be used to purchase the electoral bonds."

Further exemption

The party also cited Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961, which required every political party to file its Income Tax return and maintain the particulars of its donations received.

"There is an exemption within the section for the party to maintain/disclose the details of the donations received through electoral bonds," it said.

"There is an exemption from maintaining any details regarding the particulars of donations received through electoral bonds in the Income Tax Act, 1961, as well. The electoral bonds were introduced with the aim of bringing only accounted for funds in political funding while protecting the donors from any consequences, therefrom. It is duly submitted that as per the applicable laws stated above, the party is not required to maintain the names and particulars of the donors of the electoral bonds and as such the party has not maintained these particulars," it said in the letter.

In NE, only 2 Sikkim parties got funds through poll bonds

<u>Rahul Karmakar</u> GUWAHATI

Only two parties from the Northeast - both from Sikkim - received funds through the electoral bonds scheme introduced in 2018, two data sets five years apart uploaded by the Election Commission

(EC) revealed. According to the data shared by the State Bank of India last week, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), which ruled the Himalayan State from December 1994 to May 2019, received ₹5.5 crore through bonds between April 2019 and February 2024.

Before 2019, the SDF received another ₹50 lakh through bonds from Vadodara-based Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd., as submissions by the political parties on such receipts up to April 2019 uploaded by the EC on Sunday reveal.

A letter by Dev Gurung,

the general secretary of the SDF's administrative affairs, to Sikkim's Election Department on May 31, 2019, outlines five bonds of ₹10 lakh each credited into the Gangtok branch SBI account of the party on October 12, 2018. Sikkim is a production hub of 14 major pharma companies.

5

The BJP-backed Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, which assumed power in 2019, has also received ₹36.5 crore through bonds, which it encashed between October 13, 2022, and January 19, 2024.

Two parties from Mizoram mentioned in "details of electoral bonds as received in digitised form from Supreme Court registry" said they did not receive any "donation in respect of electoral bonds". These parties are the Mizo National Front, which lost power to the Zoram People's Movement in 2023, and the Zoram People's Conference.

Poll bonds are

bribes to get

contracts,

says CPI(M)

Only time will tell how poll bond scheme fared, says RSS

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

electoral bonds The scheme was an "experiment" and only time would tell how effective it was, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale said on Sunday, the concluding day of the organisation's Akhil Bharati-Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS).

Asked about concerns being raised on the electoral bonds issue, Mr. Hosabale said the electoral bonds scheme was an "experiment".

"It has been

NEWS ANALYSIS

NEW DELHI

bond, namely, the particu-Krishna<u>das Rajagopal</u> lars of the bank account to which the amount has <u>Vikas Dhoot</u> been credited and the date of each such credit. The

A second set of data puabove details will be furnished forthwith in respect blished on Sunday by the Election Commission on of electoral bonds received by a political party till electoral bonds purchased and redeemed by political date," a three-judge Bench headed by then Chief Jusparties prior to April 12, 2019 shows that many of tice of India Ranjan Gogoi had directed in the interim them did not disclose the identities of their donors. order of April 12, 2019.

This is despite a specific order of the Supreme Court on April 12, 2019 that political parties that benefited from the electoral bonds scheme should confidentially divulge to the EC the "detailed particulars of the donors as against each bond". The order covered poll bonds bought and encashed by parties from March 2018 to April 2019. "We require all the political parties who have received donations through electoral bonds to submit to the Election Commission of India (EC) in sealed cover, detailed particulars of the donors as against the each bond; the amount of each such bond and the



As some parties did not disclose poll bond donors, SC

sought their 'detailed particulars' in April 2019 order

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud hearing the electoral bonds case. ANI

on March 14. The first set of data received by the EC from SBI had covered bonds purchased and redeemed by parties from April 12, 2019 till February 15, 2024, the date on which the top court struck down the anonymous political funding scheme as unconstitutional. "The judgment [of February 15, 2024] required the State Bank of India to furnish to the EC all details of the electoral bonds purchased, and, as the case may, redeemed by political parties, including the date of purchase/redemption, name of the purchaser and the denomination of the electoral bond purchased. It has been submitted that SBI has not disclosed the

alphanumeric numbers of the electoral bonds," the five-judge Bench said, conveying its dissatisfaction with the bank in its order on March 15.

In-built security feature

have the donor details as this was kept confidentially by the bank. However, the bonds. question may arise from **Complete disclosure** the court as to why the parties or the EC did not, in all these years, seek a modifion electoral bonds purcation of the April 12, 2019 order to give "detailed particulars" of their donors who contributed through electoral bonds till April 2019. The EC could contend that, unlike the first set of data which was directly received from the bank, the second tranche was supplied by political parties.

made it clear that this It was only on November 2, 2023, while reservwould also include the uning the case for judgment, ique alphanumeric numbers of the bonds that the top court had directed the EC to hand over the data on electoral bonds from before April 2019 after updating the information till September 30, 2023. The court had kept the information in its custody till the EC had sought it in an application last week. The court had returned the original documents to the EC along with a digitised version, which was published on Sunday.

ply to the pre-April 2019 information on electoral <u>The Hindu Bureau</u> KOLKATA

The CPI(M)'s State secretary in West Bengal, Mo-The judgment has called for a complete disclosure hammad Salim, said on Sunday that revelations on chased from April 12, 2019 electoral bonds triggered till February 15, 2024. The by the top court's orders information required to be have exposed the similaripublished by the court verties between the Bharatiya dict included the date of Janata Party (BJP) and the purchase, donor name, de-Trinamool Congress. He said that the Communist nomination of the electoral bond, details of recipient Party of India (Marxist) political parties and date of stood proud and vindicated for challenging the elec-The court has now toral bond scheme in the Supreme Court.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Kolkata, Mr. Salim said that electoral bonds were a "political bribe" to secure contracts, something similar to the "cut money culture" in West Bengal.

checks and balances. It is not that electoral bonds have been introduced today. Such schemes were brought earlier too. Whenever a change is introduced, questions are raised and it is obvious [for such doubts to come up]. Ouestions were also raised when the EVMs (electronic voting machines) were introduced. But time will tell how good the new system is and the same should hence be left for experiment," Mr. Hosabale said.

donors while others could not, either on legal or principled grounds, is likely to come up for debate before a five-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Monday.

The five-judge Bench is primarily seeking an explanation from the State Bank of India (SBI), the authorised bank under the scheme, on why the unique hidden alphanumeric serial numbers of each electoral bond were not included in the first tranche of data published by the EC

The fact that every bond has a unique number is confirmed from a March 15, 2019 affidavit filed by the Ministry of Finance in the Supreme Court, which said that "unique hidden alphanumeric serial numbers was an in-built security feature". The unique numbers would identify which donor bought which poll bond and contributed to which political party. Ideally, the political par-

ties and the EC could argue in court that they did not

The issue before the court is whether the February 15 judgment would ap-

encashment.

On March 11, following its judgment on February 15, the court had specifically instructed the EC to "publish the details of the information which was supplied to this court in pursuance of the interim orders (April 12, 2019 and November 2, 2023) on its official website". This would logically mean the judgment had applied for the purchase and redemption of electoral bonds in the period before April 12, 2019.

"CPI(M) is the only political party which has not taken a single penny from any corporate. No corporate can dare to claim to have issued a bribe to the CPI(M)," he said.

Mr. Salim went on to add that the media should not paint all political parties with the same brush.

Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra sought to spread message of 'justice' that forms crux of Congress's poll campaign

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sobhana K. Nair NEW DELHI

The 62-day Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra concluded on Saturday. The difference between the two Bharat Jodo Yatras was not only that of the mechanics - one on the foot and the other mostly by bus. From nebulous commitments of love and harmony made in the first centred around the slogan Nafrat Ke Bazaar Main Mohabbat Ki Dukaan (to open a shop of love in a market of hate) the second one came up with concrete assurances in the form of five nyays that form the very crux of the Congress's poll campaign.

The Nyay Yatra's course has been particularly rocky, facing setbacks every step of the way. On the

YK

very day that the yatra opened on January 14 from Thoubal in Manipur, Congress leader in Mumbai Milind Deora ended his family's 55-year-old ties with the party to join the Eknath Shinde faction of the

Shiv Sena. The yatra and especially its timing was sharply criticised by the INDIA bloc allies, who saw it as a sign of the Congress's indifference towards building a joint campaign for the anti-BJP coalition. Just a day ahead of the yatra's entry to West Bengal, Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee announced her decision to not cede any seats to the Congress in her State. Ahead of its entry in Bihar, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar severed ties and returned to the BJP-led Na-

tional Democratic Alliance (NDA). Within the party too, there has been criti-



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh addressing the media at the AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

cism that the Congress took its eye off the 2024 campaign and the party's entire machinery was geared towards the yatra alone.

Intermingling of cadres

But the Congress rejects the criticism that the yatra has been a wrecking ball. "The yatra saw an organic intermingling of the party cadres everywhere it went," Congress General

Secretary Jairam Ramesh said. He cited the examples of huge presence of Samajwadi Party's laal topis (red caps) at Malegaon and Thane in Maharashtra and in parts of western Uttar Pradesh, to significant participation from the Left cadres in West Bengal. But the most significant achievement of the yatra, Mr. Ramesh underlined was that it provided a platform for the voices from the ground to be heard. "The yatra provided the structure to conceive the five nyays and the 25 guarantees, and it also gave an opportunity to communicate this," he said.

Unlike the usual practice of announcing the manifesto from Delhi headquarters, these promises were made at various stops. The Kisan Nyay (justice for farmers that includes providing legal backing for Minimum Support Price) was unveiled at Ambikapur in Chhattis-Hissedari Nyay garh: (equal share in governance that includes the promise of caste census) at Ranchi; Yuva Nyay (justice for youth that include the mandatory internship commitment) at Banswara in Rajasthan; Naari Nyay (justice for women that includes promise like ₹1 lakh

per annum to women) at

Dhule in Maharashtra and Shramik Nyay (justice for workers that includes urban version of MGNREGA) at Dharavi in Mumbai.

"These are the guarantees by the Congress party and not by a single person," Mr. Ramesh remarked in an obvious jibe at the Prime Minister who has been claiming to provide "Modi ki Guarantee".

The Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra covered 106 districts after travelling a distance of 6,300 km. The earlier Bharat Jodo Yatra had travelled to 76 districts over 140 days. Mr. Ramesh said that concluding the Nyay Yatra at Chaityabhoomi, Mumbai, the memorial of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the befitting tribute to the architect of the Constitution of India, particularly at a time when demands are being raised to change the Constitution.

•••

Abhinay Deshpande MUMBAI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of lacking the courage to amend the Constitution, despite "making noise" about it.

Addressing a gathering in Mumbai after leading the Nyay Sankalp Padayatra from Mani Bhavan to August Kranti Maidan, he asserted that the truth and the support of the people were on his side.

The Wayanad MP's statement comes in response to recent remarks by BJP MP Anantkumar Hegde, who stated that his party required a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament to rectify what he termed as unnecessary additions made to the Constitution by the Congress.



Rahul Gandhi

'BJP makes noise, but

change Constitution'

has no courage to

"The BJP makes a lot of noise, but it does not have enough courage to change the Constitution. Truth and the people's support are on our side," he said.

Mr. Gandhi said that the ongoing battle went beyond political affiliations, portraying it as a clash of ideologies between the centralisation of power and decentralisation, with an emphasis on amplifying the voices of the people.

THE HINDU



NIA attaches four assets in Pune in IS terror module case

The NIA on Saturday attached four immovable properties as "proceeds of terrorism" in the IS module case in Maharashtra's Pune, officials said on Sunday. These properties have been identified as critical hubs for the fabrication of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and for training and planning terrorist operations. Attached under Section 25 of the UAPA, the properties are residential houses/flats linked with accused Mohammed Imran Khan, Mohammed Yunus Saki, Mohammed Shahnawaz Alam, Md. Rizwan Ali, Kadir Dastagir Pathan, Simab Kazi, Zulfikar Ali Barodawala, Abdullah Faiyaz Shaikh, Talha Liyakat Khan, Shamil Nachan and Aakif Nachan.

Robbers from Tiruchi held for stealing cash in Gujarat

The Gujarat Police arrested five persons, hailing from Tamil Nadu's Tiruchi, in Delhi on Saturday for their alleged involvement in the theft of cash and laptops in Gujarat. According to the police, the accused had left Tiruchi and gone to Jamnagar, one of the venues of the pre-wedding celebrations of industrialist Mukesh Ambani's son Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant. As the security was tight there, they headed to Jamnagar bus stand, where they allegedly broke the window of a parked car and stole a laptop. Then they went to Rajkot where they allegedly broke a Mercedes car's window and stole ₹10 lakh cash and a laptop before being nabbed.

No change in CUET-UG exam schedule, says UGC chief

The Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG will be conducted between May 15 and May 31, 2024, as announced earlier, and there will be no change in view of the Lok Sabha election schedule, according to UGC Chairman Jagadesh Kumar. The date sheet will be released after the registration process is completed. He had earlier this month said the exam dates could change depending on the schedule of the forthcoming Lok Sabha election. "The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct CUET-UG, as announced earlier, between May 15 and May 31, 2024. In this period, two dates overlap with the election dates on the 20th and 25th of May." PTI

Marathon operation by Navy, IAF led to pirates' surrender

17 crew members were saved from the hijacked MV Ruen; the Air Force's C-17 aircraft airdropped Marine Commandos during the operation while INS Kolkata disabled the vessel's steering system

Dinakar Peri NEW DELHI

he Indian Navy said on Sunday that a drone it had used to intercept a merchant vessel hijacked by pirates on March 15, was shot down by the armed men. The Navy said this while

sharing details on the over 40-hour operation resulting in the surrender of 35 pirates and freeing of 17 crew members of the hijacked vessel.

An Indian Air Force (IAF) C-17 transport aircraft executed a precision airborne drop of two Combat Rubberised Raiding Craft (CRRC) boats flying 10 hours to an area 2,600 km away from the Indian coast.

"In a reckless hostile act, the pirates shot down the drone and fired at the Indian Naval warship. In a calibrated response in accordance with international laws, INS Kolkata disabled the ship's steering system and navigational aids, forcing the pirate ship to stop," the Navy spokesperson said. Videos of the operation released by the



Somali pirates with arms inside Maltese-flagged vessel Ruen. The vessel was rescued by Navy and Indian Air Force. REUTERS

Navy show the pirates putting forward the crew members as human shields as warning shots were fired from the warship.

INS Kolkata undertook "precisely measured actions" while maintaining her position close to the pirate ship and also engaged in forceful negotiations, which resulted in the "pirates surrendering and releasing the pirate ship MV Ruen and its original crew present onboard," the spokesperson stated.

Hijacked in December The Malta-flagged merchant vessel Ruen was hijacked in December 2023

of polling stations marked

as 'vulnerable' will howev-

er remain the same at 109,"

The EC definition for

critical includes several

quantifiable parameters

such as voter turnout be-

low a certain threshold,

past incidents of violence,

more than 75% of the eligi-

ble votes being polled for a

ex

single candidate etc.

said the official.

and had been under the control of Somalian pirates. The seaworthiness of MV Ruen will be assessed on Sunday and the vessel, which is carrying approximately 37,800 tonnes of cargo worth over \$1 million, will be brought safely to India, the Navy said. The Indian Navy as part of the maritime security

operations has been carrying out extensive surveillance in the region, including monitoring of traffic in areas of interest. "Based on the analysis of the surveillance information, the Indian Navy was able to track the movement of the pirate Kolkata to intercept the ship approximately 260 nm east of Somalia."

The anti-piracy operation 1,400 nm (2,600 km) from mainland India was augmented by the deployment of INS Subhadra on Saturday morning, and also by air-dropping of the Marine Commandos (MAR-COS) by C-17 aircraft in the afternoon, the Navy said. Additionally, the pirate vessel was kept under surveillance by MQ-9A high-altitude long endurance remotely piloted aircraft and P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft.

Commenting on its role, the IAF said on X, "In a remarkable display of jointness and integration, an IAF C-17 aircraft executed a precision airborne drop of two CRRC boats, along with Indian Navy MARCOS in Arabian Sea in support of ongoing anti-piracy Op Sankalp flying for almost 10 hrs to an area 2600 kms off the Indian Coast..."

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said, "The Navy continues to ensure safety and security of the mariners in the Indian Ocean region."

ED holds searches in Mumbai in fake artworks case

<u>The Hindu Bureau</u> MUMBAI

crore by selling fake paintings to him along with the forged and fabricated certificates of the paintings.

The Enforcement Directo-The ED also unearthed a rate said on Sunday it conducted search operations cartel involving a promiunder the Prevention of nent art gallery in South Money Laundering Act Mumbai, a ace corporate (PMLA), 2002, at six localawyer and bullion traders. tions in Mumbai for alleg-This included works of 'naedly selling fake paintings. tional treasure' artist Jami-The operations were carni Roy and others includried out on March 13 in a ing M.F. Husain, F.N. Souza, Jahangir Sabavala, case involving Rajesh Rajpal and others. S.H. Raza, N.S. Bendre, During the search proand Ram Kumar.

ceedings, digital devices It was found that the cartel operated with the and incriminating documents were seized which help of people claiming highlighted the operations fake origins with royal kingdoms, antique art colof a cartel, including trading of fake artwork, generlectors and small-time aration of fake authenticity tists who created these and provenance certififake replicas and projected cates, transfer of money it to be authentic with the through cash and involvehelp of fake certificates of ment of other prominent authenticity, provenance art galleries and indiviand affidavit of ownership.

The money trail in the case has revealed that the money received was sent by domestic hawala channels to members of the cartel in the form of commission or free/discounted artwork. Some cash so generated from sale of fake artworks was used to purchase antiques. Further investigation is under progress, said the ED officials.

ship Ruen and directed INS As Ayodhya turns a tourist hotspot, 'guides' leave devotees high and dry

<u>Mayank Kumar</u> AYODHYA

For Vinay Shukla, 52, the visit to Ayodhya in the second week of March wasn't as pleasant as he had expected. A resident of Satna in Madhya Pradesh and ardent devotee of Lord Ram, he feels he was overcharged by a local guide he hired through the hotel staff for the Ram Temple



duals.

The ED initiated an in-

vestigation based on a first

information report regis-

tered by the Tardeo police

station under various Sec-

tions of the Indian Penal

Code wherein one Puneet

Bhatia had alleged that Mr.

Rajpal and Vishwang Desai

had conspired to financial-

ly dupe him by defrauding

him to the tune of ₹17.90

Left in lurch: The Ram Temple devotees say they lack awareness about facilities in Ayodhya . AP

grims with affordable homestay options whose fares are regulated by district authorities. "Many tourists are not aware of these options," added Mr. Pandey.

Locals said the hospitality sector in the city is still at a nascent stage and only took off following the Supreme Court's November 2019 judgment on the Ayodhya Temple. They hoped the industry would develop with more quality and affordable options in the next 12-18 months. At present a few hundred hotels, lodges, and homestays cater to the needs of the devotees.

More polling booths in Bastar region flagged as 'critical'

Shubhomoy Sikdar RAIPUR

Given the increased security threat posed by Naxals during the Lok Sabha election, the Chhattisgarh State Election Commission (SEC) has adjusted its strategy compared to the Assembly polls held last November. There has been an increase in the number of

ing such changes.

6

Uttarakhand ex-Minister's daughter-in-law quits Cong.

Former Uttarakhand Forest Minister Harak Singh Rawat's daughter-in-law, Anukriti Gusain, has quit the Congress citing personal reasons. In a letter to the State Congress president, Ms. Gusain on Saturday said she was resigning from the primary membership of the party. A former beauty pageant winner, Ms. Gusain had unsuccessfully contested the 2022 Assembly polls from Lansdowne. The development comes close on the heels of a severe indictment of her father-in-law by the Supreme Court in connection with the illegal felling of trees and constructions carried out during his tenure as Forest Minister in the Corbet Tiger Reserve. PTI

critical polling stations and plained the official, adding those scheduled for relocathat the "vulnerable" tag is tion, and an uptick in the based on an on-ground analysis of the situation by expected helicopter dropthe police and the local offs. An official said due to better visibility during the administration.

summer months, the The official added that Maoists are more active the number of relocations - i.e. polling station being and target those from the administration necessitattaken further away from a village due to threat - will "As many as 1,726 pollbe almost doubled from 151 ing stations – all in the in the Assembly elections Maoist-affected Bastar reto 289 this time.

Several violent incidents gion - have been marked as critical this time comwere reported during the pared to 1,670 such polling Assembly election in stations during the Aswhich security personnel sembly polls. The number had both been injured.

visit

"I was told about the face some difficulties as a special darshan of Ram few locals try to take ad-Lalla and paid ₹2,000 each vantage," says Rahul Panfor five people, but later dey of Ayodhya Tour Guide got to know that there was Service. Devotees also demand a no such arrangement," Mr. Shukla said, bitter about dedicated awareness cam-

being fleeced. paign by the government. Mr. Shukla is not alone. "There is no arrangement With the Shri Ram Janmabfor special darshan by payhoomi Temple in Ayodhya ing a certain fee or any spewitnessing an average footcial pass at the Mandir. If fall of 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh pilyou ever hear about paying grims daily, the city's infor darshan, it might be a frastructure and tourism scam," said the Shri Ram Ianmbhoomi Teerth Trust ecosystem is still playing catch up. "There is huge after multiple complaints rush, people from adjoinwere raised.

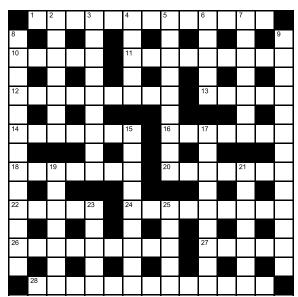
ing districts are a bit aware "We booked our stay

of the city, but outsiders through a local agent. We were charged ₹6,000 per head but the hotel room was below-par. Some people had booked through Holy Ayodhya app and they paid less than half of what we shelled out and enjoyed a comfortable stay," said Raghu Veer Chaudhary from Bareilly. Many budget hotels which used to charge ₹1,200-1,400 per day before the opening of the temple have increased rates by 25%.

Many visitors from outside the State are not aware of the Holy Ayodhya app, which aims to provide pil-

Construction of 142 hotels, including luxurious ones like Wyndham Hotels and Resorts and Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL), was launched after the recent Global Investors' Summit. In the 2023 edition of the summit, 102 investment intents worth approximately ₹18,000 crore were signed for tourism in Ayodhya.





Across

- **1** Might is right example of... (9,4)
- **10** Almost throw up, transfixed by party disturbances (2-3)
- **11** Shaking a leg as in a state of painlessness (9)
- 12 Fanciful, light-hearted fellow with aura? Yes! (4-5)
- 13 Starts to elbow, jostle etc. vigorously, gets sack (5)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn



- 14 Good! Cochin made dumplings! (7)
- **16** Asylum built around small plant (7)
- 18 Mark as 'dealt with reprimand' (4,3)
- 20 Slippery English priest engaging liberal Knight and Earl (3-4)
- **22** A large gun causing scare (5)
- 24 Ignorant royal having time at present to follow United Nations (9)
- 26 Appear in panic, sadly at the last moment of crisis (9)
- **27** A spot inhabited by number one fool (5)
- 28 Sing softly, quietly, again with robust sea giant (8,5) Down
- **2** Blunder golfer cherishes for experience (7)
- **3** Top of CIA's rendered by very nature of the deed (4,5)
- **4** This Arab model could be Qatari (5)
- 5 Daydream about one finally becoming very useful for some purpose (5-4)
- Fuzzy due to very high fever (5)

6

- Communists capturing diocese for sows again! (7) 7
- A fact the grids can be blank! (8-5) 8
- 9 Bar might waste rum for some boxers (13)
- **15** Impact Church lost South Africa to disease (9)
- **17** Cry over fancy kind of shade (9)
- **19** Country house gossip over Adam's ale (7)
- **21** This cop could be politician first (7)
- 23 Study gum? (3,2)
- 25 Symmetrical vessel (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING:

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku 4 1 6 2 3 5 8 9 7 9 38467251 579 18643 926 71435 4523968 3849712 6 89152374 4 5786129 21394586

FAITH

Affection, cause for disaster

Dhritarashtra was silent when Duryodhana unleashed his fury against the Pandavas. It was not that Dhritarashtra lacked affection for his brother Pandu's sons.

The problem with Dhritarashtra was his love towards his son Duryodhana, said Kidambi Narayanan in a discourse. Because of his excessive attachment to his son, he did not check him, or overrule his wrong decisions. But when the Pandavas depart for the forest, Dhritarashtra is anxious.

He sends for Vidura and enquires about the Pandavas.

Vidura tells him about the attitude of the Pandavas. which is a clear indication that they are going to have their revenge later. Vidura also says that there have been many ill omens, which show what awaits the Kauravas.

Even as Vidura and Dhritarashtra are conversing, Narada comes to the court, and says to Dhritarashtra, "Fourteen years from now, Bhima and Arjuna will destroy your entire family. And this is entirely due to Duryodhana."

And indeed, it is Duryodhana who has put the entire Kuru clan in danger.

But while Duryodhana is guilty of arrogance and jealousy, Dhritarashtra is guilty of being a weak, vacillating king. Had he vetoed Duryodhana's plan to get the Pandavas to gamble, none of the subsequent events would have happened. A king should think of the welfare of his kingdom. But Dhritarashtra was more interested in keeping his son happy.

In any case, this did not benefit Duryodhana either. It just led to the entire Kaurava family being wiped out eventually.

CM YK

A IN-X

Ν

Solution to previous puzzle

SCIENCE

Scientists build a camera to 'show' how animals see moving things

Animal-vision video could help people navigate wild landscapes without hurting camouflaged animals; help farmers spot fruit pests invisible to the human eye but readily visible to animals that have evolved to eat those fruits: and even transform the way wildlife documentary films are made

Sanjukta Mondal

o most people, leaves are green and oranges are orange. But if our pets could speak, they'd disagree.

We know there are many different ways to 'see' the world because that's the diversity we have found in animals. Organisms with the ability to see have two or more eyes that capture light reflected by different surfaces in their surroundings and turn it into visual cues. But while all eyes have this common purpose, the specialised cells that respond to the light, called photoreceptors, are unique to each animal.

For instance, human eyes can only detect wavelengths of light between 380 and 700 nanometres (nm); this is the visible range. Honey bees and many birds on the other hand can also 'see' ultraviolet light (10-400 nm).

While the human visual range is relatively limited, it hasn't abated humans' curiosity about how animals see the world.

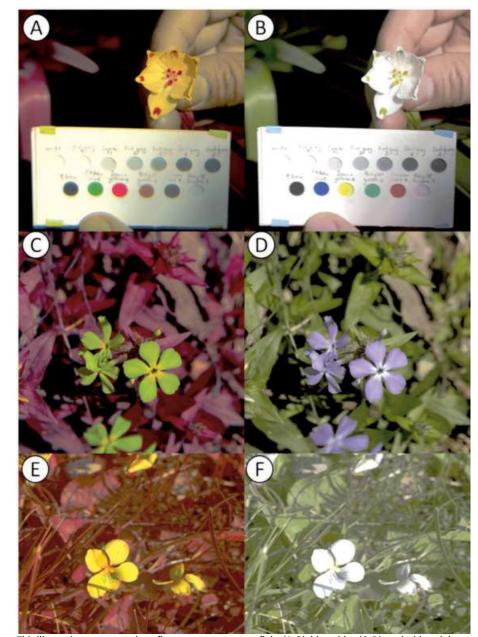
Thankfully we don't have to imagine too much. Researchers at the University of Sussex and the George Mason University (GMU) in the U.S. have put together a new camera with the ability to view the world like animals do. In a paper published in *PLoS Biology*, the team has written their device can even reveal what colours different animals see in motion, which hasn't been possible so far.

Making the invisible visible

Animals use colours to intimidate their predators, entice mates or conceal themselves. Detecting variations in colours is thus essential to an animal's survival. Animals have evolved to develop highly sensitive photoreceptors that can detect light of ultraviolet and infrared wavelengths; many even notice polarised light as part of their Umwelt - the biological systems that make a specific system of meaning-making and communication possible.

Neither human eyes nor most commercial cameras have been able to tap into this unchartered territory of animal vision. In the new study, exponents of biology, computer vision, and programming came together to create a tool that could record and track the complexity of animal visual signalling.

The tool combined existing multispectral photography techniques with a new camera setup and a beam-splitter (to separate ultraviolet and visible light), all encased in a custom 3D-printed unit. The system recorded videos simultaneously in visible and ultraviolet channels in natural lighting. They fed the camera output through some code (written in Python) that could convert the visual data to the physical



This illustration compares three flowers - summer snowflake (A, B), blue phlox (C, D), and a blue violet (D, E) - in honeybee false colour (left) and human-visible colours (right). VASAS V, ET AL., 2024, PLOS BIOLOGY, CC-BY 4.0

signals produced by photoreceptor cells. Finally, the researchers modified these signals based on what they already knew about how an animal's photoreceptors work, and produced videos true to what that animal might see. These used false colours in these videos so that, for example, a particular colour could stand in to show ultraviolet imagery.

In sum, the camera system translated what animals see in visible and non-visible light into colours compatible with the human eye



The specialised cells that respond to light, called photoreceptors, are unique to each animal

coloured that way to show what the telescope saw in, say, infrared or radio wavelengths. Scientists have also used false-colour images to understand how flowers reflect ultraviolet light to influence the behaviour of insects nearby. wavelengths beyond human vision (with the help of bandpass optical filters). Both scenarios require the subject to be motionless. The new system can visualise free-living organisms in their natural settings, however.

In addition, Pavan Kumar Reddy Katta, a graduate teaching assistant at GMU and one of the study's authors, said the team wrote a program that could accept both ultraviolet- and visible-light data and spit out complete videos. "We made use of a continuous stream which allowed us to resolve our data at various points of space and time and produce real-time visualisations in animal-vision," he told this author.

The next big thing in animal vision

Equipped with the new camera, the research team checked what the flower black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta) looks like to honey bees (Apis mellifera).

"To our eye, the black-eyed Susan appears entirely yellow because in the human-visible range, it reflects primarily long wavelength light," the team wrote in its paper. "Whereas in the bee false colour image, the distal petals appear magenta because they also reflect ultraviolet, stimulating both the ultraviolet-sensitive photoreceptors ... and those sensitive to green light ... By contrast, the central portion of the petals does not reflect ultraviolet and therefore appears red."

According to the paper, the visual mechanisms animals have evolved to communicate and protect themselves could help solve many of our detection problems. For example, the animal-vision video could help people navigate wild landscapes better and without hurting camouflaged animals. It can help farmers spot fruit pests that are not visible to the human eye but are readily visible to animals that have evolved to eat those fruits.

Daniel Hanley, assistant professor at GMU and the study's corresponding author, said their invention could even transform the way wildlife documentary films are made.

The camera system could allow filmmakers and ecologists to record the animal world through a new lens and create new visual experiences. He also said the platform's striking images could be used to communicate the science of the living world to young audiences.

"We are thinking of creating a science exhibit for children using our setup, flowers, and live animals." Dr. Hanley said. "Where children can just click a button to experience what a snake might see or a honeybee might see." (Sanjukta Mondal is a chemist-turned-science-writer with experience in writing popular science articles and scripts for STEM YouTube channels.)

THE GIST

Human eyes can only detect wavelengths of light between 380 and 700 nanometres; this is the visible range. Honey bees and many birds on the other hand can also 'see ultraviolet light

Researchers created a tool that combined existing multispectral photography techniques with a new camera setup and a beam-splitter. The system records videos simultaneously in visible and ultraviolet channels in natural lighting

The camera system translated what animals see in visible and non-visible light into colours compatible with the human eye

The time challenge

You may have already seen false-colour images - like when you saw the Hubble space telescope's iconic snap of the 'Pillars of Creation'. The stars and nebulae don't actually look that resplendent to human eyes. They are

But false colours can only stand in for so much. According to the researchers, existing techniques to visualise the colours animals see require object-reflected light to predict how an animal's photoreceptor would respond or require a series of photographs in

BIG SHOT

YK



A volcano in Iceland erupted on March 16 for the fourth time since December, the country's meteorological office said, spewing smoke and bright orange lava into the air in sharp contrast against the dark night sky. One resident of Grindavik, a town near the fissure, who had been evacuated in November said, "We're just like, this is business as usual." AP

WHAT IS IT?

IceCube: the big, chill neutrino-spotter

.....

Vasudevan Mukunth

The IceCube neutrino observatory is a device at the earth's South Pole that detects subatomic particles called neutrinos. It was built and is maintained by the IceCube Collaboration, which consists of many universities worldwide led by the University of Wisconsin, Madison. IceCube consists of thousands of sensors buried more than 1.4 km beneath the ice plus multiple detectors above the surface.

Neutrinos are light particles that very rarely interact with matter. This is why they're called "ghost particles". By some estimates, a human-sized neutrino detector will have to wait for a century for a single neutrino to interact with a sensor. The larger the detector's collecting area, the higher the chances of spotting neutrinos. IceCube is the world's biggest 'neutrino telescope'; its sensors are distributed throughout a cubic kilometre of ice.

When a neutrino interacts with the ice surrounding the sensors, it may produce some charged particles and some radiation. The sensors detect the radiation to infer the detection of a neutrino and use the radiation's properties to understand more about the particle. Neutrinos come in different types. IceCube can identify some of them in real-time. For others, IceCube collects data for many years and scientists then comb through them to find neutrino interaction events.



Most of the energy of a collapsing supernova is radiated in the form of neutrinos, produced when protons and electrons in the nucleus combine to form neutrons. NASA

In such an instance, scientists reported last week they had found instances in IceCube's data from 2011 to 2020 that matched the signature of tau neutrinos, with more than 99.999999% confidence.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'



Editorial

M.K. Narayanan

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Intelligence Bureau.

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a former National

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security joint venture



On the ballot <u>The Election Commission must ensure</u> a free and fair democratic process

he general election to the 18th Lok Sabha will be spread over seven phases and 44 days, with the counting of votes scheduled for June 4. The announcement marks a formal beginning but campaigning has become a perennial affair of Indian politics as if to vindicate the ruling BJP's call for 'one nation, one poll', which it argues will reduce the time spent in electioneering. Simultaneous elections and other contentious questions form the backdrop for the long-drawn election season, the largest such exercise anywhere in the world. While India has enough reasons to be proud of its vibrant democracy and exhilarating diversity, an honest introspection can be sobering. From 2019, India has witnessed rapid and massive changes, the good and the bad. The BJP, naturally, is trying to present its second term as an era of progress and prosperity. While its propaganda has been blaring, the Opposition's attempts to critique it have been feeble. This uneven playing field is largely the outcome of the BJP's misuse of state power to influence other parties and actors in the political process such as the media, the bureaucracy and the private sector. Inherent problems weaken the Opposition further. The fact that the principal Opposition party's bank account is restricted on the basis of an alleged procedural lapse, which is a minor one even if proven, says a lot about how state agencies are tilting the scales.

The revelations so far around the electoral bond scheme, which was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India, also paint a deeply disturbing pattern of shrinking fairness in the election process. Given the circumstances, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has a difficult job in ensuring that the poll process is not only fair but also seen as such. This challenge has been complicated by the abrupt exit of an ECI member, and two hurried appointments. The process of appointing the members of the ECI remains controversial, given the complete control that the political executive has given itself in it. Opposition leaders have questioned the need for such a prolonged poll schedule. In West Bengal, where the BJP is pulling out all stops, polls have been staggered across all seven phases. While the ECI is justified in its defence of the electronic voting machine, it needs to do more to ensure public trust in them. In the conflict between the claim of a right to privacy by donors and the voter's right to information, the ECI's equivocation is unwarranted, particularly after the Court has settled the question. The ECI must know that all eyes are on it when it comes to assessing the biggest democratic exercise on the planet.

Bonded favours

Disclosures confirm fears of sceptics about electoral bonds

Many elections, AI's dark dimension

he rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) models suggests that we are at an inflection point in the history of human progress. The speed with which the development of newer skills is taking place suggests that the day is not far off when Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) will transform into Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which can mimic the capabilities of human beings. Such a situation could revolutionise our ideas about what to expect from machines. Breakthroughs in the AI domain will bring about a new chapter in human existence, including the way people react to both facts and falsehoods.

The potential of AI is already clear. Many such as Sam Altman of OpenAI in the United States, believe that it is the most important technology in history. AI protagonists further believe that AI is set to turbocharge, and dramatically improve, the standard of living of millions of human beings. It is, however, unclear, as of now, whether, as many Doomsday sayers aver, whether AI would undermine human values and that advanced AI could pose 'existential risks'.

AI and the electoral landscape

With the seven-phase general election in India having been announced, and to be held from April 19 to June 1, 2024, political parties and the electorate cannot, however, afford to ignore the AI dimension. This year, elections are also scheduled to be held (according to some reports) in as many as 50 other countries across the globe, apart from, and including, India, Mexico, the United Kingdom (by law, the last possible date for a general election is January 28, 2025) and the United States.

These elections are set to alter the fate of millions of people, and policymakers and the electorate need to ponder over the positive and negative impacts of this new technology. Rapid technological breakthroughs in AI (especially its latest manifestation, such as Generative AI, that provides dynamic simulations and mimics real world interactions) carry their own burdens. It may be too early to fully contemplate the possible impact of AGI– AI systems that simulate the capability of human beings – but all this is indicative of yet another dimension to electoral dynamics that cannot be ignored.

It may, hence, not be wrong to consider the elections of 2024 as a curtain-raiser to whether AI and its offerings (such as Generative AI) would prove to be a game changer. The world is by now aware that AI models such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot are being employed in many fields, but 2024 would be a test case as to whether AI's newer models could alter electoral behaviours and verdicts as well. The good news, perhaps, is that those wishing to employ Generative AI to try and transform the electoral landscape do not

With a series of elections to be held across the world in 2024, the potential of AI to disrupt democracies cannot be dismissed have adequate time to fine-tune their AI models. It would, however, still be a mistake to underestimate the extent to which AI could impact the electoral landscape this time as well. What might not happen in 2024, may well happen in the next round of elections, both in India and worldwide.

A recently published Pew Survey (if it can be treated as reliable) indicates that a majority of Indians support 'authoritarianism'. Those employing AI could well have a field day in such a milieu to further confuse the electorate. As it is, many people are already referring to the elections in 2024 worldwide as the 'Deep Fake Elections', created by AI software. Whether this is wholly true or not, the Deep Fake syndrome appears inevitable, given that each new election lends itself to newer and newer techniques of propaganda, all with the aim of confusing and confounding the electorate. From this, it is but a short step to the inevitability of Deep Fakes.

Tacking AI 'determinism'

AI technology makes it easier to enhance falsehoods and enlarge mistaken beliefs. Disinformation is hardly a new methodology or technology, and has been employed in successive elections previously. What is new is that sophisticated AI tools will be able to confuse the electorate to an extent not previously known or even envisaged. The use of AI models to produce reams of wrong information, apart from disinformation, accompanied by the creation of near realistic images of something that does not exist, will be a whole new experience. What can be said with some degree of certainty is that in 2024, the quality and quantity of disinformation is all set to overwhelm the electorate. What is more worrying is that the vast majority of such information would be incorrect. Hyper realistic Deep Fakes employed to sway voters, and micro targeting are set to scale new heights.

The potential of AI to disrupt democracies is, thus, very considerable. Simply being aware of the disruptive nature of AI and AI fakes is not enough. It may be necessary, for democracies in particular, to prevent such tactics from distorting the 'thought behaviour' of the electorate. AI deployed tactics will tend to make voters more mistrustful, and it is important to introduce checks and balances that would obviate efforts at AI 'determinism'. Notwithstanding all this, and while being mindful of the potential of AGI, panic is not warranted. There are many checks and balances available that could be employed to negate some of AI's more dangerous attributes.

The wide publicity given to a spate of recent inaccuracies associated with Google is a timely reminder that AI and AGI cannot be trusted in each and every circumstance. There has been public wrath worldwide over Google AI models, including in India, for their portrayal of persons and personalities in a malefic manner, mistakenly or otherwise. These reflect well the dangers of 'runaway' AI.

Inconsistencies and undependability still stalk many AI models and pose inherent dangers to society. As its potential and usage increases in geometric proportion, threat levels are bound to go up. As of now, even as the potential of AI remains very considerable, it tends to be undependable. More so, its 'mischief potential' cannot be ignored.

As nations increasingly depend on AI solutions for their problems, it is again important to recognise what many AI experts label as AI's 'hallucinations'. In simple terms, what these experts are implying is that 'hallucinations' make it hard to accept and endorse AI systems in many instances. What they further imply, specially in the case of AGI, is that it tends at times to make up things in order to solve new problems. These are often probabilistic in character and cannot be accepted ipso facto as accurate. The implication of all of this is that too much reliance on AI systems at this stage of development may be problematic. The stark reality, though, is that there is no backtracking from what AI or AGI promises, even if results are less dependable than one would like.

We cannot also afford to ignore other existential threats associated with AI. The dangers on this account pose an even greater threat than harm arising from bias in design and development. There are real concerns that AI systems, oftentimes, tend to develop certain inherent adversarial capabilities. Suitable concepts and ideas have not yet been developed to mitigate them, as of now. The main types of adversarial capabilities, overshadowing other inbuilt weaknesses are: 'poisoning' that typically degrades an AI model's ability to make relevant predictions; 'back dooring' that causes the model to produce inaccurate or harmful results; and even 'evasion' that entails resulting in a model misclassifying malicious or harmful inputs thus detracting from an AI model's ability to perform its appointed role. There are possibly other problems as well, but it may be too early to enumerate them with any degree of probability.

India's handling of AI

Elections apart, India being one of the most advanced countries in the digital arena, again needs to treat AI as an unproven entity. While AI brings benefits, the nation and its leaders should be fully aware of its disruptive potential. This is specially true of AGI, and they should act with due caution. India's lead in digital public goods could be both a benefit as well as a bane, given that while AGI provides many benefits, it can be malefic as well.

The Myanmar conflict is a regional problem

hree years ago, on March 9, 2021, army trucks pulled up in front of Mizzima's headquarters in Yangon, Myanmar. Soldiers proceeded to ransack and loot the office of the independent media group, taking whatever they wanted. This scene was played out across the city, as the junta enforced legislation that outlawed Myanmar's independent media scene on the heels of the coup in February 2021 to overturn the results of the November 2020 general election.



regional countries victimised by this criminal underworld.

suppression of the Myanmar population, including arbitrary arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, and indiscriminate attacks against the country's civilian population and journalists.

the disclosure of details about the purchasers and recipients of electoral bonds confirm the early apprehension of sceptics that the anonymous political funding scheme will have undesirable consequences. Ranging from likely quid pro quo deals to flagrant proximity between companies being investigated by central agencies and the purchase of electoral bonds worth hundreds of crores by these firms, the scheme has played out exactly as its detractors predicted. Fears that shell companies and loss-making entities may be used to buy the electoral bonds and donate them to parties seem to have come true. The argument that waiver of the rule that political donations can be made by companies only up to a certain percentage of their profits will render the scheme illegal has been proved right. The Supreme Court of India did well to voice these concerns, flagging the potential for wrongdoing and striking down the bonds scheme in its entirety as unconstitutional. However, the delay in disposing of the multiple challenges to the scheme, without ever staying its operation over the years, has had its own cost. It is a sobering thought for all those invested in democracy to note that the political and corporate classes have lived up to the public expectation that they are ready to use the scheme for mutual benefit rather than solve the problem of unclean funds vitiating the election campaign.

Some details about who donated to which party are emerging now, thanks to a few parties having disclosed their names and given them to the Election Commission of India on the Court's orders. However, it is disappointing that both the ruling BJP and the Congress did not disclose them even in sealed covers. It is possible that there will be more revelations in the coming days when unique numbers given to each bond are disclosed. The role of investigative agencies has been politically controversial, especially under the present regime, but the strong correlation between searches and arrests on one hand, and the dates of purchase of bonds on the other, shows the Centre in a bad light. It will be a dark day for democracy if it emerges that the agencies were used to arm-twist people into making political contributions. The BJP has, unsurprisingly, emerged the largest beneficiary, having received well above ₹6,000 crore and nearly half the contributions made through the bonds route. However, its attempt to describe contributions as comparatively low if seen against the fact that it has the largest number of Lok Sabha members is quite naive, or worse, self-incriminating. Power and influence do attract political funding, but misusing them either by muscular demonstration or the promise of reward will ultimately be subversive of democracy.

YK

The situation on the ground

With many being targeted, a number of Myanmar journalists were forced to abandon their native places, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, or in regions in Myanmar that were outside junta control. This exodus of journalists has been mirrored by the population at large, as vast numbers of Myanmar citizens – over two million within Myanmar and some 1.5 million refugee seekers – have been forced from their homes since the coup. Estimates suggest nearly half of Myanmar's population, i.e., 25 million people, is living in conditions of poverty. The result is a highly destabilising situation for Myanmar and its neighbours.

The fact that Myanmar's independent media has been forced to maintain a presence in neighbouring countries is further evidence that the Myanmar conflict is not contained to Myanmar. It is rather a regional problem. The conflict has poured over its borders to impact neighbouring countries. Fighting and refugee flows pose grave security concerns for Myanmar neighbours, including Bangladesh, China, India and Thailand, while placing extreme humanitarian demands on these countries. Hostilities in Myanmar further serve as an impediment to envisioned trade and economic corridors throughout the region.

Meanwhile, the collapse of rule of law has led to an explosion of criminal activity with not only negative repercussions for Myanmar but also for

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is Founder, Editor-in-Chief, and Managing Director of Mizzima, Myanmar

ASEAN and

Myanmar's

media and

democratic

country

independent

people in their

battle for a truly

support

others need to

ASEAN's struggle for stability

Following the February 2021 coup, the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and other international stakeholders looked to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to play a leading role in ending the conflict in Myanmar. One month after the looting of Mizzima's headquarters, ASEAN reached a five-point consensus with junta leader senior General Min Aung Hlaing. However, it is difficult to identify any substantive achievements of ASEAN over the ensuing three years toward ending the conflict in Myanmar and stabilising the region. This is despite previous ASEAN chair Indonesia claiming to have held over 260 meetings with stakeholders in Myanmar to find a solution to the crisis.

The result is that despite the efforts of ASEAN and others to stop the violence in Myanmar, the conflict today is arguably worse than it has been in the three years since the coup. At the close of 2023, 316 of Myanmar's 330 townships reported active fighting, with 40% of townships throughout the country now assessed to be out of the control of the junta. Meanwhile, nearly 600 resistance groups have emerged since the coup to challenge the position of the junta. Armed hostilities opposed to the junta were highlighted by Operation 1027 (the offensive) launched by ethnic forces at the close of October 2023. The offensive was successful in overrunning approximately 200 junta camps along with getting control of four border gates.

But, regardless of the desire of the people of Myanmar that has been clearly expressed, the State Administration Council (SAC), the self-styled name by which the junta refers to itself, still refuses to heed the calls of the Myanmar people for an end to military rule and the realisation of representative democracy. Instead, the junta's response has been to intensify its persecution and

The independent media soldiers on

Against this violence and intimidation, Myanmar's independent media continues to report the truth. From bases that are located primarily in the neighbouring countries, Myanmar's independent media continues to work to protect journalists and promote press freedom. It is forming an Independent Press Council to counter the Myanmar Press Council, which no longer functions the way it should and is instead staffed with retired military staff tasked with paying lip service to state propaganda.

As ASEAN and regional neighbours have been entrusted by international bodies when it comes to finding a pathway to ending the Myanmar conflict, it is time for these actors to prove that they are up to the task. Policymakers should approach Myanmar with an outlook focused not solely on Myanmar but, rather, with a comprehensive vision for the region's stability and growth on the whole. Short-sighted policy such as accepting the outcome of any junta-rigged election in Myanmar, for example, will only serve to fuel the violence between the junta and the vast majority of the population. Far from stabilising the situation, it would only exacerbate the situation, internally and regionally.

With an understanding of the debilitating nature of the Myanmar conflict, policymakers must appreciate that the only way forward for Myanmar, and the region, is a truly democratic post-junta Myanmar. This is in meeting with the strategic, security, and economic interests of all countries in the region. To this end, I would like to call on all stakeholders, ASEAN and the others, to support Burmese journalists and the people of Myanmar in their struggle for a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and democratic post-junta Myanmar.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Poll ready'

The Prime Minister's grandiose declaration in "Standing on the cusp of history, PM says NDA ready for poll" (Inside pages, March 17) comes as no surprise. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is flush with funds and has also ensured that the main Opposition party is hampered in this area. Had the Supreme Court of India not junked the electoral bond scheme, the BJP would have continued to reap a rich harvest. Unlike the INDIA bloc which continues to flounder on issues such as seat sharing, the BJP has sewed up all alliances and has already released lists of candidates. **C.V. Aravind,** Bengaluru

The Opposition is not following a credible narrative to counter the BJP. While the BJP is promoting a developmental theme, the Opposition is only talking about issues such as the alleged misuse of institutions and an 'authoritarian regime' which affect these parties more than the common man. People view ED/IT raids against politicians and businessmen as anti-corruption measures and not as an abuse of power. It is time the Opposition comes up with

Corrections & Clarifications

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In the story titled "On the final day of Nyay Yatra, Rahul criticises Gautam Adani, PM Modi" (March 17, 2024), Akhilesh Yadav was erroneously referred to as "RJD leader." It should have been "Samajwadi Party leader."

credible narratives. At this

rate it seems that the BJP

will be on a good wicket

Srikanth Mahadevan,

even in 2029.

Chenna

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Water crisis, lessons

Amidst the dire water crisis that has enveloped Bengaluru, a point emerges — of the need for nationwide adoption of rainwater harvesting. The need to sustain natural resources cannot be emphasised. There has to be afforestation too. **M.V.L. Vivek.**

Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

The military's continuing hold over Pakistan

fter much waiting, Pakistan's election drama appears to be over, with Shehbaz Sharif becoming the Prime Minister for the second time after his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) joined hands with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to form a coalition government. The two parties may claim that they have taken this step to save Pakistan from instability; however, in reality, this is only poised to exacerbate the economic and political chaos. In the days ahead, the new government will have its task cut out to alleviate Pakistan's troubles while also pandering to the military's whims and fancies.

In Pakistan, it is a known secret that the military establishment interferes in the electoral process and selects the *laadla* (a derogatory term for the army-backed prime ministerial candidate). However, the brazenness with which the electoral manipulation has occurred this time has caused widespread anger among people against the army leadership. Allegations of rigging notwithstanding, the military appears to have achieved its intended objectives without caring much about the people's mandate. This is bound to have implications for not just domestic political stability but also for South Asia.

The military's interference Pakistan's history is replete with instances of direct or indirect military interference in domestic politics, including four periods of martial law. This time, the independent candidates backed by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) won the highest number of National Assembly seats. In 2018, Mr. Khan himself became the Prime Minister of Pakistan with the tacit support of the army. So, it is somewhat ironic that his party is now raising such a hue and cry about the rigging of the elections.

The last purportedly free and fair polls in Pakistan were held in



Sameer Patil is a Senior Fellow at **Observer Research** Foundation and Deputy Director at ORF Mumbai. He previously served in the National Security Council Secretariat. Views are personal





Sarral Sharma

Jawaharlal Nehru in the National Security Council personal

military establishment. Despite securing an absolute majority in erstwhile East Bengal, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League was not allowed to form the government in Islamabad. This spawned a public outcry and eventually caused the breakup of Pakistan in 1971. Since then, the army has been largely successful in manipulating the electoral mandate and selecting prime ministers. Both domestic and international pressures have so far failed to stop the army from

1970. However, the disastrous

consequences of those elections

still linger in the memory of the

interfering in domestic politics. The latest arrangement of selecting the prime minister also squarely benefits the military establishment. First, with Mr. Shehbaz Sharif as the 'selected'

is a PhD Scholar at University, New Delhi. He previously served Secretariat. Views are

Pakistan's new

rests on a stolen

engineered by

the military

government

mandate

Prime Minister, it will be easier for the army to control the civilian government. Unlike his elder brother, Nawaz Sharif, Mr. Shehbaz Sharif will not rebel against the military and will likely remain a trusted yes-man in the foreseeable future. Second, he shares good ties with important Western countries, in addition to China and Saudi Arabia. So, though the army is criticised by some countries for interfering in the elections, it will still receive some international support for at least holding general elections and helping form a (token) civilian government. The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, is aware that the success of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, his pet project to stabilise the country's economy, depends on external financial support. For that to happen, any 'selected' government in Islamabad is sufficient to move things forward. Third, a fractured electoral mandate with no clear majority

for any political party has given enough manoeuvring space to the army to put PML-N and PPP in a politically weak coalition. Considering the sad fate of previous governments in Pakistan, this new PML-N-PPP coalition is

unlikely to last its five-year term. More importantly, this fractured mandate has already started an ugly power struggle among various parties. This political wrangling will help divert attention from the wrongdoings of the military establishment and put the spotlight on the political class and civilian institutions. Finally, with a 'selected' and weak prime minister in office, General Munir may now plan to seek an extension in November 2025. It is noteworthy that these were the first National Assembly polls under his tenure as the COAS. His responsibility was to ensure a free and fair election in a politically polarised Pakistan – a task at which he failed miserably.

Any rapprochement between Mr. Khan and the military establishment looks unlikely. Hinting at Mr. Khan's style of politics, General Munir said that Pakistan needed "stable hands and a healing touch to move on from the politics of anarchy and polarisation, which does not suit a progressive country of 250 million people." Ironically, the army's interference in the elections has dashed all hopes of providing a "healing touch" to the people.

A loss for the people After a favourable election outcome, the military establishment now feels more emboldened to tighten its grip on Pakistan's civilian and political institutions. Journalists, PTI supporters, human rights activists, and minority communities are increasingly being targeted by state security agencies. Regular internet shutdowns, excessive social media monitoring, and the banning of platforms such as X have become daily occurrences. In his second year as COAS, with a new coalition government in power, General Munir will assert more control over all spheres of governance. As the military establishment wins another political battle by disregarding the public mandate, the ultimate loss will be borne by the people.

Advancing equitable access to kidney care

Chronic kidney disease is the fifth leading cause of mortality in Tamil Nadu

STATE OF PLAY

<u>Sakthirajan Ramanathan</u>

7 orld kidney day is celebrated every year on the second Thursday of March. The theme of this year is 'Advancing equitable access to care and optimal medication practice'. The first Department of Nephrology in India was started at the Government General Hospital and the Premier Institute of Madras Medical College in Tamil Nadu in December 1971. The State has crossed many milestones since, including running a successful dialysis programme under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS) - only Tamil Nadu and Kerala run a hemodialysis programme at government hospitals without opting for the PPP model - and delivering peritoneal dialysis bags at the doorstep of patients through the Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam scheme. launched by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in 2021 to provide healthcare at the doorstep of patients including screening, drug delivery, and palliative care. But there is still a long road towards the goal of ensuring kidney health for all.

Chronic kidney disease is the fifth leading cause of mortality in Tamil Nadu. This means that Tamil Nadu needs special attention compared to most other States. A recent step survey, conducted by the Institute of Nephrology and Institute of Community Medicine, Madras Medical College, estimated chronic kidney disease to be prevalent in 8.4% of the adult population of Tamil Nadu; 0.3% will require dialysis immediately. With diabetes and hypertension increasing in the population, the burden Tamil Nadu

of chronic kidney disease will

only increase. This will impact

not only the health of the peo-

ple, but also the economy. Ev-

ery year, the Tamil Nadu go-

vernment spends more than

₹100 crore for hemodialysis

alone for the CMCHIS; this is

the highest amount being

check blood creatinine levels

to assess kidney function and

use the dipstick method to

check whether there is excess

protein in urine among high-

risk populations, in primary

care. Further, the people of

Tamil Nadu are also prone to

chronic kidney disease of un-

known origin. This is still an

enigma as it is more common

among people working in agri-

culture, salt pans, brick kilns,

and other industries which re-

quire outdoor activity. A high

number of people are in-

volved in agricultural activi-

ties in Tamil Nadu, so they

could be prone to this.

Though there are symptoms

for every disease, unfortu-

nately, chronic kidney dis-

ease, much like diabetes and

hypertension, predominantly

remains asymptomatic and

warrants a screening pro-

gramme, which should be in-

cluded in screenings for non-

devised a mechanism to en-

sure that there are many super

specialty doctors in govern-

ment-run hospitals. There is

internal reservation for those

The State government has

communicable diseases.

The need of the hour is to

spent on one disease.

the highest number of super specialists (900 doctors across various disciplines) in government hospitals, it has qualified nephrologists in only 20 medical colleges. Nearly half these have only one specialist. A disease with a prevalence of 8.4% needs at least two qualified nephrologists in every medical college. Further, end-stage kidney disease can be prevented if appropriate treatment is given at various stages of chronic kidney disease (classified as stage 1 to 5). This will save opportunity cost.

working in primary health

centres and government hos-

pitals to pursue specialty med-

icine. Though Tamil Nadu has

The government has done commendable work through the Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam scheme by delivering medicines for diabetics and hypertension at the doorsteps of individuals above 45 years of age. This scheme has covered more than 1 crore people so far. But it has to be strengthened further to include drugs for chronic kidney disease. All those with noncommunicable diseases need lifelong medication. This scheme not only cuts the indirect cost of travel and wage loss for people who have to go get the drug on a specified day, but also ensures good adherence to medication.

Mr. Stalin has been emphasising that health and education are the two eyes of a government following the Dravidian model. He has ensured reasonable steps in every corner to achieve health equity. Similar to diabetes and hypertension, chronic kidney disease also needs prioritisation so that Tamil Nadu can achieve kidney health for all.

Sakthirajan Ramanathan is Senior Assistant Professor of Nephrology, Madras Medical College

No major change in employment status or wages in 10 years

A report by Bahutva Karnataka shows that the share of self-employed workers increased, while the share of those in formal employment remained low

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 18, 1974

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Mar Mindu.

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

n March 11, Bahutva Karnataka, a forum for concerned citizens and organisations, released a report titled 'Employment, Wages and Inequality', at the Press Club, Bengaluru. The report analyses the progress in various employment-related indicators in the last decade, ever since the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) came to power, including employment generation, formalisation of jobs, and improvement in wages.

As the general elections draw near, the report also examines the progress of the NDA's employment-related initiatives. In April 2019, for instance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that 2.5 crore jobs have been added annually. Data reveal that the share of formal employment with social security and other advantages attached to it has remained stagnant. On the other hand, the number of self-employed individuals has increased substantially. Further, while wage earnings have increased when adjusted for inflation, the increase is negligible.

The stagnation is reflected in the share of households earning less than the national floor level minimum wage (NFLMW). About 34% of households in India earned less than the proposed NFLMW of ₹375 a day. Further, wage inequality has resulted in widening the gap between the rich and the poor. In 2022, the top 1% and 10% of the population held 22% and 57% of the national income, respectively, while the bottom 50% held 12.7%, according to data from the World Inequality Database.

Chart 1 compares the share of employment across various employment categories in 2011-12 and 2022-23 for men and women. Data show that the share of employment in the formal sector remained below 25%. The share of

mained above 50% by 2022-23. While the share of self-employed women was the highest, it also saw the highest growth of 8% points from 56.5% in 2011-12 to 64.3% in 2022-23. According to the report, between 2011-12 and 2022-23, women doing unpaid labour in their family business or farming rose from one in four to one in three due to lack of other remunerative employment and stagnant household earnings.

those who were self-employed re-

Chart 2 shows the year-wise average weekly wages, adjusted for inflation, for male and female regular salaried workers and casual labourers. Data show there has not been any significant growth in income in the last five years across employment categories.

Further, many households still earn less than the NFLMW (Map 3). In 2019, an expert committee, set up by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, recommended that the NFLMW should be at least ₹375 per day and ₹3,050 per week. Of the 34 States and Union Territories (UTs) analysed, in about 19 of them, more than 20% earned less than ₹375 a day or less than ₹3,050 a week in 2022-23. In Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh, above 50% of the households earned less than this threshold. The report adds that nearly 30 crore workers make less than the minimum wage.

The stagnancy in income growth among the majority of the population, when juxtaposed with India's increased GDP per capita, hints at a widening gap between the rich and poor. In the last 10 years, GDP per capita increased by 60%, while close to 35% of the total households earned less than the NFLMW. The share of national wealth held by the wealthiest 10% of the population increased from 63% in 2012 to 64.5% in 2022, while the share held by the poorest 50% reduced further from 6.1% in 2012 to 5.6% in 2022 (Chart 4). The chart shows the year-wise wealth share of the top 10% and the bottom 50% of the population.

Employment check

The charts were sourced from the report titled, 'Employment, Wages and Inequality', published by Bahutva Karnataka



Unpaid helpers: Women planting paddy seedlings in their agricultural field in Tetelia village, Guwahati. RITU RAJ KONWAR

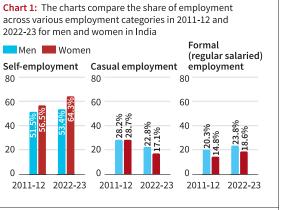
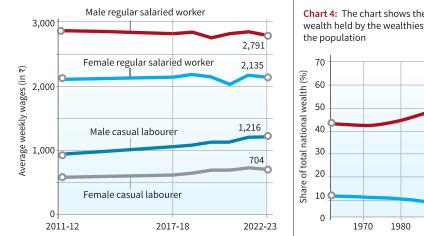


Chart 2: The chart shows the year-wise average weekly wages, adjusted for inflation, for male and female regular salaried workers and casual labourers



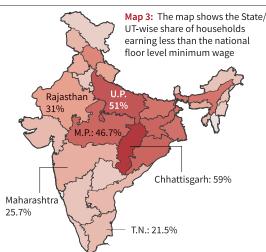
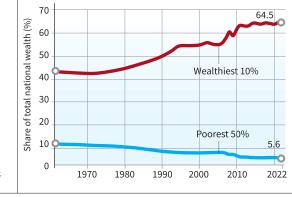


Chart 4: The chart shows the year-wise share of national wealth held by the wealthiest 10% and the poorest 50% of



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Malaysia and Singapore hold differing views on peace zone idea

Kuala Lumpur, March 17: Following up the recent statement of the Malaysian Government in support of the call to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace, official sources here believe that the principle should be reiterated regardless of what the United States does with Diego Garcia.

They are of the view, however, that China may have to be taken into confidence and brought into the picture at some stage by the Indian Ocean countries. Malaysia and China, although they recognise each other, have no diplomatic relations. They are moving towards diplomatic representation which may be established this year.

Opinion here on this issue is in such contrast to what it is in Singapore. Like other non-aligned countries which support the peace zone idea, Malaysia sees the problem as one of big power rivalry, essentially leading to U.S.-Soviet confrontation, in the Indian Ocean. Singapore, on the other hand, sees it as a problem of small power confrontation in its region. In the event of its relations deteriorating with Malaysia or Indonesia or both to the point of confrontation, Singapore feels that it must have dependable ways of safeguarding its commercial sea lanes without which it cannot survive. Non-aligned maritime nations may feel that the Indian Ocean must be non-aligned not only as between the superpowers but among themselves. Unless a peace zone also means agreement among its sponsors that they will themselves police it with a view to keeping the peace among themselves, small States like Singapore have nowhere to go for succour in an emergency. This is how the Strait of Malacca have come to be crucial to Singapore's thinking on the subject. Both Indonesia and Malaysia claim the Straits as part of their territorial waters.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 18, 1924

Empire trade in the east

London, March 17: In the Commons to-day, replying to Mr. Nellairs, Mr. Ammon stated that the aggregate value of the Empire trade in 1922 in eastern waters east of Africa was 1,100 million pounds while the cost of maintenance of British squadrons including ships of dominion navies in Eastern Waters and the Pacific was £3,542,000.

Text&Context

THEMANHINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

No plans to allocate budget to settle Chinese plant dues

\$ billion dues. The Chinese power plants were built under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. An IMF team has been in Pakistan to complete the final review of the \$3 billion Standby Agreement. PTI The decline in Flipkart valuation in the last two years

in \$ billion. The valuation of e-commerce firm Flipkart declined to \$35 billion as of January 31, 2024, from \$40 billion in the financial year ended on January 31, 2022, as per Walmart's change in equity structure in Flipkart. PTI

The aid package announced by the EU for Egypt

in \$ billion. The EU announced the aid package for cash-strapped Egypt as concerns mount that economic pressure and conflicts in neighbouring countries could drive more migrants to European shores. AP

Amount amassed by President Joe Biden's 2024 campaign

in \$ million. President Biden's campaign amassed more than \$150 million in cash on hand for the 2024 election, far exceeding the in-hand total for his Republican opponent, Donald Trump. AP

India's smartphone exports to the U.S. in April-December FY24

3.53 in \$ billion. India's smartphone exports to the U.S. rose from \$998 million in the same period last year, according to the Commerce Ministry. PTI COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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The problem of equity in IPCC reports

What underpins mitigation action in assessment reports by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change? What are Integrated Assessment Models? Do these models follow the principle of equity? What did the latest study find with respect to over 500 future emissions scenarios?

EXPLAINER

<u>Rishika Pardikar</u>

The story so far:

n a study published on March 4, researchers analysed more than 500 future emissions scenarios the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessed in its latest reports. These scenarios relate to mitigation actions like reducing carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels and increasing carbon sequestration through forestry. It found that across all 556 scenarios, income, energy-use, and emissions disparities between developed and developing countries are projected to continue up to 2050.

What are IPCC assessment reports? Typically, IPCC reports comprise three Working Group reports: one on physical science, one on climate adaptation, and one on mitigation action. One synthesis report consolidates findings from the three Working Group reports. Then there are thematic special reports. Each report assesses climate-related scientific literature to capture the state of scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge on climate change. The IPCC is currently in its Seventh Assessment cycle (AR7).



Equitable action: A solar thermal power plant in Maraimalai Nagar, Tamil Nadu in 2023. FILE PHOTO

disciplines, IAMs are meant to provide policy-relevant guidelines on climate action. However, these models also have shortcomings. They prioritise least-cost

IPCC's AR6 report and found they project that per-capita GDP across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, West Asia and the rest of Asia, which together constitute 60% of the world's population, will be below the global average even in 2050. They spotted similar inequities between the Global North and the Global South vis-à-vis the consumption of goods and services and both energy and fossil fuel consumption. The scenarios were also found to project higher carbon sequestration from land-based carbon sinks (like forests) and higher deployment of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies in developing countries compared to developed ones. Thus, poorer countries, they concluded, would bear the burden of both mitigation action and carbon dioxide removal and CCS. "Our analysis of the regional trends underlying the global modelled scenarios

in the IPCC's [AR6] indicates that the scenarios disregard the notion of historical responsibility of the Global North," the authors wrote in their paper, adding the scenarios also "disregard" the future energy needs of the Global South to meet development goals.

Why does equity matter?

The principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities are enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Article 3 of the Convention states countries "should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof."

These principles recognise that while tackling climate change requires global action, richer countries are better placed to shoulder bigger climate action responsibilities than poorer ones. By viewing climate action solely through the lens of global-level technical and economic feasibility, mitigation pathways modelled using IAMs often run counter to equity principles, researchers say. "Equity in this sense would imply that

THE GIST

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In the study, the authors conclude that construction of IPCC scenarios will need to be both equitable and environmentally sound.

dioxide removal and CCS.

How does it assess future scenarios? The IPCC uses 'modelled pathways' to estimate what it will take to limit the warming of the earth's surface. These pathways are drawn using Integrated Assessment Models (IAMs) that describe human and earth systems. IAMs are complex models that examine possible futures of the energy and climate system and economies. Its macroeconomic models can point to future growth levels in terms of GDP; its energy models can project future consumption; vegetation models can examine land-use changes; and earth-system models use the laws of physics to understand how climate evolves. With such integration across

assessments – for example, the absolute cost of setting up a solar plant or undertaking afforestation in India is lower than in the U.S. However, experts have said they could exercise the option of enabling countries to equitably share the burden of action, where the richest undertake more drastic mitigation action more immediately.

What did the new study find?

The study was conducted by Tejal Kanitkar and Akhil Mythri from the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, and T. Jayaraman from M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai. They assessed 556 scenarios in developed regions need to accelerate towards net negative emissions and make the remaining carbon budget available to other less developed regions. However, the scenarios project precisely the opposite," they wrote in their paper.

In the study, the authors conclude that construction of IPCC scenarios will need to be both equitable and environmentally sound. "This is currently a major gap in the emissions modelling domain and we need to move towards model and scenario building techniques where questions of equity and climate justice come to the foreground," they wrote.

Rishika Pardikar is a freelance environment reporter based in Bengaluru

How were the new Election Commissioners selected?

What does the law say on the appointment process? Why has the new Act been challenged?

K. Venkataramanan

The story so far: he President has appointed Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, both retired IAS officers, as Election Commissioners (ECs) to fill up two vacancies in the three-member Election Commission of India. The two officials are the first to be appointed under the new law governing appointments to the constitutional body, the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

How were the new ECs selected?

YK

In terms of the new law, the two ECs were selected by a three-member Selection Committee, comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and the Leader of the Indian National Congress in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, as leader of the largest party in the Opposition. They were chosen out of a shortlisted panel of six names. The shortlisting was done by a committee which, according to the Act, is headed by the Union Minister for Law and Justice and includes two officials of the rank of Secretary to the government.

What was the process before this?

Article 324 of the Constitution vests the "superintendence, direction and control of elections" in an Election Commission. It also says the EC shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may fix from time to time. This provision was subject to any law made in that behalf by Parliament. However, for nearly 40 years from the adoption of the Constitution, the EC only had a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). It was not until October 1989 that it became a multi-member body. However, the appointment of two Election Commissioners was rescinded within a short time, that is on January 1, 1990.

A law was enacted in 1991 to fix the conditions of service of the CEC and the ECs, and amended in 1993. However, it did not provide for any appointment process. In the absence of any particular process being laid down by parliamentary law, the President has been appointing the CEC and ECs. The only known process is that the Law Ministry puts up a panel of names to the Prime Minister, who recommends the appointment of one of them as EC to the President. It had become a convention to appoint officials as ECs first and then, on the completion of the tenure of the CEC, the senior EC was elevated as CEC.

What did the SC rule on the process? In Anoop Baranwal versus Union of India, a five-member Constitution Bench ruled that it was the intention of the makers of the Constitution that the power to appoint the CEC and other ECs was not meant to be given exclusively to the executive and that the power was to be exercised "subject to any law made by Parliament". Noting that no such law was enacted since the inception of the Constitution, the court laid down an interim arrangement for the appointment. This was to operate until Parliament made its own law. The court said the appointments should be made by a three-member committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (or the leader of the party that is largest in the Opposition) and the Chief Justice of India. It was in response to this that Parliament enacted the 2023 Act, which received presidential assent and was notified late in December 2023.

What is the criticism against the Act? The foremost criticism from those who have challenged the new Act is that it has removed the CJI from the selection panel and has made a Union Minister a member instead. This gives the executive a two-one majority in the three-member committee. The government has argued that the Act does not really remove the CJI from the appointment process, as the inclusion of the CJI was only a stop-gap arrangement put in place until the enactment of a law. The Supreme Court has repeatedly rejected attempts to obtain a stay on the new Act. The petitioners have approached the court again against the appointment of the two ECs. Their primary argument is that the Act violates the main principle in the Constitution Bench judgment – the need to free the appointment process from the executive.

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THE GIST

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Text Context

BUILDING BLOCKS



What is the HbA1C test and why is it used to check for diabetes?

All individuals older than 30 years should be screened for diabetes, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research's Guidelines for Management of Type 2 Diabetes, 2018. The American Diabetes Association approved HbA1c as a diagnostic tool for the same in 2009

Zubeda Hamid

ndia is estimated to have 10.13 crore people with diabetes, and another 13.6 crore people who are pre-diabetic, according to a nationwide study published in 2023. This apart, over 35% of Indians suffer from hypertension and nearly 40% from abdominal obesity, both of which are risk factors for diabetes. India accounts for 17% of all diabetes patients in the world.

Prevention and early detection are key to helping combat this non-communicable disease burden, experts say. One of the most commonly-used tests to diagnose pre-diabetes and diabetes (both type 1 and type 2) and to help manage diabetes, is the haemoglobin A1C (HbA1C) test, also known as the glycated haemoglobin or glycosylated haemoglobin test.

How does the test work? Sugar enters your bloodstream from the patients with diabetes and was proposed for monitoring glycemia."

During the first few years of clinical use, the paper said, HbA1c measures were inconsistent. But as the importance of precise HbA1c measurements became apparent through studies that revealed better patient outcomes and mortality associated with lower average HbA1c, the need to reduce error margins in measurement became apparent. Following programmes to regulate HBA1c measurements and calibrate them to reference standards, standardisation and accuracy greatly improved from 1993 to 2012, the paper noted.

The American Diabetes Association approved HbA1c as a diagnostic tool in 2009. In 2011, after an expert consultation with the World Health Organization (WHO), it said HbA1c could be used as a diagnostic test for diabetes "provided ... stringent quality assurance tests are in place and assays are standardised to criteria aligned to the international reference values, and there are no conditions present which preclude its accurate measurement."

type of haemoglobin found in some populations; or are under certain medications including steroids, opiates or dapsone (a drug used to treat leprosy). They may even change if a person is in early or late pregnancy.

Generally, for those whose results indicate pre-diabetes or diabetes, doctors specify a goal to achieve specific HbA1C levels. But these vary from person to person and also depend on their age, health conditions, medications being taken, and other factors.

Who needs to take the test and when? According to the Indian Council of Medical Research's Guidelines for Management of Type 2 Diabetes (2018), all individuals older than 30 years should be screened for diabetes. Those with one or more risk factors including, among others, obesity, an increased waist circumference, a history of or being treated for hypertension, a history of heart disease, and a history of polycystic ovarian syndrome should be screened earlier. Retests should be conducted after three years in case of normal glucose tolerance. If a person is pre-diabetic, retests should be annual. Your doctor may also ask you to be tested more frequently if, for instance, you're planning to have a baby. If you have diabetes, your doctor may ask you to take it every three to six months, to keep an eye on your blood sugar levels and to check if your treatment plan is working.

the person's latest meal and when they last consumed it, the HbA1C test is independent of these variables, making it more reliable. It can be taken irrespective of when the latest meal was consumed.

What are the test's limitations?

It is important to note the HbA1C test does not replace other tests and may be carried out alongside others, such as the traditional blood sugar tests to test for diabetes and pre-diabetes. It also does not replace regular blood-sugar testing at home, which a doctor may have recommended, as the blood sugar levels may spike and dip through the day or night, and the HbA1C test may not capture this.

This apart, while the HbA1C test remains one of the best to assess long-term control of diabetes in people known to have diabetes, it is not uniformly accepted as a diagnostic test by all global medical bodies because of its relatively low sensitivity arising from



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

I admire his happy-golucky attitude

His salty language got him in trouble with his superiors at the new office

S. Upendran

"I ran into Saketh at the supermarket." "I really miss his cheerful presence in the office. Every office should have a happy-go-lucky person like him."

"Happy-go-lucky? What does it mean?" "A happy-go-lucky person is someone who remains happy most of the time. He is a content individual who doesn't really become anxious or worry about things. Doesn't really plan for anything ... "

"He's someone who thinks that everything will work out fine - even though he hasn't done the required work. Someone who depends on Lady Luck quite a bit."

"And when things don't go the way he'd expected them to, he doesn't panic. Instead, he merely accepts the outcome. Gets on with life."

"Not many people are willing to put up with that kind of attitude."

"I know! My boss fired him because she didn't like his happy-go-lucky attitude."

"Oh, by the way, have you read your favourite author's latest book?'

"I've bought the book, but just haven't found the time to read it."

"Saketh was raving about it. Critics have been praising the author's chatty style. Tell me, how can someone's writing style be chatty? The word chatty is normally associated with speech, isn't it?"

"It's true that the word chatty is usually used with someone's speech. When you describe someone as being chatty, what you're suggesting is that the person is very friendly, and talks a lot. The language she uses is rather informal. The chatty girl was full of questions' "My grandmother was never chatty." "That's true. The word chatty can also be used to refer to one's style of writing.' "When you refer to someone's writing style as being chatty, what you mean is that the individual makes use of the spoken language rather than the written." "I guess you could say that! The person makes use of an informal style of writing. It's more a conversation between the writer and you. The writer sounds as if he were talking to you. Here's an example. I enjoy reading emails from my boss. They are always written in a chatty style." "My uncle wants to write a chatty book about his life as a film distributor." "I hope he uses the kind of salty language he normally uses in his daily conversation."

food you eat. The sugar, or glucose, attaches to the haemoglobin in your red blood cells. Haemoglobin is a protein that transports oxygen to all the cells of your body. Everybody has some sugar attached to their haemoglobin. Those with pre-diabetes and diabetes, however, have more. The HbA1C test measures the percentage of your red blood cells that have sugar-coated haemoglobin.

Why is the test used to check for diabetes?

A paper was published in the Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine in 2016 entitled 'The role of haemoglobin A1c in the assessment of diabetes and cardiovascular risk'. It stated: "HbA1c was first discovered in 1955, but elevated HbA1c levels in diabetes patients were not noted until 1968. Another eight years passed before HbA1c was correlated with blood glucose values in hospitalised

What do HbA1C test results look like? The HbA1C levels are provided as either a percentage or in mmol/mol (which stands for millimoles per mole). A mole is a unit of measurement often used for chemical substances. The higher the percentage, the higher your blood glucose levels are. An Hb1A1C below 5.7% is considered normal; between 5.7% and 6.4% may indicate you are pre-diabetic; and 6.5% or higher can indicate diabetes. In mmol/mol: below 42 corresponds to below 6.0%; 42-47 mmol/mol to 6.0 to 6.4%; and 48 mmol/mol to 6.5% or over.

However, the test's results may change under certain conditions, including if a patient has kidney or liver failure, severe anaemia or a blood disorder such as thalassaemia; if they have a less common How does the test differ from others? While fasting and post-prandial (after a meal) or post-meal blood sugar tests give you blood sugar levels within a specific time frame, the HbA1C test reflects your average blood glucose levels over the last two to three months.

Also, while the traditional blood sugar tests may fluctuate depending on items in difficulties in assay standardisation. In other words, a doctor may recommend a glucose test alongside an HbA1C test to obtain a clearer picture when diagnosing a person. The test may also have limitations particular in India. A 2013 paper published in the journal Diabetes Technology and Therapeutics noted that in some clinical situations, accurate measurements are harder to make. These include having conditions like thalassaemia, structural haemoglobin variants in the population, iron-deficiency anaemia (which is relatively high in India), and the use of certain drugs.

"Because of the relatively frequent occurrence of some of these conditions in some parts of India, it is important that they are looked for when evaluating an inappropriately high or low HbA1c level. Alternative indices may have to be used for assessing glycemic control in these cases," the paper noted.

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

THE DAILY QUIZ

A quiz on the holy month of Ramzan that began a few days back

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1

Which month of the Islamic calendar is Ramzan or Ramadan?

QUESTION 2

When does the Holy Koran indicate that eating and drinking are permissible during the holy month?

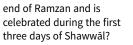
QUESTION 3

Traditionally, the faithful break their fast by eating the fruit of the 'Phoenix dactylifera'. What is the fruit?

QUESTION 4

What is the name of the festival that marks the

YK



QUESTION 5

If the greeting 'Ramadan Mubarak' means 'Blessed Ramadan', what does 'Ramadan Kareem' mean?

QUESTION 6

In Ramadan, the reward for every good deed done is multiplied by what number: 50, 60, or 70?

QUESTION 7

Quraysh tribe.

Name the battle that took place in Ramadan 2 AH (March 624 CE) between the Prophet Muhammad-led Muslim army and a relief

column of the Meccan



Visual question:

In front of which famous mosque are Muslims sharing Iftar on March 11, 2024? AFP

Questions and Answers to the March 15 edition of the daily quiz: 1. The ides falls on this date in months with 30 days. Ans: 13th day 2. The assassination of Julius Caesar followed three incidents that turned the conspirators in the senate against him. This was the first incident in which he did this action when the senators reached the temple. Ans: Didn't stand up

3. This was the second incident wherein Caesar removed two officials for suspecting him of this action. Ans: Wanting to become king 4. This was the third incident, wherein Caesar made this man take-off the crown he had put on Caesar's head. Ans: Marcus Antonius (Mark

Antonv) 5. In Dante's Inferno, Satan has three faces in the

Ninth Circle of Hell. One is consuming Judas Iscariot, another Gaius Cassius Longinus and the third this man. Ans: Marcus Junius Brutus Visual: Name the left-most actor. Ans: John Wilkes Booth

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Early Birds: Rajmohan V | Tamal Biswas | M. Suresh Kumar

"Salty language? What is that?" "When you say that someone uses salty language, what you mean is that the person uses rather offensive language."

"In other words, the person curses a lot when he speaks.

"Exactly! When he was young, my cousin specialised in telling salty jokes." "Politicians using salty language is not anything new."

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day Gauzy:

so thin as to transmit light

Synonyms: see-through, sheer, transparent, vapourous

Usage: The gauzy curtains bring in a lot of light.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/gauzyen

International Phonetic Alphabet: / 'gɔ zi /

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

THE HINDU World

LASHKAR GAH

21 killed in accident involving bus, tanker, and scooter in Afghanistan



At least 21 persons were killed and 38 injured on Sunday when a bus collided with a fuel tanker truck and burst into flames in southern Afghanistan. Officials said that a bike was also involved in the accident. The accident occurred in the early hours on a key highway that sees traffic between Herat and capital Kabul. AFP

TEHRAN

Iran inks deals worth \$13 billion with domestic oil companies



Iran on Sunday sealed contracts worth billions of dollars with domestic companies to boost its oil production in the face of Western sanctions. The deals worth \$13 billion will increase daily oil production in six major fields and add 3,50,000 barrels per day to the country's daily production of oil. AFP

SEOUL

Blinken arrives in South Korea to attend democracy summit



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived on Sunday in South Korea on the first stop of a brief Asia tour also including the Philippines. Mr. Blinken landed on Sunday afternoon ahead of the third Summit for Democracy on Monday, an initiative of U.S. President Joe Biden, which Seoul is hosting this week. AFP

GOMA

Eight UN troops wounded as fighting escalates in DR Congo



Clashes have broken out between government forces and M23 rebels leaving eight UN peacekeepers injured after a brief lull in fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the United Nations said. One of the peacekeepers was "gravely wounded" in the attack on Saturday at Sake, a UN official said. AFP

Putin poised to rule Russia after an election with no other real choices

Early results after counting ballots from 24% of the precincts showed that Putin garnered 88% of the vote; three-day poll happened in a tightly controlled environment where no criticism of the Russian President or Ukraine war was allowed

Rome-runners

Associated Press

ussian President Vladimir Putin is poised to extend his nearly quarter century of rule for six more years after a relentless crackdown on dissent - and early returns announced after polls closed in Russia showed he had nearly 88% of the vote with 24% of the precincts counted, according to Russia's Central Election Commission.

The three-day election that began on Friday has taken place in a tightly controlled environment where no public criticism of Mr. Putin or his war in Ukraine is allowed.

Mr. Putin's fiercest polit-



Close scrutiny: People queue outside a polling station during Russia's presidential election in Moscow on Sunday. AFP

ical foe, Alexei Navalny, with Mr. Putin or the war to protest by coming to the died in an Arctic prison last month, and other critics polls at noon on Sunday, a are either in jail or in exile. strategy endorsed by Na-Navalny's associates valny shortly before his have urged those unhappy death. Team Navalny described it as a success, releasing pictures and videos of people crowding near polling stations in various cities across Russia around noon

The 71-year-old Russian leader faces three token rivals from Kremlin-friendly parties who have refrained from any criticism of his 24-year rule or his full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago. Mr. Putin has boasted of Russian battlefield successes in the run-up to the vote, but a massive Ukrainian drone attack across Russia early on Sunday sent a reminder of challenges faced by Mos-COW

The Russian Defence Ministry reported downing

35 Ukrainian drones overnight, including four near the Russian capital.

Voting took place over three days at polling stations across the vast country's 11 time zones, in illegally annexed regions of Ukraine and online. While polls closed Sunday night in Russia, voting continued at some embassies around

Cases of vandalism Despite tight controls, sev-

the world.

eral dozen cases of vandalism at polling stations were reported.

Authorities in Russia have detained some 74 people across the country for protest actions linked to the presidential election.

'Ground operations in Kyiv are possible at some point'

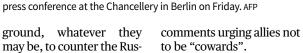
Agence France-Presse PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron said in an interview published on Saturday evening that Western ground operations in Ukraine might be necessary "at some point", days after meeting with German and Polish leaders.

Last month Mr. Macron refused to rule out putting troops on the ground in Ukraine, which prompted a stern response from Berlin and other European partners.

But the French President has not recanted from his position, but stressed that Western allies would not take the initiative.

"Maybe at some point – I don't want it, I won't take the initiative – we will have to have operations on the



to be "cowards". Mr. Macron met his German and Polish counterparts in Berlin on Friday, in a show of solidarity behind

were

that we can do it". After the meeting, Ma-German Chancellor Olaf cron said the three coun-Scholz reacted angrily to tries of the so-called Wei-Mr. Macron's earlier refusal mar Triangle to rule out sending troops "united" in their aim to to Ukraine and his pointed "never let Russia win".

(from left) Emmanuel Macron, Olaf Scholz and Donald Tusk at a

sian forces," Macron told

newspaper Le Parisien in

an interview conducted on

"France's strength is

Friday.

EU and Egypt agree to a €7.4-billion deal on energy, migration

and the centres of two on

going conflicts - the Israel-

Hamas war in the Gaza

Strip and Sudan's war bet-

ween the regular armed

Egypt already hosts

around nine million mi-

cluding four million Suda-

nese and 1.5 million

UN's International Organi-

cooperate on "security,

counter-terrorism cooper-

The Gaza Strip "will not

be the main focus but will

be part of the discussion"

in Cairo, the official added.

three Mediterranean lead-

ers – Italian Prime Minister

Giorgia Meloni, her Greek

counterpart Kyriakos Mit-

sotakis and Cyprus Presi-

The agreement follows several controversial deals

the EU has sealed in north-

ern Africa – with Libya,

Tunisia and Mauritania -

to stem the flow of irregu-

lar migrants across the Me-

Christodoulides.

Nikos

dent

The delegation included

zation for Migration.

Rapid Support Forces.

Haven for refugees



Netanyahu vows not to stop despite U.S. criticism of Gaza war

Agence France-Presse CAIRO

The EU chief and five European leaders visited cashstrapped Egypt on Sunday to announce a €7.4 billion financial package focussed on boosting energy trade and stemming irregular migrant flows to the 27member bloc.

The deal will include billions in credit over coming years for highly indebted Egypt, and stepping up energy sales that could help Europe "move further away from Russian gas", said a senior European Commission official.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen - who was joined by the leaders of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Italy – met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ahead of the scheduled signing ceremony.

Split-up of funds

The Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership agreement includes five billion euros in loans over four years, 1.8 billion euros in investment and hundreds of millions for bilateral projects including on migrationy.

Egypt, mired in a painful economic crisis, borders war-battered Libya

CM YK



EU chief Ursula Von der Layen and Egypt President Abdel-Fattah al-Sissi at the Presidential Palace in Cairo on Sunday. AP



Contestants run by the Colosseum during the Rome Marathon on Sunday. Three activists from climate movement Last Generation briefly interrupted the marathon before the police arrested them. The group has called for creation of a reparation fund worth €20 billion. AFP

UNICEF chief says Haiti situation resembles chaos of Mad Max

Agence France-Presse UNITED NATIONS

The UN children's agency chief offered a dire assessment Sunday of the chaotic situation in Haiti, saying it was "almost like a scene out of Mad Max," which depicted a violent and lawpost-apocalyptic less future.

"Haiti is a horrific situation," UNICEF executive director Catherine Russell told CBS talk show Face the Nation.

"Many, many people there are suffering from serious hunger and malnutrition and we are not able to get enough aid to them," with gangs controlling large parts of capital Port-



Mouting misery: Children line up to receive a plate of food at a shelter for families displaced by gang violence in Port-au-Prince. AP

au-Prince as well as key roads leading elsewhere. The situation is "the film.

worst that anyone has seen in decades," she said. "It's almost like a scene out of Mad Max. That's

what it seems like," Ms. Russell said of the 1979

Haiti, already hit by drought, natural disaster and weak government, has seen "the near-collapse of

basic services," a recent United Nations report warned.

Shipment looted

The challenges facing foreign aid workers - some of whom have been attacked or kidnapped for ransom – were underlined on Saturday when gangs looted a UNICEF shipment intended to provide relief for suffering mothers and children.

cult for Haitians and foreigners, the US Embassy said Saturday it was organizing a charter flight to evacuate its citizens from Haiti. Non-essential embassy staff were evacuated six days earlier.

Associated Press TEL AVIV

victory."

den

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu railed on Sunday against growing criticism from the United States against his leadership amid the devastating war with Hamas, saying the pressure will not stop Israel from achieving "total

In recent days, top offi-cials from the U.S., Israel's

staunchest ally which has

provided key military and

diplomatic support, have

publicly voiced their frus-

accused

vilian death toll in Gaza.

er Chuck Schumer, the

highest-ranking Jewish offi-

cial in the country and an

Israel supporter, called on

Israel to hold a new elec-

tion, saying Mr. Netanyahu

had "lost his way." Mr. Bi-

den expressed support for

what he called Mr. Schum-

The U.S. also has ex-

pressed concerns about a

planned Israeli assault on

Rafah, where about 1.4 mil-

lion displaced Palestinians

are sheltering, and support

tion to those talks was not

expected to leave for Qatar

until after Sunday evening

meetings of the Security

Cabinet and War Cabinet,

which will give directions

Despite the talks, Mr.

Netanyahu made it clear

for the negotiations.

er's "good speech."

Call for Israel polls U.S. Senate Majority Lead-

Chuck Schumer, highest-ranking Jewish official and an Israel supporter, had said that the Israeli PM had 'lost his way'

he had no plan to back down from the fighting that has killed more than 31,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials. More than five months have passed since Hamas's attack on southern Israel killed 1,200 people and left another 250 hostage in Gaza.

tration with Mr. Netanyahu. U.S. President Joe Bi-Mr. Netanyahu said that calls for an election now -Mr. Netanyahu of hurting Iswhich polls show he would rael because of the huge cilose badly - would force Israel to stop fighting and would paralyse the country for six months.

> "If we stop the war now, before all of its goals are achieved, this means that Israel will have lost the war, and this we will not allow," he said.

While the international criticism was mainly directed at Mr. Netanyahu and his leadership, his statement painted it as a broader attack on Israel.

Rafah attack imminent

"No international pressure will stop us from realizing all of the goals of the war: Eliminating Hamas, freeing all of our hostages and ensuring that Gaza never again constitutes a threat to Israel," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu also reiterated his determination to attack Hamas in Rafah and said that his government approved military plans for such an operation. "We will operate in Rafah. This will take several weeks, and it will happen," he said.

for a new round of talks aimed at securing a ceasefire in exchange for the return of Israeli hostages taken in Hamas's October 7 attack. The Israeli delega-

As life grows more diffi-

•••

THE HINDU World

✐



A farmer looking at his crop in a field in Vietnam's Mekong Delta region, known as the country's rice bowl'. AFP

Vietnam's 'rice bowl' about to crack as saltwater levels rise

Agence France-Presse HANOI

Vietnam faces nearly \$3 billion a year in crop losses as more saltwater seeps into arable land, state media reported on Sunday, citing new research.

The damage would likely centre on the Mekong Delta region, known as "Vietnam's rice bowl" because it provides food and livelihoods for tens of millions of people, research from the country's Environment Ministry showed.

Saltwater levels are often higher in the dry season but they are intensifying due to rising sea levels, droughts, tidal fluctuations, and a lack of upstream freshwater.

The resulting crop losses could amount to 70 trillion dong (\$2.94 billion), state media VnExpress reported, citing new research from the Water Resources Science Institute, which is under the Environment Ministry.

The research presented at a conference on water resourse management on Friday, found that among the most impacted parts of the region would be the southernmost Ca Mau province, which could lose an estimated \$665 million.

Earlier this month, the Department of Water Resources warned saline intrusion could impact around 80,000 hectares of rice and fruit farms in the Mekong Delta.

Salt intrusion in the area between 2023-2024 was higher than the average, according to the Na-Center for Hydro-Meteorological tional Forecasting.

The delta suffered an unusually long heatwave in February, leading to drought in several areas and low water levels in the region's canals.

Gemini's racial images are warning of tech titans' power to 'influence' views

Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month slammed errors by his company's AI app, after images of ethnically diverse Nazi troops forced it to temporarily stop users from creating pictures of people; many feel the stumble highlights the inordinate power held by a handful of companies over AI platforms

Agence France-Presse AUSTIN

or people at the trend-setting tech festival in Texas,U.S., the scandal that erupted after Google's Gemini chatbot cranked out images of Black and Asian Nazi soldiers was seen as a warning about the power artificial intelligence can give tech titans.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month slammed as "completely unacceptable" errors by his company's Gemini AI app, after gaffes such as the images of ethnically diverse Nazi troops forced it to temporarily stop users from pictures creating of people.

media users Social mocked and criticised Google for the historically inaccurate images, like those showing a female black U.S. Senator from the 1800s - when the first such Senator was not elected until 1992.

"We definitely messed up on the image generation," Google co-founder Sergey Brin said at a recent AI "hackathon," adding that the company should have tested Gemini more thoroughly.

Folks interviewed at the popular South by Southwest arts and tech festival in Austin said that the Gemini stumble highlights the inordinate power a handful of companies have

preneur, meaning Google had gone overboard in its effort to project inclusion and diversity. Google quickly corrected its errors, but the underlying problem remains, said Charlie Burgoyne,

'Too woke'

chief executive of the Valkyrie applied science lab in Texas. He equated Google's fix of Gemini to putting a

over the artificial intelli-

gence platforms that are

poised to change the way

"Essentially, it was too

'woke,'" said Joshua Weav-

er, a lawyer and tech entre-

people live and work.

Band-Aid on a bullet that happens in tech," Mr. wound. While Google long had

Shot in the foot: With Gemini, Google engineers tried to rebalance the algorithms of AI models to

provide results which better reflected human diversity, but the effort backfired. REUTERS

GEMINI

the luxury of having time to refine its products, it is now scrambling in an AI race with Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic and others, Mr. Weaver noted, adding, "They are moving faster than they know how to move." Mistakes made in an effort at cultural sensitivity are flashpoints, particularly given the tense political divisions in the U.S., a situation exacerbated by Elon Musk's X platform, the former Twitter.

"People on Twitter are winning creator with Interactive very gleeful to celebrate Films Ltd., said she could any embarrassing thing

someone gets into a robotaxi and, "if the AI scans you and thinks that there are any outstanding violations against you... you'll be taken into the local police station," not your intended destination.

AI is trained on mountains of data and can be put to work on a growing range of tasks, from image or audio generation to determining who gets a loan or whether a medical scan detects cancer.

Cultural bias

But that data comes from a world rife with cultural bias, disinformation and social inequity - not to mention online content that can include casual chats between friends or intentionally exaggerated and provocative posts and AI models can echo those flaws.

With Gemini, Google engineers tried to rebalance the algorithms to provide results better reflecting human diversity. The effort backfired.

"It can really be tricky, nuanced and subtle to figure out where bias is and how it is included," said technology lawyer Alex Shahrestani, a managing partner at Promise Legal law firm for tech companies.

Even well-intentioned engineers involved with training AI cannot help but bring their own life expe-

imagine a future in which rience and subconscious bias to the process, he and others believe. Mr. Burgoyne also casti-

gated big tech for keeping the inner workings of generative AI hidden in "black boxes," so users are unable to detect any hidden biases. "The capabilities of the outputs have far exceeded our understanding of the methodology," he said.

13

Experts and activists are calling for more diversity in teams creating AI and related tools, and greater transparency as to how they work – particularly when algorithms rewrite users' requests to "improve" results.

A challenge is how to appropriately build in perspectives of the world's many and diverse communities, Jason Lewis of the Indigenous Futures Resource Center and related groups said here.

At Indigenous AI, Mr. Lewis works with farflung indigenous communities to design algorithms that use their data ethically while reflecting their perspectives on the world, something he does not always see in the "arrogance" of big tech leaders. His own work, he told a group, stands in "such a contrast from Silicon Valley rhetoric, where there is a top-down 'Oh, we're doing this because we are going to benefit all humanity' bullshit," receiving laughter.

+ Shamrocks on Agence France-Presse MOUNT DARWIN

Low-cost rural clinic offers solace to + patients in impoverished Zimbabwe



Emmerson Mnangagwa opened a new "state-ofthe-art" clinic in a battle-

August last year, President



Jolly green: A performer jokes with members of the military ahead of the annual St Patrick's Day parade in Dublin in Ireland on Sunday. AFP

ide a hospital in rural Zimbabwe, scores of people wait patiently under trees or inside small tents for news of their loved ones.

Vendors sell snacks. fruits and drinks to drivers queuing at the gates of what has become an unlikely sought-after healthcare destination in the impoverished southern African country. public Zimbabwe's

health system has all but collapsed under years of mismanagement, amid shortages of funds, staff, medicine and equipment. When in need, those

who can afford it, including government Ministers, fly overseas to seek treatment. Some check into priv-

ate, but relatively expensive clinics in Harare. Many

A group of pregnant women exercise at the Karanda Mission Hospital in Mount Darwin, Zimbabwe on March 2. AFP

others make the trip to Mount Darwin, a small village in the parched countryside about 200 km north of the capital and home to the Karanda Mission Hospital.

Weaver said, adding that

reaction to the Nazi gaffe

The mishap did, howev-

er, call into question the

degree of control those us-

ing AI tools have over infor-

In the coming decade,

the amount of information

or misinformation –

created by AI could dwarf

that generated by people,

meaning those controlling

AI safeguards will have

huge influence on the

Karen Palmer, an award-

mixed-reality

world, Mr. Weaver said.

mation, he maintained.

was "overblown."

Funded by the Evangelical church of Zimbabwe and run by three North American doctors, the hospital originally set up to cater to rural folks has built a reputation as one of the

ground district of Zimbabwe's second-largest city, Bulawayo. But critics say that for years, flashy ribbon-cutting exercises have not been followed by systemic reforms to salvage the health sector. Many hospitals lack equipment for magnetic resonance, radiography, cancer treatment and other procedures.

"The sector has suffered from years of gross underfunding and investments," said Itai Rusike, who heads the Community Working Group on Health, an umbrella advocacy group. "The depleted health personnel are also highly demotivated owing to dwindling real incomes, poor working conditions and under-equipped health institutions.

British brass band marches on with miners' legacy, 40 years after milestone strike

Agence France-Presse WAKEFIELD

Memories of the U.K.'s once-mighty mining industry are fading but 40 years after an epoch-defining strike, Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band still embodies the close ties that once bound the community.

"It's like the band, when times are hard, we stick together," said Ray Sykes, chairman of the year-long 1984-85 strike, from the practice hall that has been his second home for 70 years.

Miners at Frickley Colliery, in the Yorkshire town of South Elmsall in northern England, prided them-

YK

selves on being "second to none" during the action against planned

closures.

Very few broke the strike, which was once described as "the decisive social and economic confrontation of Britain's post-war era" that hastened the demise of heavy industry. The mine, which em-

ploved 3,000 workers at its height, eventually succumbed and shut in 1993.

were the foundation of the regional economy, and without them, communities are still suffering economically.

top 10 - and keeps Frickley on the international map. Mr. Sykes, 77, said the pit

heaviest toll had been the

He likened the pit clo-

The community's social

life largely revolved around

father".

spread

gradual fracturing of the community bond, forged in the unforgiving and often dangerous subterranean world of heat and dust. 'Losing camaraderie'

Camaraderie through the community above, he said. "Sadly we However, the mines are losing it, and you can

see it happening in the village," he said. sure's effect on the community to "a son losing his

But the brass band marches on - consistently still ranking in the world's

In tune: Members of the Carlton Main Frickley Colliery Band take part in a rehearsal in their band room in South Elmsall, England. AFP

the mine – including not only the band but local football club Frickley Athletic, which is still plying its trade four leagues below professional level. On Saturday, the club

wearing the same shirt as the team wore in 1984. On the back was written "The Miners United will never be defeated".

Hundreds packed the club's 100-year-old main marked the anniversary by stand, which was decorated with a flag depicting firebrand union boss Arthur Scargill being arrested during the strike.

Wounds unhealed

But wounds opened during the miners' strike are not yet fully healed.

"The violence in the village was quite nasty, really nasty, and I would not like to see that ever, ever again," said Mr. Sykes, whose father and grandfather both worked at the pit.

Pete Wordsworth, a miner from the age 16, who stopped working in 2015, said the most ardent strikers "are still saying that they would not speak to a miner who went back to

work. They are really, really bitter."

best in the country.

physician.

ing Zambia.

Charging

The 150-bed clinic treats

up to 1,00,000 people a

year and is almost always

full, says medical director,

Paul Thistle, a Canadian

rates, it draws patients

from well beyond its catch-

ment area. Some come

from as far as neighbour-

Ahead of elections in

affordable

He is now deputy mine manager at the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, which has special exhibitions marking

the strike's anniversary. "All the small villages had really good communities and everybody pulled together," he said, in the shadow of the old mine's winding gear. But pit closures "fragmented" those communities, he said. Miners moved to find work and more educated people left. Even the celebrated band came close to shutting during the strike, as financial hardship whittled its numbers down to just eight.

Its reputation for excellence was its saving grace, helping it to attract talented players from hours away with no links to the pit.

They are now trumpeting the area's heritage and identity.

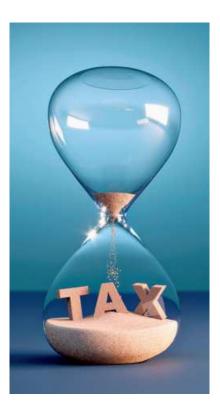
"That's what keeps this band going, the name," said a visibly emotional Mr. Sykes, beating his hand on the 119-year-old band's logo, over his heart.

One such newcomer is cornet player Tabby Kerwin, who makes a twohour round trip for each of the twice-weekly practices.

"Everyone does it for the love of it and for the legacy, for the history," she said before practice.

THE HINDU

MONEYWISE



Time to reflect on tax saving options

COVERNOTE

As the financial year ends and we get caught up in the tax-planning urgency, beware of panic buying leading to ill thought-out decisions

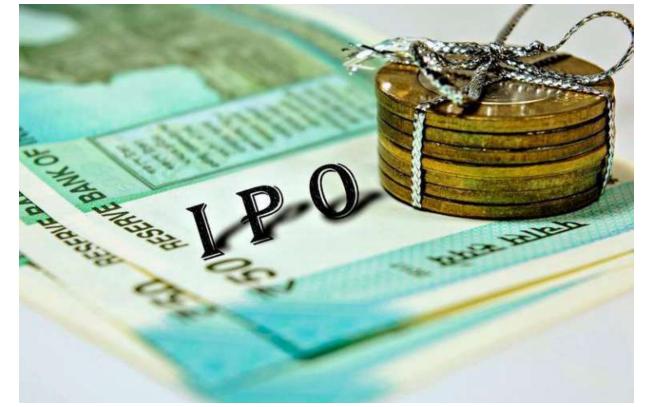
K. Nitya Kalyani

For years, investing to avoid tax was a limited to a few, well-known options. Life insurance policy, Employee Provident Fund or Public Provident Fund and a few more.

We have a wider choice now and so much else has changed around this activity of investing to reduce taxes.

The most important of them is that investing to get a tax break, under various sections of Section 80 of the Income-tax Act, 1961, is on its way out.

In the 'new tax regime', you pay lower taxes and cannot avail of any tax saving investment. A couple of years ago you had to opt to move to the new tax regime. Last year, the new tax regime was the default and you had to opt for the old tax regime if you needed to stay on. It is clear that the old tax regime will go. When, it's not been said but in two or three years is an intelligent guess. What does this imply for your year-end flurry? Section 80 investments can be one-time commitments or repeat investments. One-time commitments like PPF, tax saving fixed deposits or National Savings Certificate mean that you can invest as much or as little as you like in one year and not at all, or a very minimal amount, the next. A life insurance policy, on the other hand usually means repeated premium payment for several years on end with the policy validity actually depending on your paying up regularly. If, or rather when, Section 80 benefits end, and you have one of the former type of investments its flexibility is going to work to your advantage. Unless it is intrinsically a beneficial investment and you can afford the outlay, you should avoid investing further. However, if you have one of the latter, like a life insurance policy, you will still have to keep your life policy going. And please do so! Going forward, if you are investing just to save tax, keep this in mind and opt for a one-time, pay-as-you-like instrument. Of course, repeat commitments like life insurance should be in your reckoning, but only ever buy it for its real purpose, and not to save tax.



Lure of the lucre?: The stories of new-age tech stocks like Paytm, Zomato, Nykaa, and EaseMyTrip, which captivated investors with their stock market debuts in 2021, epitomise the high risks of chasing IPOs. GETTYIMAGES/ISTOCK

Investment, a loser's game?

The tale of Paytm underscores the speculative gamble inherent in such investments, echoing the broader theme of investment as a loser's game, where the focus should be on avoiding errors

MARKET DYNAMICS

Anand Srinivasan Sashwath Swaminathan

he investment landscape is fundamentally a paradox where conventional strategies often lead to unconventional outcomes. This paradox is articulated through the insights of Charles D. Ellis, Warren Buffett, and Charlie Munger, whose collective wisdom underscores a radical yet practical approach to investing: the art of winning by not losing. Ellis's "The Loser's Game" provides a compelling framework for this philosophy, illustrating how the influx of highly skilled professionals into the investment arena has radically transformed its dynamics, making it increasingly difficult to outperform the market through traditional means.

The dangerous allure of IPOs offers another instructive example in the loser's game of

investment, mirroring pitfalls seen with SPACs

> misalignment resonates with the investment philosophies of Buffett and Munger, who have long championed the virtues of patience, disciplined analysis, and a steadfast focus on avoiding losses rather than capturing the most significant gains. The cautionary tale of Rick Guerin, as Buffett recounts, epitomises the perils inherent in the pursuit of rapid wealth accumulation through leverage. Guerin's precipitous fall during the 1973-74 market downturn starkly contrasts with the steadier, more methodical approach of Buffett and Munger, highlighting the dangers of over-leveraging and the value of a patient, conservative investment strategy. The narrative of speculative frenzies finds a modern counterpart in the recent SPAC bubble, a striking example of the market's susceptibility to collective amnesia and the allure of seemingly effortless wealth. The SPAC phenomenon, characterised by high-profile sponsors and the promise of lucrative mergers, echoes the speculative manias of the past, revealing a pattern of investment behaviour driven by overconfidence and the pursuit of quick profits. The dramatic rise and fall of many SPACs, culminating in sig-

nificant financial losses for many investors, serve as a contemporary illustration of the risks associated with speculative investments and the importance of adhering to disciplined, va-

lue-oriented investment principles. The dangerous allure of initial public offerings (IPOs) offers another in-

structive example in the loser's game of investment, mirroring the pitfalls seen with SPACs. The stories of new-age tech stocks like Paytm, Zo-

mato, Nykaa, and EaseMy-Trip, which captivated investors with their stock market debuts in 2021, epitomise the high risks of chasing IPOs.

Initially, these companies drew substantial investor interest, buoyed by the promise of innovation and growth. However, the subsequent performance of these stocks reveals a harsher reality.

The tale of Pay ticularly cautionary, with shares plummeting more than 80% from its IPO price following regulatory challenges and operational hurdles. It underscores the speculative gamble inherent in such investments, echoing the broader theme of investment as a loser's game where the focus should be on avoiding errors and speculative traps. At the heart of Buffett and Munger's success is a set of core principles that echo Ellis's findings. First, they eschew investments in debt-laden companies, recognising that leverage, while potentially amplifying returns during bull markets, poses a grave risk during downturns. This principle was vividly illustrated by Guerin's forced liquidation of his Berkshire Hathaway stock, a move precipitated by the unsustainable burden of his margin loans.

Second, the integrity and trustworthiness of a company's leadership are paramount. Investment decisions based on speculative short-term gains, often due to dubious management practices, are eschewed in favour of companies whose leadership prioritises long-term value creation. This focus on ethical leadership underscores the belief that a company's long-term success is inextricably linked to the character of its decision-makers.

Lastly, Buffett and Munger emphasise valuation, particularly the Price to Earnings (P/E) ratio. Rather than chasing companies with inflated P/E ratios - a speculative bet on continued market favour - they focus on identifying under valued firms with solid fundamentals. This approach is less about uncovering the market's next darling and more about avoiding the pitfalls of overvaluation, aligning with Ellis's thesis that success in investing comes from not losing. In essence, the collective wisdom of Ellis, Buffett, and Munger redefines the notion of success in investing. It shifts the focus from winning big bets to the cumulative effect of not losing, advocating for a cautious, principled investing strategy. (Anand Srinivasan is a consultant. Sashwath *Swaminathan is a research* assistant at Aionion Investment Services)

Why investing in equity funds is behaviourally optimal

THINKINVESTOR

It is easier to invest in equity funds with a small capital and scale up as your savings potential increases with age. You need a significant amount of capital to invest directly in stocks

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

You should preferably invest in equity funds for your goal-based investments and directly in stocks for your trading portfolio. Many individuals prefer to invest directly in "blue-chip" stocks and in companies that are "fundamentally sound" for their goal-based investments. If you are one of them, it is worth considering why investing in equity funds is optimal.

The following are some of the reasons why investing in equity funds is optimal for your emotional and financial health: First, you outsource your investment decisions to a professional money manager when you buy units in an equity fund. Because generating returns is a function of both skill and luck, even the most skilful money managers can generate losses. And losses hurt emotionally and financially. Yet, the regret you will face is much less when the equity fund you invested in suffers losses than if your direct investment in stocks generate losses! This is because in the latter case, you are directly responsible for the investment. Second, regardless of your investment capital, you are likely to have fewer stocks in your investment portfolio than equity funds do. So, the likelihood that an equity fund betters your performance is higher because of the possibility that some stocks are always likely to perform poorly. What if you invest in 10 stocks and three of them perform poorly, as opposed to 5 stocks out of 30 for an equity fund?

Third, an active fund can move between equity and cash more quickly than you can, despite its size This is because a money manager is likely to take a professional approach to deciding whether to take profits. You may be emotionally driven to taking a decision. Finally, it is easier to invest in equity funds with a small capital and scale up as your savings potential increases with age. You need a significant amount of capital to invest directly in stocks. Many individuals typically setup systematic investment plan (SIP) on say 3-5 stocks every month. If you know how to read charts, you might as well pick 3-5 stocks at any point in time based on price momentum and trade actively. If you do not want to trade based on technical analysis, you can setup SIPs on 3-5 stocks and have a pre-defined profit-taking rule to capture short-term gains on a continual basis.

Either way, keep the financial commitments you have made and don't make past investments a lost cause!

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in The experts on personal finance will answer select queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular.

Failure to beat averages

Ellis's analysis reveals a sobering reality: most investment managers consistently fail to beat market averages, particularly during economic downturns and volatility.

This failure is not due to a lack of talent but a fundamental misalignment of strategy within the evolved market context.

The essence of Ellis's argument is that the saturation of talent in the investment world renders the conventional approach of outperforming the market through superior stock selection or timing ineffective and counterproduc-This tive. strategic

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage *their personal investments)*

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

	Interest Rates (%)				
Bank Name	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure		5-year Tenure	
Small Finance	e Bank	s			
AU Small Finance Bank	8.0	0 6.75	5 7.50	7.25	
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.5	50 8.20	8.00	7.25	
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.2	.00	6.75	6.25	
Fincare Small Finance Bank	8.6	51 7.65	8.11	8.00	
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.5	50 8.50) 7.25	7.25	
NorthEast Small Finance Bank	8.5	50 7.75	8.00	6.25	
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	9.0	01 6.85	8.60	8.25	
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.5	50 8.25	5 7.20	7.20	
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.5	50 8.00	8.50	7.50	
Private Sector Banks					
Axis Bank	7.2	20 6.70	7.10	7.00	
Bandhan Bank	7.8	85 7.25	5 7.25	5.85	
City Union Bank	7.0	0 6.75	6.50	6.25	

7.75 5.00

8.00 7.15

6.60

7.50 7.00 6.50

7.50 6.80 7.00

7.25

7.20 6.70 7.00

7.75 6.50 7.25

7.75 7.75

5.75

7.60

7.00

7.25

5.75

6.50

7.40

6.60

7.00

7.00

7.00

7.25

CSB Bank

DBS Bank

DCB Bank

Federal Bank

HDFC Bank

ICICI Bank

IDFC First Bank

IndusInd Bank

; (%)			Inter	est Rate	es (%)
5-year Tenure	Bank Name	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
	Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.10) 7.10	6.50	6.50
7.05	Karur Vysya Bank	7.50	7.00	7.00	7.00
7.25	Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.40	7.10	7.00	6.20
7.25	Nainital Bank	7.05	6.70	6.25	5.75
6.25	RBL Bank	8.10) 7.50	7.50	7.10
8.00	SBM Bank India	8.25	5 7.05	7.30	7.75
7.25	South Indian Bank	7.40	6.70	6.70	6.00
6.25	Tamilnad Mercantile	7.75	5 7.00	6.50	6.50
8.25					
7.20	Yes Bank	7.75	5 7.25	7.25	7.25
7.50	Public Secto	or Banks			
	Bank of Baroda	7.25	6.85	7.25	6.50
	Bank of India	7.25	6.50	6.50	6.00
7.00					

Bank of Baroda	7.25	6.85	7.25	6.50
Bank of India	7.25	6.50	6.50	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	7.00	6.50	6.25	6.00
Canara Bank	7.25	6.85	6.80	6.70
Central Bank of India	7.25	6.75	6.50	6.25
Indian Bank	7.25	6.10	6.25	6.25
Indian Overseas Bank	7.30	6.90	6.50	6.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25	6.75	7.00	6.50
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.40	6.20	6.00	6.00
State Bank of India	7.10	6.80	6.75	6.50
Union Bank of India	7.25	6.75	6.50	6.50

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)				
Name of Lender	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh		
			(In %)		
Publ	ic Sector E	Banks			
State Bank of India	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.05	8.40-10.05		
Bank of Baroda	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.90		
Union Bank of India	8.35-10.75	8.35-10.90	8.35-10.90		
Punjab National Bank	8.45-10.25	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.15		
Bank of India	8.30-10.75	8.30-10.75	8.30-10.75		
Canara Bank	8.50-11.25	8.45-11.25	8.40-11.15		
UCO Bank	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30		
Bank of Maharashtra	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15		
Punjab and Sind Bank*	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00		
Indian Overseas Bank	8.40-10.60	8.40-10.60	8.40-10.60		
Central Bank of India	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80		

Privat	e Sector Ba	anks	
Kotak Mahindra Bank	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*
ICICI Bank	8.75*	8.75*	8.75*
Axis Bank	8.75-13.30	8.75-13.30	8.75-9.65
HSBC Bank	8.45*	8.45*	8.45*
South Indian Bank	9.84-11.24	9.84-11.04	9.84-11.69
Karur Vysya Bank	9.00-11.05	9.00-11.05	9.00-11.05

...

Name of Lender	Loa	an Amount (Rs.)
	Jpto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
			(In %)
Karnataka Bank	8.60-10.60	8.60-10.60	8.60-10.60
Federal Bank	8.80*	8.80*	8.80*
Dhanlaxmi Bank	9.35-10.50	9.35-10.50	9.35-10.50
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	8.60-9.95	8.60-9.95	8.60-9.95
Bandhan Bank	9.16-15.00	9.16-13.33	9.16-13.33
RBL Bank	8.90*	8.90*	8.90*
CSB Bank	10.69-12.5	4 10.69-12.54	10.69-12.54
HDFC Bank Ltd.	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50

Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)					
LIC Housing Finance	8.35-10.35	8.35-10.55	8.35-10.75		
Bajaj Housing Finance	8.50*	8.50*	8.50*		
Tata Capital	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*		
PNB Housing Finance	8.50-14.50	8.50-14.50	8.50-11.45		
GIC Housing Finance	8.80*	8.80*	8.80*		
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00*	10.00*	10.00*		
Aditya Birla Capital	8.80-14.75	8.80-14.75	8.80-14.75		
ICICI Home Finance	9.20*	9.20*	9.20*		
Godrej Housing Finance	8.55*	8.55*	8.55*		
*Onwards Rates as on March 13 Source:Paisabazaar.com					

CM YK

Business

Women gig workers on the road to financial security'



Fast buck: The women riders earn ₹10.000 a month on an average and additional income from extra trips. FILE PHOTO

T.E. Raja Simhan

Kamala (name changed) delivered a cake in her first assignment with a food delivery platform. The 25-year-old Chennai resident says she is excited to take up her new job as a delivery executive. "I have two daughters and my husband owns an auto. I love riding a two-wheeler; delivering items will help me earn a few thousand rupees a month," she says.

More and more women like Kamala are joining the last-mile delivery service, zipping through the streets on bikes to deliver food and other packages to customers across the city. The riders earn ₹10.000 a month on average, with additional income dependent on any extra trips they can manage each day.

Of the estimated 10-12 lakh delivery riders across sectors like e-commerce, food delivery, and quick commerce, nearly 80,000 are women, says Yeshab Giri, Chief Commercial Officer, Operational Talent Solutions, at leading HR company Randstad India. Though there is a huge gap between the number of male and female riders, hiring of women in the sector is increasing by 30-35% every year due to the improved work culture, safety in operations, and higher compensation, Mr. Giri says. "With our female delivery partner onboarding programme, over 2,000 inspiring women leverage our platform to participate in, and earn from last-mile deliveries," says Rakesh Ranjan, CEO, Food Delivery, Zomato. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Rolls-Royce rolls out the 'most complex clock face' in its history

Luxury carmaker unveiled Arcadia, the third custom-made 'Coachbuild Droptail' in the world, recently; Assembly took five months and the wood sections took 8,000 hours to create, according to the company; Droptail is said to be the first roadster body style in Rolls-Royce's modern history

NEWS ANALYSIS

S. Ronendra Singh

7 ou can see, but you can't touch it! It was an exclusive 'Coachbuild' preview of the latest Roll-Royce Motor Cars model for just a few of us from around the world, before the magnificent piece of art was to be handed over to a multi-billionaire client in the evening. At a private ceremony in the Flower Field Hall at

Gardens by the Bay, Singapore, the Coachbuild masterpiece was kept under wraps until some detailing and presentation was to be made. And, the wait of a few minutes before it was unwrapped worthwhile

The company presented the 'Arcadia', the third Coachbuild Droptail commission - a uniquely pure reflection of Droptail's principal design, featuring the most complex clock face in Rolls-Royce history.

The assembly alone took five months, wood sections took 8,000 hours to create before the Arcadia emerged. Droptail is the first roadster body style in Rolls-Royce's modern history, the company said.

"The Rolls-Royce Arcadia Droptail demonstrates the true nature of a Coachbuild proposition in completely transforming the



dual who has a unique ap-

preciation for British luxu-

ry," Anders Warming,

Design Director of the

company said at the

he said in creating this his-

toric motor car, "we once

again prove our peerless

abilities in synthesising

and executing bespoke de-

mission takes its name

from the mythical realm of

Arcadia, a place depicted

in Ancient Greek mytholo-

gy as 'Heaven on Earth' - a

land renowned for its natu-

ral beauty and perfect har-

This coachbuild com-

sign at its highest level."

Presenting the Arcadia,

unveiling.

Rolls-Royce never shares the product's price (the Arcadia is estimated to cost about \$25 million), and the identity of the customer

Bespoke luxury: At a private ceremony in Singapore, the Coachbuild masterpiece was kept under

mony. Like the haven that inspires its name, Arcadia Droptail was envisioned by the client as a refuge from the complexities of their business life, the company said. The company has programmes called Bespoke and Coachbuild, wherein the designers, engineers and staff at Rolls-Royce work together with the client from day one, to build such models.

The U.K.-based compa-

ny says that every Rolls-Royce that leaves the Home of Rolls-Royce at Goodwood includes some bespoke elements. These range from subtle but significant touches - an individual exterior colour that evokes childhood memories, or the client's initials embroidered on the headrests - to highly complex artworks requiring months or years of design and technical development.

"The significance of Rolls-Royce Arcadia Droptail lies in its subtlety. It is a projection of an individual who values clarity and precision in all areas of their life - from their passion for fine cuisine, their highly curated personal and professional spaces and affinity with contemporary design," said Alex Innes, Head of Coachbuild Design, Rolls-Royce Motor Cars.

But, it is easier said than done as the engineers and designers of Rolls-Royce often have to tackle unique demands from clients.

Jonathan Simms, Head of Bespoke, Rolls-Royce, cites the example of a client who wanted some silk materials they had been using to be used in the car which they were buying. However, Rolls-Royce had to tell them the company had to run some tests before it could be fitted in the car as such materials should last as long as

the car ages. "When I talk to them about our test standards, they sometimes say 'are you crazy'. They tell us that it will be a ceremonial car and they will use it only on special occasions, so please to use the material," he explains.

He said as a general rule, everything is tested, but there are occasions where the client will make specific requests, and Rolls Royce would need to match their requirement. And, that is why the company takes months and years to test those materials/ fabrics so that they last.

"It sounds like a cliche, but when we talk about relationships with our clients we really mean it. When we are into the Bespoke

four-and-a-half years to be fully built and handed over to the client. The interesting part is that Rolls-Royce never shares the price of such a product (the Arcadia is estimated to cost about \$25 million), and the identity of the customer. (The writer, who is with

commissions, it's very rare

that we won't have the

client coming to Goodwood, meeting us or we

meet them where they are and we really get to know

much about them because

if you know someone well,

then you can be convince-

d...And, then our design-

ers and our craftsmen will

start work with the client," Mr. Simms explains.

the car physically - the first

parts - that's when many of

the clients love to come to

Goodwood and actually

see those parts being

made, and many of them

get very emotional," he

said. As the most exclusive

division of Bespoke, Rolls-

Royce Coachbuild is the

marque's equivalent of

haute couture. It empow-

ers clients to create com-

pletely unique Rolls-Royce

motor cars beyond the

brand's product portfolio,

participating in every stage

of its development over a

Arcadia Droptail is one

such product that took

number of years.

"When we start to make

15

The Hindu businessline, was recently in Singapore at the invitation of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars)

Kolkata port gearing up for ₹800-cr. container berth upgrade



Mithun Dasgupta

Tiles to go: An employee takes tiles out from the oven at Tuillerie de Niderviller, an artisan tile-maker, in Niderviller, north eastern France. More than 200 years old, the factory is the last traditional tilery in Lorraine, operating with machinery dating back to 1928 in an approach to preserving heritage. AFP

In an ambitious endeavour, Syama Prasad Moo-Port, Kolkata kerjee (SMPK), plans to reconstruct and mechanise two container berths at the Netaji Subhash Dock of the Kolkata Dock System (KDS) within two years.

SMPK aims to award the ₹800-plus crore publicprivate partnership (PPP) projects in the next three months.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways had earlier this month approved the projects for the re-construction of berth No. 8 and the mechanisation of berth No. 7 and 8 at the Netaji Subhash Dock. The foundation stone



Rathendra Ramar

for the project was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 1, 2024.

Shorter wait for ships "The projects for the reconstruction and mechanisation of berths at Netaji Subhash Dock of Kolkata Dock System are a part of the government's drive to enhance container and cargo handling capacity,

man Rathendra Raman.

projects within the next 3

The projects will be exe-

cuted on a 'design, build,

finance, operate, and transfer' (DBFOT) mode.

"After the completion of

the projects, the container

handling capacity of berth

No. 7 and 8 at Netaji Sub-

hash Dock will stand at

Later, it can go up to

0.78 million TEU. Under

this project, three rail-

mounted quay cranes

(RMQCs) will be installed.

It will reduce the detention

0.48 million TEUs.

months," he added.

said Mr. Raman. "Tender for the projects has already been floated. Sagarmala projects We are looking to complete Comprising two dock systhe process and award the

tems, KDS and Haldia Dock Complex (HDC), SMPK, formerly known as Kolkata Port Trust, currently has a combined cargo handling capacity of about 87.5 million tonnes (MT).

The port authorities plan to increase the combined capacity to 115 MT by 2030 through 15 PPP projects. Three projects, worth ₹733 crore, have been awarded, while the rest, cumulatively worth about ₹5,200 crore, are in the pipeline.

(The writer is with The *Hindu businessline*)

Young Chinese again want to study abroad, just not in the U.S.

Associated Press WASHINGTON

In the Chinese city of Shanghai, two young women seeking an education abroad have both decided against going to the United States, a destination of choice for decades that may be losing its shine.

For Helen Dong, a 22year-old senior studying advertising, it was the cost. "It doesn't work for me when you have to spend 2 million (yuan) (\$2,78,000) but find no job upon returning," she said. Ms. Dong is headed to Hong Kong this fall instead.

Costs were not a concern for Yvonne Wong, 24, now studying comparative literature and cultures in a master's program at the University of Bristol in Bri-

YK

tain. For her, the issue was safety.

"Families in Shanghai usually don't want to send their daughters to a place where guns are not banned - that was the primary reason," Ms. Wong said. "Between the U.S. and the U.K., the U.K. is safer, and that's the biggest consideration for my parents."

With an interest in studying abroad rebounding after the pandemic, there are signs that the decadeslong run that has sent an estimated 3 million Chinese students to the U.S., including many of the country's brightest, could be trending down, as geopolitical shifts redefine U.S.-China relations.

Cutting people-to-people exchanges could have a lasting impact on relations



Fear psychosis: The Chinese government has sidelined English education, hyped gun violence in the U.S., and portrayed the U.S. as a declining power. AFP

between the two countries.

"International education is a bridge," said Fanta Aw, executive director of the NAFSA Association of International Educators, politicians of the future, based in Washington. "A they are the business entrepreneurs of the future. long-term bridge, because the students who come to-"Not seeing that pipe-

day are the engineers of line as strong means that the future. They are the we in the U.S. have to pay attention, because China-U.S. relations are very important."

Ms. Aw said the decrease is more notable in U.S. undergraduate programs, which she attributed to a declining population in China from low birthrates, bitter U.S.-China relations, more regional choices for Chinese families and the high costs of a U.S. education.

But graduate programs have not been spared. Zheng Yi, an associate professor of mechanical and industrial engineering at Northeastern University in Boston, has seen the number of Chinese applicants to one of the school's engineering programs shrink to single digits, compared with 20 to 30 students before the pandemic.

•••

He said the waning interest could be partly due to China's growing patriotism that nudges students to attend Chinese institutes instead.

'Here to stay'

Andrew Chen, CEO of Pittsburgh-based Whole-Ren Education, which has advised Chinese students in the U.S. for the past 14 years, said the downward trend is here to stay. "This is not a periodic wave," he said. "This is a new era." The Chinese government has sidelined English education, hyped gun violence in the U.S., and portrayed the U.S. as a declining power. As a result, Mr. Chen said, Chinese families are hesitant to send their children to the U.S.

U.S. for its unfriendly policy toward some Chinese students, citing an executive order by former President Donald Trump to keep out Chinese students who have attended schools with strong links to the Chinese military.

The Chinese foreign ministry also has protested that a number of Chinese students have been unfairly interrogated and sent home upon arrival at U.S. airports in recent months. Spokeswoman Mao Ning recently described the U.S. actions as "selective, discriminatory and politically motivated."

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said fewer than "one tenth of 1%" of Chinese students have been detained or denied admission.

Beijing has criticised the

Sport

CUP NAMDE

16

We have got it, it is for the fans: Shrevanka on WPL triumph



Over the last few years, the *Ee Sala Cup Namde* (The Cup is ours this time) slogan of RCB has remained the pet troll of the social media. Not anymore. "They keep saying *Ee Sala Cup Namde* and we got it. That's it guys... this is for the fans," said RCB off-spinner Shreyanka Patil after the triumph.

MR. COOL

Shrevanka credits coach Williams for keeping the RCB dugout calm



Shreyanka Patil lauded RCB head coach Luke Williams for keeping the dressing room calm. "Day in and day out we put in our hard work and felt like family. We did not know Luke much. During the last game that we won against Mumbai Indians, he shed tears of joy. We hope to do more of this," said Shrevanka.

UNBELIEVABLE

The support for all the teams has been phenomenal, says Perry



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

The talismanic Ellyse Perry topped the run-makers' chart in the WPL with 347 runs, and the Australian all-rounder said the support for the teams throughout the event was very heartening. "Pretty bonkers, to be honest. It's another level for us - the support for all the teams has been phenomenal and it's been unbelievable.

SPECIAL ONE

The young Shreyanka has got the world at her feet: Perry



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Ellyse Perry praised spinners Sophie Molineux and Shreyanka Patil for changing the complexion of the game in the final. "She [Molineux] turned the match on its head. The rest of the spinners backed her up. Shreyanka is such a young player and she has got the world at her feet. It was a special performance," said Perry.

Red-hot spinners help Royal Challengers strike gold

Molineux, Shreyanka and Asha cast a spell over DC's batters as the team slips from 64 for no loss to get bundled out for 113; vital contributions at the top of the order see the Bengaluru side through



SCOREBOARD

DELHI CAPITALS

Meg Lanning lbw b Shreyanka 23 (23b, 3x4), Shafali Verma c Wareham b Molineux 44 (27b, 2x4, 3x6), Jemimah Rodrigues b Molineux 0 (2b), Alice Capsey b Molineux 0 (1b), Marizanne Kapp c Devine b Asha 8 (16b), Jess Jonassen c Smriti b Asha 3 (11b) Radha Yadav run out 12 (9b, 2x4), Minnu Mani Ibw b Shreyanka 5 (3b. 1x4). Arundhati Reddy b Shreyanka 10 (13b), Shikha Pandey (not out) 5 (5b), Taniya Bhatia c Richa b Shreyanka 0 (1b); Extras (w-3): 3; Total (in 18.3 overs): 113.

FALL OF WICKETS 1-64 (Shafali, 7.1 overs), 2-64 (Jemimah, 7.3), 3-64 (Capsey, 7.4), 4-74 (Lanning, 10.4), 5-80 (Kapp, 13.1), 6-81 (Jonassen, 13.3), 7-87 (Minnu, 14.1), 8-101 (Radha, 16.2), 9-113 (Arundhati, 18.2).

RCB BOWLING

Renuka 2-0-28-0, Molineux 4-0-20-3, Perry 2-0-14-0, Devine 1-0-9-0, Wareham 3-0-16-0, Shreyanka 3.3-0-12-4, Asha 3-0-14-2

ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Smriti Mandhana c Arundhati b Minnu 31 (39b, 3x4), Sophie Devine lbw b Shikha 32 (27b, 5x4, 1x6), Ellyse Perry (not out) 35 (37b, 4x4), Richa Ghosh (not out) 17 (14b, 2x4); Total (for two wkts. in 19.3 overs): 115.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-49 (Devine, 8.1), 2-82 (Smriti, 14.6) **CAPITALS BOWLING**

0-0. Capsev 3-0-13

Over the moon: It was a night to remember for the members of the Royal Challengers Bangalore team as they prevailed over Delhi Capitals in a low-scoring final. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

WPL SEASON 2

Lavanya L NEW DELHI

ith a fine display of the asphyxiating properties of a good spin attack, Smriti Mandhanaled Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Delhi Capitals by eight wickets to lift its maiden Women's Premier League title at the Arun

Jaitley Stadium here on Sunday.

ting on two different wick-

ets. Where Shafali was

striking the ball clean, Lan-

ning looked tentative right from the third ball of the in-Coach Jonathan Batty, nings where miscommuniskipper Meg Lanning and cation nearly saw her lose batting first - time and her wicket. With Shafali again this combination has taking charge, DC got to 61 in the PowerPlay, the joint proved futile in league finals in the Women's Big best tally in the first six ov-Bash League and even in ers this season. However, last year's WPL final which Sophie Molineux was the DC lost to Mumbai Indians. out-of-syllabus question Lanning and Shafali Verma that left the league leader looked like they were batin tatters.

She removed Shafali Verma (holed out to Georgia Wareham at deep midwicket), Jemimah Rodrigues (who got on one knee to sweep missing the ball completely as it hit the stumps) and Alice Capsey (a brain fade that saw her trying to scoop the ball only to lose her stumps) in the span of four balls.

Seeing the purchase Molineux got from the wicket, Smriti stuck to spin, bringing her death-overs combo of Shreyanka Patil and Asha Sobhana into play. As she did a week ago,

Shreyanka got Lanning trapped leg before yet again, with the ball headed straight for her middle stump. From there on, DC slipped deeper into the quicksand, finally folding for 113 with nine balls left unfaced, its lower-order's batting hiccups proving to be its Achilles' heel again. Smriti's ploy to strangu-

late with spin was spot on. RCB's four tweakers gave away only 62 runs, bowling 35 dot balls between them.

What particularly hurt DC was the period between the 7th and the 14th over (7.4 overs to be precise) which saw no boundaries.

Lanning, with her poker face on, did not let RCB have it easy. Sophie Devine and Smriti got off to a confident start putting on 49 runs before Shikha Pandey got Devine in the ninth over. Lanning bowled out her premiere pace options -Marizanne Kapp and Shikha – within the first 12 ov-

Shikha 4-0-11-1. Radha 1-0-18-0. Arundhati 3.3-0-26-0, Jonassen 2-0-15-0, Minnu 2-0-12-1. Toss: Delhi Capitals. RCB won by eight wickets with three balls to spare.

fend with Test intensity in a T20 game by Lanning and Co., but 113 was far too less even for the genius of the world's most decorated leader.

In what tied the win up with a perfect bow, Richa – who, a week ago, was reduced to tears when she couldn't see out a win against the same opponent – hit the winning runs.

The propellers

YK (



Stars of the night: Molineux, centre, started the slide by picking up three wickets in an over and Shreyanka took over to return a four-wicket haul. Perry then guided the team home in a tricky chase. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Meteors, Defenders notch up victories

ers, potentially looking for

their wicket-taking form to

come through. The pair did

well to keep things tight,

bowling 26 dot balls in total

Jess Jonassen was intro-

duced only in the 14th over

with RCB needing 42 off as

many deliveries. Smriti's

off-spin weakness got the

better of her as Minnu Mani

sent her back. If the target

wasn't so low, this fielding

effort would have been a

masterclass in how to de-

and giving away 33 runs.

PVL

Saikat Chakraborty CHENNAI

Mumbai Meteors defeated Delhi Toofans 15-11, 12-15, 15-12, 17-15 in a Super 5 clash of the Prime Volleyball League season three here at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium on Sunday.

Toofans were unable to get into the first set and fell behind early.

The Delhi outfit came alive in the second set, led by the strong attack of S. Santhosh. The Meteors took the third set thanks to some good play from Amit Gulia.

The fourth set too was a close one, with neither team able to gain a significant advantage. In the end, it was Meteors who came out on top. Despite the loss, the Toofans have still qualified for the knockouts.

Reigning champion Ahmedabad Defenders pulled off a dramatic come-frombehind win against Calicut Heroes. Despite losing the first two sets, Defenders fought back valiantly to win 16-18, 13-15, 15-11, 15-8, 15-13.

Their victory was fuelled by an exceptional team performance. Captain Muthusamy Appavu and star attacker Angamuthu led the charge, guiding their team to a crucial win. This sets up a clash against the Delhi Toofans in the eliminator, with the ultimate goal of facing Calicut Heroes again in the finals.

The results: Mumbai Meteors bt Delhi Toofans 15-11, 12-15, 15-12 17-15; Ahmedabad Defenders bt Calicut Heroes 16-18, 13-15, 15-11, 15-8, 15-13.



Rising to the occasion: The Mumbai outfit prevailed in a four-setter against Delhi Toofans. M. VEDHAN

RCB needs to plug holes if it has to avoid familiar fate

Still searching for a maiden title, the team lacks a quality wrist-spinner and support cast to the fulcrum of the batting line-up in skipper du Plessis, Kohli and Maxwell

IPL-17 COUNTDOWN

Ashwin Achal

oyal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) is set to undergo a name change, but as for its on-field prospects, it could be a worrying status quo.

Sixteen editions of the IPL have come and gone, with RCB still searching for a maiden title. Heading into the 2024 season, the franchise will have to plug the holes in the squad to end the long wait.

The most glaring deficiency is the lack of a quality wrist-spinner – a point highlighted by former RCB and South Africa batter A.B. de Villiers. Himanshu Sharma, Karn Sharma and Swapnil Singh are the available slow bowlers - hardly an inspiring list.

On the pace front, RCB signed Alzarri Joseph (₹11.50 crore), Yash Daval (₹5 crore), Tom Curran (₹1.5 crore) and Lockie Ferguson (₹2 crore) at the auction. West Indian Joseph was chosen over established names Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins – a gamble which may backfire on the batting-friendly M. Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch.

Mohammed Siraj, who played his part in India's win over England in the recent Test series, will spearhead the attack. Siraj will have added motivation in IPL 2024, as good perfor-



The Influencer

GLENN MAXWELL: A magnificent unbeaten 201 against Afghanistan in the 2023 Cricket World Cup underlined the Australian's immense value as a pure match-winner. RCB will need these qualities in spades, as only Maxwell has the wherewithal to pull a team out of deep water.

DCP's 2024 fivtur

RCB's 2024 fixtures*					
March 22	vs. CSK	8 p.m.	Chennai		
March 25	vs. PBKS	7.30 p.m.	Bengaluru		
March 29	vs. KKR	7.30 p.m.	Bengaluru		
April 2	vs. LSG	7.30 p.m.	Bengaluru		
April 6	vs. RR	7.30 p.m.	Jaipur		
		*.	announced so fa	r	

mances will earn him a spot at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Local lad and speedster V. Vyshak, who bowled with fire in the domestic circuit, deserves a few caps.

RCB prides itself on possessing a fine batting core in skipper Faf du Plessis, Glenn Maxwell and Virat Kohli, but the support cast lacks depth. Rajat Patidar, a class batter, struggled for runs in the England Tests. At 38, Dinesh Karthik is nearing the end of his playing career, especially so after his poor showing in IPL 2023. The onus thus falls on big-hitting Australian Cameron Green. Green, however, has spent the last few months focusing on red-ball cricket, so he may need some time to adjust to the demands of T2Os.

Kohli, the face of the franchise, is likely to don the role of opener. The superstar is more accumulator than belligerent blaster, so in the event of his failure, the pressure falls on an already brittle middleorder. Once again, it will be left to Maxwell to pick up the pieces.

THE DUGOUT

Faf du Plessis (Capt.), Glenn axwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik, Suvash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, V. Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh, Saurav Chauhan

Kohli... RCB's talisman. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Dhawan's Punjab Kings will be eager to shrug off 'underachiever' tag this time around

KINGS

The

Influencer

S IPL's second-highest

A run-accumulator and

DHAWAN will again be the

as a captain, SHIKHAR

key for Kings this sea

son. Dhawan proved

wasn't a burden as

he top-scored for

the side last year.

He is a big tourna-

ment player and

will hope that he

can lead Punjab to

its first IPL title in

the 17th edition.

that captaincy

FINALIST

M.R. Praveen Chandran

Underperformance has been an exasperating constant for Punjab Kings since its maiden appearance in the final in 2014. A new IPL season beckons and PBKS would be hoping that 'changes' would result in breakthrough performances needed to tear away its underachiever tag. The new vibrant jersey, new home ground, strateg-

ic change of coaching staff and expensive buys at auction should bring in positive vibes and enough firepower to turn the tide this season.

Punjab's high-risk, noholds-barred attack has brought little rewards for the team in the last two seasons. A more tempered approach will certainly put the side in good stead this time around. Last season, Punjab's form tailed off after a good start and it had more to do with the inconsistent show from its expensive foreign players.

The side will be seeking more consistency from its overseas stars. Liam Livingstone and Sam Curran, both of whom had moderate success last season, will be under pressure to perform. The availability of Jonny

Bairstow will be a big boost to Punjab's chances. After a lean Test series against India, Bairstow has a point to prove and will be hungrier for runs. The lionhearted Chris Woakes and the explosive Rilee Ros-

souw will offer more options for skipper Shikhar Dhawan. Prabhsimran Singh, Atharva Taide and Jitesh Sharma played occasional sparkling knocks last year but Punjab will need more game-changing contributions from the trio.

PBKS spent a fortune to rope in Harshal Patel who is known for his death

bowling prowess. Harshal's bowling gives more teeth to the attack while his skills with the willow will beef up the lower-order batting, an area where Punjab was distinctly weak last season. Kagiso Rabada will spearhead the bowling while Arshdeep Singh is a canny bowler at the start and in the home stretch.

Leg spinner Rahul Chaif they can replicate that trust with performances on the field, Punjab will be a hard team to beat.

BRIÐR



Christie and Marin reign supreme

BADMINTON **Sports Bureau**

Indonesia's Ionatan Chris

ham on Sunday.



Earlier, Spain's Carolina Marin claimed her second All England title when Japan's Yamaguchi Akane quit in the second game of

Wadia zooms to overall title in South **India Rally C'hips**

THE DUGOUT

Choudhary

March 23

March 25

March 30

April 4

Shikhar Dhawan (Capt.), Jonny Bairstow, Rilee Rossouw,

Sam Curran, Sikandar Raza, Liam Livingstone, Kagiso

Rabada, Chris Woakes, Nathan Ellis, Prabhsimran

Arshdeep Singh, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar,

Harshal Patel, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath

PBKS' 2024 fixtures*

vs. DC

vs. RCB

vs. LSG

vs. GT

Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Rishi Dhawan, Atharva Taide,

Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh,

Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajan, Prince

3.30 p.m.

7.30 p.m.

7.30 p.m

7.30 p.m.

Mullanpur

Bengaluru

Lucknow

Ahmedabad

har lends variety to the attack. The plethora of allrounders will give some selection headaches to the team management. Dhawan enjoys great relationships with the players and

17

Rethin-Tan combine triumphs in Australian ITF tournament

India's Rethin Pranav and Indonesia's Jaden Dewandaka Tan defeated Australia's Daniel Jovanovski and Brendan Loh 1-6, 6-3, 10-8 in the doubles final of the I100 ITF juniors Grade 3 tennis tournament in Mornington, Victoria, Australia on Sunday.



Kane set to join England squad despite ankle injury

Harry Kane is set to join up with the England squad for upcoming friendlies against Brazil and Belgium despite injuring his ankle while playing for Bayern Munich, the German club said on Sunday. England captain Kane was hurt when he collided with the goalpost in Bayern's 5-2 win over Darmstadt in the Bundesliga on Saturday. "The striker has still travelled to international duty with England and will be treated by the team doctors there, in close consultation with the FC Bayern medical department," the club said.

Bangladesh's Tanzim ruled out of final ODI against SL

Bangladesh pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib has been ruled out of the third and final ODI match against Sri Lanka after sustaining a hamstring injury, according to ESPNCricinfo. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has not named a replacement for the 21-year-old since it already has Mustafizur Rahman in the ODI squad.

YK (



Jonatan Christie. GETTY IMAGES Christie's first World

Tour Super 1000 triumph "It's like a dream come also ensured the first men's true. I cannot believe this can happen because, last singles champion from Indonesia since Hariyanto week, I lost in the first Arbi's second title in 1994. round. I don't know what

Carolina Marin, GETTY IMAGES

God wanted me to do, but I'm very happy and so proud to be an Indonesian men's singles (champion), said an emotional Christie.

the final due to a hip injury.

Marin, the 2016 Olympic champion, won the opening game 26-24 and was 11-1 in the second when Yamaguchi decided to retire.

"It's been nine years but there are so many things in the past. Now I'm back", said the 30-year-old on her success after the 2015 triumph.



On top: Harikrishan Wadia (co-driver Kunal Kashyap) after emerging triumphant. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sports Bureau CHENNAI

On a day of drama, Harkrishan Wadia (co-driver Kunal Kashyap) of Arka Motorsports emerged champion in the 47th MMSC South India Rally, here on Sunday even as several leading title contenders retired due to various issues.

Wadia not only topped the round of AVT Gold Cup FIA APRC-Asia Cup but also the season-opener of the Blueband FMSCI National Rally championship besides taking the P1 spot in the INRC 2 category for a

triple crown. His main rivals in Asia Cup, SIDVIN-MRF Tyres sponsored Pragathi Gowda and co-driver Trisha Alonkar, in a Subaru Impreza 4wheel drive car whose windshield was shattered when hit by a stone thrown by a miscreant in the penultimate stage, failed to finish as they ran out of fuel 2kms from the finish. Of the 51 crews who

started, 23 retired. The second round of the INRC is scheduled to be held in Nashik from May 31 to June 2.

Rally Cup: 1. Harkrishan Wadia / Kunal Kashyap (Arka Motorsports) (2:04:59.8); 2. Naveen Puligilla / Santosh Thomas (2:15:22.0): 3. Ramcharan C / Jeevarathinam (Arka Motorsports) (2:17:24.1) **Blueband Indian National Rally Championship: INRC** Overall: 1. Wadia / Kunal (2:04:59.8); 2. Aditya Thakur / Virender Kashyap (Chettinad Sporting) (2:05:05.0); 3. Vishak

Balachandran / Anil Abbas (Chettinad Sporting) (2:10:02.6) INRC 2: 1. Wadia / Kunal (2:04:49.8); 2. Thakur / Virender (2:05:05.0); 3. Puligilla / Santosh (2:15:22.0). INRC 3: 1. Vishak / Anil (2:10:02.6); 2. Daraious Shroff /

Srikanth Gowda (Chettinad Sporting) (2:10:48.1); 3. Samrat Yadav / Arvind Dheerendra (2:11:48.2). Junior INRC (2 finishers): 1. Arjun Rajiv / Vinay Padmashali (Chettinad Sporting) (2:13:47.9); 2. Ajay Shankar / S. Nitharshan

The provisional classification

(after leg-2): FIA APRC-Asia

(Mandovi Racing) (2:14:00.0). Women INRC (2 finishers): 1. Phoebe Nongrum / Nash Ross (Snap Racing) (2:28:27.4); 2. Harshitha Gowda / Vignesh Mahalingam (2:45:42.8). FMSCI Gypsy Challenge: 1. Baljinder Singh Dhillon / Goutham CP (2:21:51.9); 2. Dr

Akarsh Sundar) / Ravi Kumar (2:24:45.7); 3. Jayanth Somanathan / R. Rajashekar (2:24:51.9).

West Ham's late goal ruled out in draw with Villa

EURO LEAGUES

Reuters LONDON

West Ham United was denied a dramatic stoppage time winner after Aston Villa came from behind to earn a 1-1 draw in a fiery Premier League clash on Sunday.

Michail Antonio's stooping header, his first goal since August, gave the hosts the lead after 29 minutes and West Ham had goals ruled out for handball either side of halftime. Villa equalised in the 79th minute when Nicolo Zaniolo poked home fel-

low substitute Moussa Diaby's cutback after a period of sustained pressure. West Ham thought it

had won the game at the death but another goal was ruled out for handball after a lengthy VAR check to leave both sides with a point.

On Saturday night, Ful-



The equaliser: Zaniolo, left, pulls Aston Villa level with this strike against West Ham. AP

ham striker Rodrigo Muniz scored twice as Tottenham missed out on the chance of moving into fourth place after losing 3-0 at Craven Cottage.

The results: Premier League: West Ham 1 (Antonio 29) drew with Aston Villa 1 (Zaniolo 79). LaLiga: Sevilla 1 (En-Nesyri 18) lost to Celta Vigo 2 (Perez 72, Strand Larsen 78). Serie A: Juventus 0 drew with

Genoa 0; Verona 1 (Noslin 65) lost to AC Milan 3 (Hernandez 44,

Pulisic 50, Chukwueze 80). Bundesliga: Freiburg 2 (Doan 10, Keitel 79) lost to Leverkusen 3 (Wirtz 2, Hlozek 40, Schick 53). On Saturday: Fulham 3 (Muniz 42, 61, Lukic 49) bt Tottenham 0. LaLiga: Getafe 1 (Santiago 33) bt Girona 0; Athletic Bilbao 2 (Guruzeta 32, 37) bt Alaves 0.

Serie A: Frosinone 2 (Lirol 13, Cheddira 70) lost to Lazio 3 (Zaccagni 38, Castellanos 57, 62); Monza 1 (Maldini 41) bt Cagliari 0; Salernitana 0 lost to Lecce 1 (Gyomber 17-og); Udinese 0 lost to Torino 2 (Zapata 10, Vlasic 53).

Gulveer betters men's 10,000m National record

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI

Asian Games bronze medallist athlete Gulveer Singh shattered the 16year-old National record in the men's 10,000m to finish second in his heat at The Ten in San Juan Capistrano in California.

The 25-year-old clocked 27.41.81 on Saturday to better the 28:02.89s time that stood in Surendra Singh's name since 2008. However, Gulveer's effort was not enough to meet the Paris Games qualification time of 27:00.00. The other Indian in the heat, Kartik Kumar finished ninth with a timing of 28:01.90, while Avinash Sable, did not finish his heat, pulling out at the 6000m mark. In the women's 10000m, Parul Chaudhary finished 20th, clocking 32:02.08 and missed the Paris qualification of 30:40.00.





EMMANUAL YOGINI

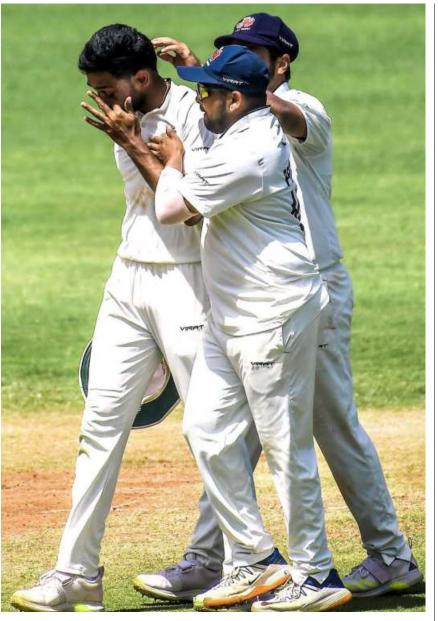
I have passed on my 17-year experience to the younger guys

I would love to be involved in cricket, either coaching or doing something with fast bowlers or youngsters, but it will definitely be something related to the game

INTERVIEW

Dhawal Kulkarni

numbers because numbers are just numbers. What I have done in these years counts more than numbers and I have had a good career. To win five of the six finals I have featured in is quite special.



in a positive way and took it as a challenge. Every time I took the field, I wanted to prove it, prove it to myself rather than anyone else, that I am better than others. And whenever I walk onto the field, I try to become better. Yes, I do think I should have played more international cricket that I did, but that hasn't prevented me from giving my best for Mumbai.

Amol Karhadkar

e was born the day Sachin Tendulkar made his First Class debut. And even before he made his First Class debut, Dhawal Kulkarni was playing along side the man himself in the Indian Premier League.

More than his 14 India caps – 12 ODIs and two T2OIs – and a unique record of being the only pacer to have played at least a game in each of the first 13 IPL editions, Kulkarni emerged as a domestic stalwart.

After being a leader of Mumbai's pace pack for a majority of his 17 seasons with the domestic powerhouse, Kulkarni hung up his boots after picking up a wicket off his last ball to end his career with five Ranji Trophy titles. He takes a look at his career in an interview.

Why do you think it's time to pass on the mantle to a younger generation?

There are a lot of talented youngsters and fast bowlers in Mumbai and that's why I think that I should pass on the mantle to the younger guys. It's been 17 years, a long journey. Whatever experience I have got in these 17 years, I have made sure that I have passed it on this year to the younger guys.

This whole season, more than playing, you have been involved in taking care of the bowling group...

I want to give back to cricket because cricket has given me so much. The knowledge I have received from the greats of cricket, I would like to pass it on to the younger guys.

There's no point keeping it to myself. So that is going to be the next thing.

I would love to be involved in cricket, either coaching or doing something with fast bowlers or younger guys. But it will definitely be something related to cricket.

For an Indian pacer, playing 100 First Class games is a big deal.

No, no, I am not thinking about the

YK

Can you tell us why the *Sportstar* Trophy (Mumbai age-group selection tournament) is so dear to you?

Before playing in the *Sportstar* Trophy (u-17), I was a batting all-rounder and I used to bat for my school teams and even when I was just about in the circuit. I used to bat higher up the order. Then I used to bowl with the new ball, but the game-changer was the *Sportstar* Trophy.

I received the best bowler award in that tournament and from there on I thought that I should focus more on bowling than batting and this is where I am now.

Once you made that switch to being primarily a bowler, the rise was even more rapid than as an opening batter, right?

Yes. I was picked in the Mumbai under-17 team as a fast bowler and from there I picked up wickets.

Then I played two years of under-10, was with the India U-19 team and from there, the real journey began playing professional cricket.

Then after the under-19 level, I got into the Ranji squad.

What is it that gets the best out of you in the finals?

It means a lot because you work really hard during the season, the pre-season you do a lot of fitness, put in a lot of hard yards in the entire domestic season.

There are seven to eight league games when you play the Vijay Hazare Trophy, the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and after those league games in Ranji Trophy, there are the knockout games. You have to win the league games to be a part of those knockouts.

And once you get there, whenever I played the knockouts, I used to give it more than 100% because I used to think about the hard yards that I have put in throughout the season and the championship is what you dream of at the start of the season. Once you hold the trophy in the hand, it's a special feeling. Even before you made your international debut, you had played with Tendulkar in the IPL? What was it like playing with him in the Ranji knockouts in your debut season?

It was a big moment for me because sharing the dressing room with him, you know, just looking at him, his routines, the process that he used to follow was a different feeling. It was like sitting next to God and as a youngster I always looked up to him. I also wanted to become like him.

Whoever played cricket back then wanted to be like Tendulkar. I was one of them and I was lucky enough to have spent time with him. Even after my first season, another Ranji Trophy that we won, he was a part of that final as well. So the experience that he shared with me was very much helpful for my whole career.

Despite being on a roll in Mumbai's colours, opportunities were far and few in international cricket. How did you manage that phase?

I always took it as a challenge. It was something that was not in my hands. I always focused on my cricket and wanted to do well. Whenever I had the ball in my hand, I wanted to go out there and perform.

Never did I think about being picked or not picked for India. I used to be disappointed when I was little young, but then I took it in my stride. I took it

•••

In the latter half, when your body wasn't really actually supporting you as much as you would have wanted, how challenging was it to keep your place in a team like Mumbai?

Getting an India opportunity or not, getting injured or not getting picked is part and parcel of the game for every athlete. I always took it in my stride whenever I got injured.

I always thought about how will I come back fitter than what I was; and that drove me every time I got injured.

I had to speak to myself. I used to ask myself why was is that I got injured so often and how I can improve my regime. Over the last few year, I focused on what I should do that more than I should not do.

If you were to pick top three moments of your career, what would they be?

The first would be the India ODI cap that I got from M.S. Dhoni. The second, my first season for Mumbai – winning the Ranji Trophy for the team. And the third would be the Ranji final (in 2009-10) against Karnataka.

I played a big role with the bat, scored 87 runs (batting at No. 7) and that changed the game. And from there it was a very interesting. It went till the last day last, last session and I played a huge role with the ball as well. Truly a remarkable game.

Any regrets?

Won't call it regret as such, but I I could have worked harder to earn the Test cap is what I would like to say.

How would you like to be remembered?

The one who always gave 100%, a perennial team man and a good human being – more than anything else, a good individual is what you want to be.