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## INSIDE



**JD(U) releases list of 16 candidates, drops two MPs**

**PATNA**  
The Janata Dal(U) on Sunday released a list of 16 candidates for the coming polls, and provided a caste break-up, in a reflection of the impact the caste census had on the State's politics. Two MPs have been dropped, while two turncoats have been included. » PAGE 5

**Left candidates trounce ABVP in JNU union polls**

**NEW DELHI**  
The United Left panel, comprising of AISA, SFI, DSF, and AISF won three posts of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union, while the BAPSA won one post, after counting of votes concluded on Sunday. The ABVP lost by a few hundred votes in all posts. » PAGE 5

**Anti-piracy Act a great enabler, says Navy chief**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, enacted in 2022, has been a "great enabler", said Indian Navy chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar as the Navy completed 100 days of Operation Sankalp in the Gulf of Aden. There are few countries which have an Act like this, he said. » PAGE 6



# INDIA bloc to hold rally against Kejriwal's arrest

Opposition parties to stage a 'maha rally' at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on March 31

Top leadership of the Opposition alliance will participate to 'safeguard country's interests'

Delhi CM shows intent to stay on in his post despite the arrest after issuing order from jail

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**R**allying behind the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Opposition INDIA bloc will hold a public event at the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on March 31 to protest against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate.

The rally is to "safeguard the country's interests and democracy", the Delhi leadership of the AAP and the Congress announced at a joint press conference in the national capital on Sunday.

"We will hold a 'maha rally' at Ramlila Maidan on March 31 against what is happening in the country. The top leadership of the INDIA bloc will participate in the event," said Gopal Rai, the AAP's Delhi convener, who shared the stage with Delhi Ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharad-

waj, as well as Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely and other senior leaders.

"The bank accounts of the oldest party of the country were sealed so that they could not even campaign for the Lok Sabha elections," Mr. Rai said, referring to the Income Tax Department's action against the Congress.

### 'Delhi fortified'

The AAP has also alleged that their headquarters on Deendayal Upadhyay Marg and Mr. Kejriwal's residence were all blockaded by the Delhi Police. "They turned Delhi into a fortress. Elected MLAs and Ministers were detained when they were protesting. Kejriwal's family was placed under house arrest. They sealed our party office. Yesterday [Saturday], at Shaheed Park, they behaved with us as if we were criminals," Mr. Rai said.



**In solidarity:** AAP and Congress leaders during a press conference of the INDIA bloc in New Delhi on Sunday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Meanwhile, Mr. Kejriwal on Sunday issued his first order after being in judicial custody, showing his intent to stay on as Chief Minister despite the arrest.

Water Minister Atishi read out the first order sent to her from Mr. Kejriwal instructing her to solve water and sewer-related pro-

blems in some areas of the city. "I might be in jail, but people of Delhi shouldn't be inconvenienced..." Mr. Kejriwal said, in the message that Ms. Atishi read out. The Minister claimed that, even in confinement, the CM was committed to serving Delhiites, and had asked her to issue strict di-

rections to the Chief Secretary and Delhi Jal Board officials to prevent public inconvenience during the upcoming summer months. "I have come to know that there are significant water and sewer problems in some areas of Delhi. I might be in jail, but the people of Delhi shouldn't

be inconvenienced; make adequate arrangements for water tankers so that there is no shortage during summer. If necessary, seek the cooperation of the Lieutenant Governor as well. He will surely assist you," said the message.

### 'Misusing agencies'

The Opposition has accused the Union government of misusing Central law enforcement agencies against their leaders, crippling their campaign for the upcoming general election which begins in less than a month and leaving them with an uneven playing field. A delegation of top Opposition leaders met the Election Commission of India to flag these concerns on Friday, a day after Mr. Kejriwal's arrest.

The AAP and the other Opposition parties have questioned the ED's action against Mr. Kejriwal, claiming that no money trail has

been found in the excise policy case despite a two-year-long investigation. "However, a ₹60 crore money trail has been found. They arrested Sarath Reddy [director of Aurobindo Pharma] in the excise policy case but he was released on the condition that he give a statement against Kejriwal and donate ₹60 crore to the BJP through electoral bonds," Mr. Rai said.

Mr. Reddy was arrested by the Central agency last November in connection with the excise policy case. Recent data released by the State Bank of India shows that Aurobindo Pharma had donated ₹60 crore to the BJP via electoral bonds. No comments were available from Mr. Reddy or Aurobindo Pharma regarding the AAP's charges. There was no immediate reaction to the allegations from the BJP either.

## A day of delight



Festive mood fills the air as revellers celebrate Holi at Mandi in Himachal Pradesh on the eve of the festival. PTI

## Pakistan mulls restarting trade relations with India

**Sahasni Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

Pakistan will "seriously examine" whether to restart trade with India, said its newly appointed Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Responding to questions during a press meet in London, Mr. Dar said he had been approached last year by Pakistani businesspersons over the issue, and said any decision would follow a full discussion with all stakeholders. In 2019, both India and Pakistan had taken trade measures against each other.

**FULL REPORT**  
» PAGE 4

## Assam Police detain IIT-Guwahati student for pledge to join IS

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

The Assam Police have detained a student of the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) after he had allegedly slipped out to join the terror group IS.

The fourth-year student from Okhla in Delhi had pledged support to the IS through emails and social media posts and said he planned to join the terror group. He disappeared from the IIT-G campus soon after his posts went viral.

The police caught him on Saturday evening in Hajo, about 30 km northwest of Guwahati.

"Reference @IITGuwahati student pledging allegiance to ISIS - the said student has been detained while travelling and further lawful follow up would take place," Assam's Director-General of Police Gyanendra Pratap Singh wrote on X at Saturday midnight.

The police investigated the authenticity of the student's email and social media handles.

The detention of the student followed the arrest of IS India head Haris Farooqi and his associate Anurag Singh on March 19. The State police's Special Task Force caught the duo after they had crossed into Dhubri district of Assam from Bangladesh.

## Kangana, Maneka, Arun Govil in BJP fifth list for LS election; Varun dropped

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Bollywood star Kangana Ranaut and television actor Arun Govil, who starred in the Ramayan series, are among the names in the BJP's fifth list of 111 candidates from 17 States for the Lok Sabha election, released on Sunday.

Ms. Ranaut will contest from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, while Mr. Govil will contest from Meerut.

The party has fielded former Union Minister Maneka Gandhi from Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh, but has dropped her son Varun Gandhi from Pilibhit. He was replaced by Uttar Pradesh Minister Jitin Prasada. Controversial MP from Ut-



Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut will contest from Mandi constituency in Himachal Pradesh. FILE PHOTO

tara Kannada Ananth Kumar Hegde was replaced by former Karnataka Speaker Vishveshwara Hegde Kageri.

In Kerala, the party has fielded State unit chief K. Surendran against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi

from Wayanad. In all, the BJP has declared candidates for 400 seats in five lists so far.

The fifth list saw some other prominent additions and drops, including former Army chief and Union Minister General V.K.

Singh from Ghaziabad. Just minutes before the list was announced, he recused himself from consideration, perhaps anticipating it. He has been replaced by MLA Atul Garg.

The dropping of Mr. Varun Gandhi, who may yet contest as an Independent, is a big development as he and the BJP's high command have not seen eye to eye on many issues for a long time.

No candidate has yet been announced for Rae Bareilly.

Candidates for 18 out of 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha were included in the list, after the collapse of alliance negotiations between BJP and the Biju Janata Dal.

## It's official: 'Statio Shiv Shakti' approved as name of Chandrayaan-3 landing site

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) working group for Planetary System Nomenclature has approved the name "Statio Shiv Shakti" for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander. The approval was given on March 19.

Planetary nomenclature, like terrestrial nomenclature, is used to uniquely identify a feature on the surface of a planet or satellite so that it can be easily located, described, and discussed.



**Etched in history:** An image of the Chandrayaan-3 Vikram lander clicked by a navigation camera onboard the Pragyan rover. ISRO

The Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature "contains detailed information about all names of topographic and albedo features on planets and satellites [and some planetary ring and ring-gap systems] that the IAU has named and approved from its founding in 1919 through the present time".

The IAU is the internationally recognised author-

ity for assigning names to planetary surface features. It follows some rules and conventions to do so.

The IAU's Rule 9 states: "No names having political, military or religious significance may be used, except for names of politi-

cal figures prior to the 19th century." The citation in the gazetteer for the name of the landing site of the Vikram lander reads: "Compound word from Indian mythology that depicts the masculine ["Shiva"] and feminine ["Shakti"] duality of nature."

On August 26, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the point where the moon lander of Chandrayaan-3 touched down would be called "Shiv Shakti".

"In Shiv, there is a resolution for the welfare of humanity and Shakti gives us the strength to fulfil those resolutions," Mr. Modi had said while announcing the name.



## INBRIEF



## ‘VBA’s decision to snap tie-up with Sena (UBT) unfortunate’

A day after Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) chief Prakash Ambedkar said the alliance with Shiv Sena (UBT) doesn’t exist any longer, Sanjay Raut, MP of the Uddhav Thackeray-led party, termed it a “one-sided and unfortunate” decision. Talking to reporters in Mumbai on Sunday, Mr. Raut said when the alliance was announced more than a year ago, the upcoming Lok Sabha election was not on the agenda. “The alliance was made with good intentions. Mr. Ambedkar should have discussed with Mr. Thackeray before making such an announcement,” he said, adding that the VBA chief should reconsider the decision. PTI

## SP MLAs who cross-voted for BJP get Y-category security

Four Samajwadi Party MLAs who cross-voted for the BJP in the February 27 Rajya Sabha elections in U.P. have been allocated Y-category security, a senior government official said on Sunday. He added that the four MLAs who got Y-category security are Abhay Singh (Gosaiganj), Manoj Kumar Pandey (Unchahar), Rakesh Pratap Singh (Gauriganj), and Vinod Chaturvedi (Kalpi). These four MLAs, alongside three other party legislators — Pooja Pal, Rakesh Pandey, and Ashutosh Maurya — had cross-voted for the BJP in the Rajya Sabha elections, leading to BJP candidate Sanjay Seth defeating Samajwadi Party nominee Alok Ranjan. Maharaji Prajapati, another MLA, had abstained. PTI

## SKM govt. in Sikkim corrupt, glad alliance is over, says BJP

A day after breaking off the alliance with the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM), the BJP on Sunday launched an all-out attack on the ruling party, describing it as “corrupt” and asked the people to vote for the BJP to usher in a “double-engine government” to fast-track development in the Himalayan State. Launching a vitriolic attack on the SKM, BJP Sikkim spokesperson Passang Sherpa said the ruling party was running a “corrupt” government and “indulging in political violence and selling natural resources and assets of the State like hydel power projects at throwaway prices.” “We are glad the uncomfortable alliance with the SKM is over for good,” Mr. Sherpa told reporters. PTI

## DMK, AIADMK and BJP to be locked in battle in 9 LS seats in Tamil Nadu

Triangular contest in Chennai North, Chennai South, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Namakkal, Nilgiris (SC), Pollachi Coimbatore, Perambalur constituencies; BJP, Congress to directly compete in 7 seats

N. Sai Charan  
CHENNAI

With major parties having announced their respective list of candidates (barring the Congress for two seats) for the Lok Sabha election in the Tamil Nadu, as many as nine of the total 39 constituencies will witness a three-cornered fight between candidates contesting on the symbols of the ‘Rising Sun’ (of the DMK), the ‘Two Leaves’ (of the AIADMK) and the ‘Lotus’ (of the BJP).

Seeman’s Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) is set to contest in all 39 constituencies in the State as a lone ranger. The electoral battle in Chennai North, Chennai South, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Namakkal, Nilgiris (SC), Coimbatore, Pollachi, and Perambalur will be between candidates of the



In the fray: Former Governor of Telangana and L-G of Puducherry Tamilisai Soundararajan resigned from her gubernatorial posts to rejoin the BJP and contest election from Chennai South. FILE PHOTO

DMK, the AIADMK and the BJP. Notable candidates in the three-cornered contest in Chennai South are the incumbent MP Thamizhachi Thangapandian of the DMK, who will face J. Jayavardhan of the AIADMK, who had emerged victorious in 2014, and Tamilisai Soundararajan of the BJP. In Chennai North, sitting MP Kalanidhi Veerasamy will compete against Royapuram R. Mano of the AIADMK and R.C. Paul Ka-

nagar of the BJP.

In Coimbatore, Ganapathy P. Rajkumar of the DMK will face Singai G. Ramachandran, who heads the AIADMK IT wing, and BJP State president K. Annamalai.

An intense contest is in the cards in the Nilgiris (SC) seat where former Union Minister and incumbent MP. A. Raja will compete against Union MoS for Fisheries L. Murugan of the BJP and D. Lokesh Tamilselvan

of the AIADMK, who is the son of former Assembly Speaker P. Dhanapal. Overall, the DMK will face AIADMK in 19 seats, while directly competing with the BJP in 12 seats. The direct contest between the BJP and Congress will be in seven seats. The grand old party will face the AIADMK in six. In six seats, the PMK will face candidates of both the DMK and the AIADMK. The fight between the Left parties and the BJP will be in four seats.

## Other players

The New Justice Party leader A.C. Shanmugham and Indhiya Jananayaka Katchi leader T.R. Paarivendhar are contesting on the ‘Lotus’ symbol in Vellore and Perambalur seats, respectively. In Namakkal, the Kongunadu Makkal Desiya Katchi’s V.S. Madeswaran is contesting on the ‘Rising Sun’ symbol.

## BJP launches rally in Nuh to reach out to Muslims

The Hindu Bureau  
GURUGRAM

The newly appointed Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Saini on Sunday sounded the bugle for the Lok Sabha election in the State with the first edition of ‘Vijay Sankalp’ rally in Muslim-dominated Nuh, underscoring the party’s efforts to reach out to the minority community ahead of the parliamentary and Assembly polls this year.

Former Chief Minister Manohar Lal too had attended a function to commemorate Raja Hasan Khan Mewati’s martyrdom on March 9 in Nuh, with 44 Ulemas sharing the dais in a first such instance.

All three Assembly constituencies of Nuh district — Nuh, Punhana, and Ferozepur Jhirka — are held by the Congress. Falling in the Gurgaon Lok Sabha segment, the three Assembly segments had voted overwhelmingly for the Congress candidate Capt. Ajay Yadav in 2019 as he polled 74% of the total votes cast in the region.



Nayab Saini

BJP’s Rao Inderjit Singh got 82,000 votes in Nuh, which was around 22% of the total votes polled in the three segments.

Mukesh Vashisht, media coordinator to the Chief Minister, said the ruling party’s efforts to reach out to the Muslims in the State were in line Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s mantra of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas”.

## ‘Fast development’

Addressing his first rally in Nuh, Mr. Saini said the Meow region, which was labelled as “backward” during the previous regimes, has developed at a fast pace during BJP rule. He said that double-engine BJP governments had put special emphasis on the backward regions.

## Parties focus on women voters ahead of twin polls in Haryana

Ashok Kumar  
GURUGRAM

Subsidised LPG cylinders, monthly doles to meet kitchen expenses and the arrangement for free legal and medical consultation — these are some of the promises political parties in Haryana are making to woo women voters in the run-up to the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls.

The parties are also holding conferences to win over the support of women voters, who in the past decade played a crucial role in deciding the fate of the

elections while rising above caste lines in a patriarchal society.

The Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) women cell general secretary Sunaina Chautala claims that her party pioneered in launching all-women conferences in the State, with its ‘Hari Chunari Chaupals’ initiative way back in 2015.

She expects women to play a pivotal role for the revival of her party, which saw its support base eroding over the years and suffering a schism following a feud in the Chautala family, leading to the formation

of the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) ahead of the 2019 Haryana Assembly poll.

“Unlike men, who mostly vote on caste lines, women tend to vote more on socio-economic issues affecting them such as crime rate, unemployment, and inflation, she said.

Meanwhile, the JJP — the INLD’s breakaway faction — too has its eyes firmly set on women voters.

“The party has already delivered on its promise of 50% reservation for women in panchayats and one-third reservation in the allotment of fair price

shops,” said JJP spokesperson Deep Kamal Saharan.

He insisted that the INLD’s ‘Hari Chunari Chaupals’ campaign was, in fact, the brainchild of JJP legislator Naina Chautala, the first woman from the Chautala family to enter active politics in 2014.

## JJP holds ‘chaupals’

Ms. Naina Chautala has held 55 ‘chaupals’ in as many Assembly constituencies so far this year, Mr. Saharan said.

Haryana Pradesh Mahila Congress president Sudha Bhardwaj, too, said women

voters have become politically more aware and assertive.

“Unlike previously, when they cast their votes as per dictates of the men in their families, they are increasingly using their own discretion now. Women electorate had also played a pivotal role in Congress’s Karnataka win,” she said.

“In Haryana, we run a dedicated helpline in each district to provide free legal and medical consultation to women. Our party has also promised LPG cylinders at ₹500, ₹6,000 elderly pension, and 300 un-

its of free electricity,” Ms. Bhardwaj added.

BJP Central Parliamentary Board member Sudha Yadav, speaking to women members of a self-help group in Jharsa, said the participation of women has increased in all spheres during the term of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre.

BJP’s social campaigns strategist Sunil Jaglan, who has launched the ‘Mahila Hiteshi Modi’ campaign ahead of the Lok Sabha election, said the awareness among women has risen over the past decade.

## Survivors of bonded labour in Maharashtra: unshackled, yet the scars run deep

## SPOTLIGHT

Purnima Sah

On a warm morning in March, 100-odd residents of Manavseva Project, a shelter home at Arangaon, 11 km from Ahmednagar town in western Maharashtra, are basking in the sunshine after breakfast. Built on a two-acre plot, the home is run by Shree Amrutvahini Gramvikas Mandal, an NGO founded by Dilip Gunjal.

Among the residents are men and women rescued by the State police after they were lured by traffickers or contractors with the promise of work with good pay and food, but forced into bonded labour. Siraj Shaikh, administrative officer of the NGO, says the shelter home is the only refuge for rescued bonded labourers in Ahmednagar. He says most of them are not able to communicate well as they are still recovering from the trauma of living in inhumane conditions, and being beaten, drugged, and forced into working for long hours with little food or water.

Rani (name changed) offers a hug and a handshake. However, she finds it hard to speak. Shaikh says the police suspect that her captors applied lead oxide or *shendur* (Marathi word for vermilion) on the tip of their tongue as part

of their harsh methods to squeeze out more work from her, causing speech impairment.

Rani is one of the 23 people rescued by the Belvandi police from farms in Ahmednagar district since May 2023. Hailing from places such as Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Odisha, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, none of them could speak at the time of rescue as they were numb and disoriented after being drugged by their captors with narcotics like cannabis, the police say.

‘Low reporting of cases’ According to December 2018 data from the Ministry of Labour and Employment, of the 3.13 lakh bonded labourers rehabilitated in the country, 1,404 were from Maharashtra.

However, NGOs, the police, and activists on the ground say not many cases of bonded labour are reported in the State owing to lack of awareness of this form of modern slavery, which has been illegal in India since 1976, when the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act came into force. Section 2 (g) of the Act defines bonded labour as “the system of forced, or partly forced, labour under which a debtor enters, or has, or is presumed to have, entered, into an agreement with the credi-



Road to recovery: Among the 100-odd residents of Manavseva Project, a shelter home in Ahmednagar, are men and women rescued from bonded labour; (below) efforts are on to rehabilitate them. PURNIMA SAH

tor”. The National Crime Records Bureau data show only four cases of bonded labour were reported in Maharashtra in 2022.

Police Inspector Sanjay Thenge, who joined the Belvandi police station in 2023, says the prevalence of bonded labour in Ahmednagar’s Shrigonda taluka came to light during an investigation into an unclaimed body found stuffed in a gunny bag in a well. Police records spanning 10 years showed that there were 71 reported cases of unidentified bodies disposed of in a similar manner in the taluka. The sacks were retrieved from wells only when they raised a stink, he says.

Based on a tip-off, he raided four locations and freed six bonded labourers. “The accused told us that they engaged the bonded labourers in harvesting sugarcane from

September to April in the district, and sent them for begging in Mumbai and Pune during the holiday and festival seasons. So far, 21 traffickers, 19 men and two women, have been arrested and prosecuted,” says Thenge, who was recently transferred to the Rahuri police station.

Following the rescue, the Belvandi police approached Gunjal’s NGO as the government shelter home for survivors of human trafficking and bonded labour is in Yerawada Central Jail, Pune, and it is inconvenient to travel

three hours by road every time there is a court hearing in the trial, which might take months or even years to conclude. Else, the survivors have to remain in the police lock-up.

## Stricken with fear

Each rescued person has survived extremely traumatic situations, affecting their mental health, says Dr. Suresh Vilas Gholap, medical officer at the NGO.

Several survivors like Karan Kumar, 21, are not in a state to completely recall how they ended up in bonded labour. A native of

Bhainso village in Chhattisgarh’s Janjgir-Champa district, he initially says he walked to Maharashtra with a bunch of friends, and then states that someone took him and a bunch of boys in a truck and brought them to the Hyderabad railway station. After being forced to beg there for a few days, they were brought to Mumbai, then Pune, and finally Ahmednagar. The police say he was rescued on May 2, 2023 from Shrigonda taluka after arresting a trafficker named Pilaji Bhonsle.

Sidheshwar Mahendranath Roy, 40, from Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal, who was freed from the captivity of his trafficker, Dalkhush Mukida Kale, on December 18, 2023, too can’t clearly remember how he reached Ahmednagar. “I left my home 27 years ago. These men were monsters. They would beat me, mess with my head by giving me some narcotic substances, and keep an eye on me even during toilet breaks. I did not take a bath for months until I was rescued,” he says.

## Longing for home

“Will you please convince my wife and sons to accept me and take me back home?” says Bhausahab Haribhau More, 41, from Chanai village in Maharashtra’s Beed district, who was brought by a *mu-kadam* (contractor) to

work in the sugarcane fields in Ahmednagar around a year ago.

“I was made to work from dawn to dusk without a toilet break and just two-three hours of sleep in a makeshift hut made of plastic sheets that collapsed with the slightest breeze. I had to sustain myself for a day with just dry *bhakkri* (unleavened flatbread made of jowar or bajra) and crushed chilli.”

Shaikh says More’s captors, Ashok Bhonsle and Jangya Kale, have been arrested, and the NGO is trying to counsel his family to accept him. “They see him as a burden, but we are telling them that he can do small jobs and secure aid from the government to restart his life,” he says.

## Struggle for aid

Those rescued from bonded labour are entitled to compensation ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹3 lakh under the Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer, 2021.

An immediate aid of ₹30,000 is to be provided after an FIR is registered and bonded labour release certificates are issued by District Magistrates or Sub-Divisional Magistrates. The remaining amount is provided once the case is settled in court.

Though all freed workers at the shelter home have secured release certificates, most of them ha-

ven’t received any aid yet. “We have reached out to the district administration multiple times. The problem is that none of them have identity proofs to open a bank account. We are going to apply for their Aadhaar cards. The District Collector has issued a letter to fast-track the process,” says Gunjal.

The initial aid is not issued in most cases, says a Mumbai-based lawyer, who did not wish to be named. “Full compensation also takes time as it is not given until the accused is convicted. There is a corpus with the district administration that can be used to provide the initial aid.”

Efforts are in progress to rehabilitate the rescued workers, says Mathura Jadhav, a volunteer at the home. Once they are able to carry out basic chores on their own, vocational training will be imparted, says Shaikh. He adds that another NGO, Pratham, has been conducting free skill development workshops for all the residents of Manavseva Project.

The home is completely reliant on donations, says Gunjal. “If the voluntary contributions stop, then we will be able to run the home for a maximum of six months with our personal funds. After that, we will have to shut down.”

LINK TO FULL STORY  
» <https://rb.gy/bm4jcs>



# CAA is a violation of Constitution: Kerala CM

Inaugurating a mass event to protest against the 2019 law, Pinarayi says CAA was part of RSS's agenda to make India a religious state and adds it won't be implemented in the State; hitting back, BJP accuses Kerala CM of fostering communal divisions, says he is spreading fake narratives on the issue

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KANNUR

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday likened the situation in the country to Hitler's persecution of Jews and cautioned against the demonisation of minorities, particularly Muslims. Inaugurating a mass event organised by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kannur to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, Mr. Vijayan said the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) wanted to treat Muslims the way Nazis treated Jews. "Just as Hitler and his Nazi followers persecuted the

Jews and treated as their prime enemies, the RSS and the Sangh Parivar are trying to handle the minorities, especially the Muslims. The CAA was introduced as part of this agenda," Mr. Vijayan said. He said the CAA was part of the RSS's agenda to make India a religious state. The Act implemented by the Union government is a flagrant violation of the Constitution.

Furthermore, the enactment of divisive laws such as the CAA had sparked widespread condemnation and protests both within the country and internationally. "Critics argue that such legislation undermine the



**Strong opposition:** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at a meet organised by the LDF against the CAA on Sunday. S.K. MOHAN

inclusive fabric of our nation by excluding certain groups, echoing the dark chapters of history where minorities were targeted and persecuted," he said.

Despite mounting opposition, the Union government has shown is determination to push forward its agenda, often resorting to diversionary tactics and

cracking down on dissent, Mr. Vijayan said.

## Attacks Congress

He said the CAA and the NPR would not be implemented in Kerala. However, the lack of cohesive opposition added another layer of complexity to the situation, with parties like the Congress being silent on critical issues, he added.

He said the Congress remained silent on the issue in Parliament. "The Congress was not ready to organise a concerted agitation against the CAA. Many CPI(M) leaders who participated in anti-CAA protest were arrested. Not a single Congress leader has been

arrested," he added.

Hitting back, the BJP said Mr. Vijayan was making statements with the intention of fostering communal division. BJP State chief K. Surendran said the decision to withdraw cases registered against the anti-CAA protesters was taken to appease a particular community.

"The Chief Minister in the name of CAA is spreading fake narratives and is attempting communal polarisation. The Chief Minister is claiming that Muslims are being targeted. What is the basis of this allegation? CAA does not deny citizenship to any one particular community," he said. (With PTI inputs)

# Balan's remarks on CPI(M) symbol trigger debate on poll stakes

**G Anand**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Will a mousetrap, civet cat, octopus or scorpion supplant the Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s [CPI (M)] celebrated hammer, sickle and star as election symbol?

At a public meeting in Kozhikode on Saturday, party central committee member A.K. Balan mused on such an arguably beyond-belief possibility, inadvertently causing a stir in political circles and exposing the CPI(M)'s flanks to an Opposition attack.

Mr. Balan appeared to candidly remark on the pivotal nature of the Lok Sabha polls by telling party workers that only a requisite number of MPs and a sizeable portion of the vote share would help the CPI (M) preserve its iconic symbol and national status.



A.K. Balan

quired the BJP's tacit help at the polling booth.

In contrast, Mr. Chennithala said, the Congress fought to displace the Sangh Parivar from power.

Mr. Chennithala also claimed that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan would never face his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal's predicament given the latter's alleged symbiotic association with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

## Hassan's taunt

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee acting president M.M. Hassan sought to play on Mr. Balan's words on Sunday.

He noted Mr. Balan had "subconsciously chosen endangered species" as an alternative election symbol if the CPI(M) lost its hammer, sickle and star symbol.

Fear of defeat lurked in the CPI(M) leadership's psyche.

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala said the CPI(M) was at its wit's end.

It was fighting to preserve its national status and poll symbol and re-

## Electoral space for BJP

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan said Mr. Balan's words indicated that the CPI(M) jockeyed to provide the BJP electoral space in Kerala at the expense of the Congress, an INDIA bloc ally.

For one, Mr. Satheesan pointed out that Left Democratic Front convener E.P. Jayaram had said that the CPI(M) would render the Congress in third place in the LS polls.

Mr. Satheesan said the CPI(M) had calibrated its covert understanding with the BJP to relegate the Congress as an also-ran in LS polls.

# Karnataka's claim on funds utterly baseless: Nirmala

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MYSURU

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the claim of the Karnataka government that it had not received its due share of funds from the Centre was "utterly baseless".

Speaking at a programme, Ms. Sitharaman said all funds payable to Karnataka had been released but if the due process of an audited certificate had not been received by the Centre, then it could not release the money.



Nirmala Sitharaman

It would be released as and when the audited certificates were furnished, she added. Without mentioning the State government, she said she would send a Kannada version of

the Finance Commission's recommendations.

On the State government's move to approach the Supreme Court and file a petition against the Centre for denying financial assistance for drought management, she said it was the right of every citizen of the country to approach the court for justice. "But I also have a duty to submit all the facts before the court," she added.

Speaking about the Centre's initiatives, she said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had brought a sea change in the economy.

# Karnataka parties must fight for Mekedatu: Deve Gowda

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Janata Dal (S) supremo and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Sunday said all parties in Karnataka should put up a united fight for the Mekedatu project.

He also appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and clear the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project.

Alluding to the water shortage in Bengaluru, he said the project should be seen through the prism of the humanitarian crisis in

the city and not through party politics.

"Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has put the Mekedatu issue in his party (DMK) manifesto (not to allow the project). We will put in our manifesto that the project will be completed. All of us had put Mekedatu in our manifesto earlier. I appeal to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa to include the issue in their respective manifestos. We have to be together in our fight. It is not the question of individual glo-

ry or party politics."

He said the Prime Minister should give clearance to the project based on the official estimates that about 30 tmcft of water can be utilised for Bengaluru. "The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal has been silent on the issue," he said.

Appealing to environmentalists not to oppose the project, he said: "Some environmentalists have opposed it saying 5,000 acres of forests will be submerged. In my opinion, 1,000 acres will be submerged. Drinking water must be the first priority."

# Janardhana Reddy set to rejoin BJP in Karnataka today

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

Kalyana Karnataka Pragathi Paksha MLA and controversial mining baron G. Janardhana Reddy announced his decision to rejoin the BJP on Monday. He was earlier associated with the BJP for over a decade.

The decision comes after a meeting of his supporters at his residence here on Sunday.

He will rejoin the party in the presence of BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra, party Karnataka in-charge Radha Mohan Das Aggarwal, and co in-charge Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy. He is currently the sole

legislator from the Karnataka Rajya Pragathi Paksha, after winning from the Gangavati seat in last year's Assembly election.

"I am happy to announce that I will be going back to my mother. My supporters from Chitradurga, Koppal, Ballari, Raichur, Vijayanagara, and Kalaburagi districts will join the BJP with me tomorrow," Mr. Reddy told presspersons. He added that he wanted to strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mr. Reddy, however, did not disclose any information about the future of his party or if he would merge it with the BJP.

## On the Lord's path



People taking part in a Palm Sunday procession organised by the St. Raphael Cathedral in Palakkad on Sunday. Palm Sunday is observed by Christians to commemorate Jesus Christ's entry into Jerusalem before he was arrested and crucified. K.K. MUSTAFAH

# BRS leader Santosh Rao booked over land grab charge

**The Hindu Bureau**  
HYDERABAD

The Banjara Hills police have booked Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader and former MP Joginipally Santosh Kumar for alleged land grabbing.

According to the police, the case was registered following a complaint from Chintla Madhav. Mr. Madhav alleged that Mr. Santosh was trying to occupy a parcel of land at Road Number 14 in Banjara Hills by using forged documents. He also claimed that the former MP had begun construction work illegally on the land, said the officials. The police said

they were investigating the matter.

## 'Political motive'

Mr. Kumar refuted the allegations of forgery, attributing them to political motives aimed at tarnishing his reputation as well as that of his party.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said he had legally acquired a property spanning 904 square yards in survey no 129/54 of Shaikpet, in 2016, through a valid sale deed. He said the transaction was conducted transparently, with the sale deed registered by the competent authorities, involving a sum of ₹3.81 crore.

# 'Plea in SC on delay in nod to Bills a poll stunt by LDF'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly V.D. Satheesan on Sunday described the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government's move to challenge the delay in Presidential assent for four Bills passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly in the Supreme Court an election stunt.

The Congress leader said the CPI(M)-led LDF's attempt to seek the Supreme Court's intervention to raise the State's borrowing limit had stalled. Mr. Satheesan said the CPI (M)'s secular credentials were suspect. The national leadership of two LDF partners had allied with the BJP. However, the par-



V.D. Satheesan

ties continued to hold Ministerial portfolios in the government.

## 'Tacit alliance'

Mr. Satheesan said the LDF had withdrawn cases against anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protesters belatedly. He said the Congress will not allow the

BJP to open an account in Kerala despite its tacit alliance with the CPI(M).

The Kerala Government on Saturday filed an appeal in the Supreme Court as President Droupadi Murmu withheld assent for four Bills passed by the Kerala Legislature without disclosing any reasons.

It also moved the court against Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan's office for keeping the Bills pending for a long and indefinite period, and later reserving them for the consideration of the President.

The act of the President in withholding the assent for the four Bills without giving any reason was highly arbitrary and in violation of the Constitution, the State said.

# Key component of NISAR satellite sent to U.S., launch delayed

**The Hindu Bureau**  
BENGALURU

The launch of the NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite has been delayed as a key component of the satellite has been sent back to the United States of America.

The satellite was scheduled to be launched in the first quarter of 2024. However, now the launch readiness date will be determined at the end of April.

According to the NASA, a special special coating needs to be applied to hardware components on the satellite's 39-foot-diameter (12-meter) radar antenna reflector, which is among the space agency's

primary contributions to the mission. It said that the addition of the special coating is a precautionary step to mitigate any temperature increases that could potentially affect the deployment of the reflector. "Testing and analysis identified a potential for the reflector to experience higher-than-previously-anticipated temperatures in its stowed configuration in flight," it said.

It added that during operations, the reflector will transmit and receive microwave signals to and from Earth's surface, enabling the NISAR to scan nearly all the planet's land and ice surfaces twice every 12 days to collect data.

# Telangana continues to register slow pace of growth

**M. Rajeef**  
HYDERABAD

Telangana continued to depend on the financial accommodation instruments provided by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for meeting its immediate financial commitments like the ongoing and recently launched welfare schemes.

The State utilised options like the special drawing facility and ways and means advances for most of January. The State relied on a special drawing facility for all 31 days of January drawing ₹883.6 crore.

It opted for ways and means advances for all but one day of the month availing ₹1,391.36 crore. It also used the overdraft option for 14 days of the month

## The State depended on financial accommodation instruments of RBI for most part of the month of January

raising ₹634.82 crore, according to the Reserve Bank of India.

Excess dependence on the financial accommodation instruments was because of the slow pace of growth in revenue receipts which continued in January too.

## Revenue receipts

The State's overall revenue receipts at the end of January stood at ₹1.36 lakh crore, 63.2% of the ₹2.16 lakh crore projected in the

budget estimates for the current financial year with just two months left for the completion of the fiscal.

Of these, receipts under the head borrowings and other liabilities stood at ₹40,852 crore, close to one third of the total receipts. Tax revenues during the period were a shade better at ₹1.1 lakh crore, 72.42% of the ₹1.52 lakh crore of the budget estimates.

Telangana had a revenue deficit of ₹1,269.69 crore against the surplus of ₹4,881 crore projected in the budget estimates for the year while the fiscal deficit was ₹40,852 crore 72.87% of ₹56,062 crore projected for the fiscal.

The primary deficit at the end of January stood at ₹21,749 crore.



## Myanmar group asks Manipur govt. not to deport refugees

The Hindu Bureau  
GUWAHATI

A Myanmar-based organisation has asked the Manipur government not to deport Myanmar refugees back to the war-torn country unless they choose to return. They say people returning were likely to face conscription.

The Nongthombam Biren Singh government began the process of sending back 77 refugees from Myanmar by deporting eight of them on March 8.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Burma Refugees Committee - Kabaw Valley said they feared that they would be handed over to the military junta.

The organisation said that Myanmar imposed the People's Military Service Law - referred to as "conscription law" - on February 10.

"We are extremely worried that handing the Myanmar nationals over to the junta would prompt the military regime to use them as human shields on the battlefields," it said.

Urging the Manipur government to reconsider the deportation plan on socio-political and humanitarian grounds, the organisation hoped the Myanmar



We are worried that handing the Myanmar nationals over to the junta would prompt it to use them as human shields

BURMA REFUGEES COMMITTEE - KABAW VALLEY

nationals would be given a choice between staying in Manipur temporarily or risking conscription by returning home. "We would also request the Manipur government for consideration allowing them to stay temporarily in the border areas after being released from the detention centre till they can safely return to their homes," it said.

Myanmar's military has been engaged in localised battles with pro-democracy forces since it staged a coup in February 2021.

The 77 refugees, including 51 women and five children, were taken into custody for illegally entering India and are lodged at a detention centre in Imphal. Officials said altogether 6,746 Myanmar nationals were detected between May 3, 2023, and February 27 this year.

## Pakistan to mull revival of trade ties with India

Pakistan Foreign Minister says businessmen in his country approached him on the issue; Amritsar traders welcome move; Jaishankar says India in 'no mood' to overlook issue of terrorism

Subhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

Pakistan will "seriously examine" whether to restart trade with India, said its newly appointed Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. Responding to questions during a press meet in London, Mr. Dar said he had been approached last year by Pakistani businessmen over the issue, and said any decision would follow a full discussion with all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, visiting Singapore, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar hit out at Pakistan for its "industry-level" support to terrorism, stressing that any talks with Pakistan would need to "face up to the problem".

In 2019, both India and Pakistan had taken trade measures against each other - after the Pulwama bombing in February, India had withdrawn the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan and raised tariffs on all trade multi-fold; after India's Article 370 moves in Jammu and Kashmir in Au-



What India did in 2019, the steps they took to amend the constitution and law [abrogation of Article 370], that was very painful

MOHAMMAD ISHAQ DAR  
Pakistani Foreign Minister

gust 2019, Pakistan had suspended direct trade ties with India amidst a number of other diplomatic measures.

The closure of trade had mostly affected businessmen and transporters engaged at the Attari-Wagah land border. On Sunday, the Amritsar-based chamber of commerce expressed hope that a rethink would follow after the Pakistani Foreign Minister's comments, calling on New Delhi to reciprocate.

"What India did in 2019, the steps they took to amend the constitution and law, that was very painful," said Mr. Dar, speaking in London on Saturday, where he referred to UN resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir. "But I think the business com-

munity of Pakistan is very keen [to restart trade]. When I presented the budget as Finance Minister last year, businessmen pointed out that the imports [from India] are coming in even today - they come via Dubai or via Singapore and involve higher freight, transportation and other transportation costs," he added.

**No comment**  
The Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on Mr. Dar's remarks. Speaking at the National University in Singapore at an event about his book, *Why Bharat Matters*, Mr. Jaishankar said that in India, the "mood is not to overlook" terrorism.

"It's not a one-off happening...but very sus-

tained, almost at an industry level, an assembly line of people whose job it is to do bad things [terror]," Mr. Jaishankar had said on Saturday, responding to a question about bilateral ties with Pakistan. "India will not skirt this problem anymore. We are not going to say... [terrorism] happened, [but] let's continue our dialogue because that's very important... We must be honest enough to face up to that problem, however difficult it is."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the Amritsar-based Director of the Confederation of International Chamber of Commerce and Industry "welcomed" Mr. Dar's initiatives for discussions on restarting trade and said the suspension had left the Integrated Check Point at Attari built at considerable investment "idle".

"We strongly urge the Indian government to react with positive intent as normal economic activity would be mutually beneficial to both the nations," businessman Ashok Sethi said.

(With inputs from Vikas Vasudeva in Chandigarh)

## India, Russia have always had positive ties, says Jaishankar

Press Trust of India  
SINGAPORE



S. Jaishankar

Russia is a country with which India has always had a positive relationship and both countries have taken extra care to look after each other's interests, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Sunday, as he dismissed the notion that Moscow was drifting towards China.

Interacting with the Indian community in Singapore, Mr. Jaishankar said India should look at its relationship with Russia or any other country from its perspective.

"So, if I do my calculations from my perspective and my experiences, I will get the answer. And the answer in this case is that Russia is a country with which we have always had a positive relationship," he said.

"Both India and Russia have taken that extra care to look after each other's

interests. So, I think we should have that confidence as we go forward," he said while answering a question.

The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

On a question on the U.S. presidential election in November and India's equation with the country after that, Mr. Jaishankar said, "I prefer to be patient." He said that he was confident that India could get along with whoever was President of the U.S.

Mr. Jaishankar is in Singapore on a three-day visit from Sunday.

## Music label challenges HC order on Ilaiyaraaja's 'special right' over songs

Mohamed Imranullah S.  
CHENNAI



Ilaiyaraaja

Music label Echo Recording Company Pvt Ltd has preferred an appeal before a Division Bench of the Madras High Court challenging a single judge's 2019 order which held that music composer R. Ilaiyaraaja had a "special moral right" over 4,500 songs composed by him for more than 1,000 movies in a career spanning over four decades.

Justices R. Subramanian and R. Sathivel are slated to hear on Monday the original side appeal filed by the recording company against Justice Anita Sumanth's June 4, 2019 order. The appeal had been restricted to a part of the decree which recognised the composer's moral right, in

line with Section 57 of the Copyright Act, with respect to his compositions.

The decree was passed in a civil suit filed by the music composer in 2014 against a group of music labels including the Malaysia-based Agi Music, Echo Recording of Chennai, Unisys Info Solution of Andhra Pradesh and Giri Trading Company of Mumbai. He had sought to restrain the music labels from monetising the songs com-

**The decree was passed in a civil suit filed by the music composer against a group of music labels to restrain them from monetising the songs without his permission**

posed by him without his permission.

While disposing of the suit in 2019, Justice Sumanth had said that Section 57 of the Copyright Act, 1957, protects the right of a composer to claim a right over his compositions even after assigning them wholly or partially to others. It also entitles him to restrain or claim damages in respect of any distortion, mutilation, modification or other acts if they

were prejudicial to his honour or reputation.

The judge had also held that Echo Recording, too, had the right to exploit the rights over the sound recordings obtained by it from various film producers for whom Mr. Ilaiyaraaja had composed the songs, and was entitled to exploit the same "specifically and strictly in the form and manner as contained in the respective cinematograph films only".

As for the special moral right, she said: "This entitles him to exploit such musical works in any manner that he may deem fit, barring in the form of the connected sound recordings that are an integral part of the cinematic films for which copyright is held by the respective producers of the films."

## 'Muslims in Assam must give up polygamy, child marriage'

Press Trust of India  
GUWAHATI



Himanta Biswa Sarma

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has asserted that Bengali-speaking Muslims must forsake practices like child marriage and polygamy to be considered *khiloniya* - indigenous people of the State.

Mr. Sarma had also previously held the Bengali-speaking Muslim community of the State, most of whom have roots in Bangladesh, responsible for these social evils.

"Whether *Miyas* (Bengali-speaking Muslims) are indigenous or not is a different matter. What we are saying is that if they try to be 'indigenous', we have no problem. But for that, they have to forsake child marriage and polygamy, and encourage women's

education," Mr. Sarma said on Saturday.

*Miya* is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

He said the Assamese people have a culture in which girls were compared

to '*shakti*' (goddess), and marrying two-three times was not Assamese culture.

"I always tell them, there is no problem in *Miyas* being indigenous. But they cannot have two-three wives. That is not Assamese culture. How can one encroach *Satra* (Vaishnavite monastery) land and want to be indigenous?" he maintained.

The State government had launched an intensive crackdown against child marriage in two phases last year and it was found that many elderly men married multiple times and their wives were mostly young girls, belonging to the poor section of the society, Mr. Sarma had said earlier.

The Opposition had termed the decision as a move to polarise voters ahead of Lok Sabha elections.

## CBI returns to Sandeshkhali for probe in ED attack case

Press Trust of India  
KOLKATA

A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team, probing an attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials at West Bengal's Sandeshkhali on January 5, on Sunday visited a village in the area to gather more evidence.

This was the second visit of the CBI to Sarberia village in North 24 Parganas district after getting the custody of suspended Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh, the main accused in the attack, on March 6.

This time, the CBI team took two of the arrested persons along with them to reconstruct the incident and collect further evidence, officials said.

## Hunger strike starts in Kargil for Ladakh Statehood

Press Trust of India  
KARGIL

A three-day hunger strike by the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) in support of their four-point demands, including Statehood and Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, commenced in Kargil on Sunday, with people from different walks of life joining the symbolic protest against the Central government.

Separately, the hunger strike led by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk in Leh entered the 19th day as he expressed his displeasure over the "breach of trust" by the Home Ministry amid a deadlock over the talks between the representatives of the Leh-based Apex Body and the government. The KDA and the Apex Body are separate groupings.

## People of Tamil Nadu will teach DMK a fitting lesson: Palaniswami

The Hindu Bureau  
TIRUCHI

Accusing the DMK government of having failed to deliver on all fronts, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Sunday said that the people of the State would teach the ruling party a fitting lesson by ensuring the defeat of all its candidates in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing a public meeting in Vannangundu on the Tiruchi-Dindigul Highway to campaign for the AIADMK-led alliance, he claimed that the DMK, which had been in power for the past three years, had done nothing for the development of the State.

Mr. Palaniswami sought to project the 2024 election battle as one between the AIADMK and the DMK, without giving much importance to the BJP-led NDA.

"Chief Minister M.K. Sta-



On campaign trail: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami at a public meeting in Vannangundu on Sunday.

lin is interested only in enjoying power. Many of his Cabinet colleagues have been amassing wealth. Several of them have been facing corruption cases," he claimed.

Mr. Stalin had alleged that the AIADMK had ruined the State during its two consecutive terms in office. But it was the AIADMK government that established 11 medical colleges in a year, he said.

"Could Mr. Stalin deny it," he asked, and added, "AIADMK rule was a golden era in the State. When government students found it difficult to compete with private school students for medical admission, my government enacted a law providing 7.5% reservation to government school students. Could Mr. Stalin come out with even one such constructive initiative? I am

ready for an open discussion," he said.

Launching a tirade against the DMK, the AIADMK leader said that the ruling party and its alliance partners had 38 members in Parliament. "They had done nothing for the State. They could have brought Parliament to a standstill. But they failed to raise the issues concerning the State on many occasions," he claimed.

On the electoral bonds issue, Mr. Palaniswami said the DMK had received more than ₹550 crore from a lottery and gaming firm under the scheme. "Mr. Stalin had no locus standi to criticise the AIADMK," he said.

Though there were three alliances, Mr. Palaniswami maintained that the fight was between the AIADMK and the DMK. His party would win all 40 seats in Tamil Nadu and Pudukcherry, he said.

## Rajnath Singh celebrates Holi with soldiers in Leh

Press Trust of India  
LEH

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday celebrated Holi with Army jawans in Leh and lauded them for protecting the country from enemies while braving extreme weather conditions.

Mr. Singh was earlier supposed to celebrate Holi with soldiers in Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, but his visit was cancelled due to inclement weather. The Minister was accompanied by the Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande and General Officer Commanding, Fire and Fury Corps, Lt. Gen Rashim Bali.

The Defence Minister applied *tilak* with 'gulaal' on soldiers' foreheads. He also laid a wreath at the War Memorial here to pay tributes to soldiers who laid down their lives in the line of duty.



Happy Holi: Rajnath Singh dabbles in colour during celebrations with Armed Forces personnel, in Leh on Sunday. PTI

Addressing the soldiers after celebrating the festival of colours, Mr. Singh said Ladakh was the national capital of courage and bravery.

"Like we have the national capital in Delhi, the economic capital in Mumbai, and the technological capital in Bengaluru, Ladakh is India's capital of courage and bravery."

"When everyone wants to hide in their homes due to extreme weather conditions, you stand up to pro-

tect the country from its enemies with unwavering willpower," he said.

The country will always be indebted to the soldiers for their devotion and service. The commitment of the soldiers posted in high altitudes is much stronger than the sub-zero temperatures, the Minister said.

Mr. Singh reiterated the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Central government's commitment to the welfare of the armed forces and their families.



## BSP declares 25 candidates for Lok Sabha election

The Hindu Bureau  
LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Sunday declared 25 candidates for the 2024 Lok Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh.

The party gave Mohammad Irfan Saifi a ticket from Moradabad, Mujahid Hussain from Amroha, Majid Ali from Saharanpur, Zeeshan Khan from Rampur, Anis Ahmad Khan alias Phool Babu from Pilibhit, Shaikat Ali from Sambhal, and Abid Ali from Aonla, etc.

The BSP ticket distribution focused on Muslim outreach with seven out of 25 candidates hailing from the minority community. The BSP, a Dalit-centric party, denied tickets to two sitting Lok Sabha members – Haji Fazlur Rehman from Saharanpur and Malook Nagar from Bijnor. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BSP contested 37 parliamentary seats in an alliance with Samajwadi Party and won 10 seats – Saharanpur, Bijnor, Nagina, Amroha, Ambedkar Nagar, Shrivasti, Lalganj, Ghosi, Janupur, and Ghazipur.

Uttar Pradesh is politically the most crucial State in India with 80 Lok Sabha seats.

# JD(U) releases list of 16 candidates, drops 2 MPs

Six of the candidates in Bihar are from the Other Backward Classes and five from the Extremely Backward Classes; the party has also given ticket to turncoats Lovely Anand and Vijay Lakshmi

Amarnath Tewary  
PATNA

The Janata Dal(U) on Sunday released a list of 16 candidates for the Lok Sabha election, and provided a caste break-up, in a reflection of the impact that last year's caste census has had on the State's politics. Two MPs have been dropped, while two turncoats have been given ticket, with preference given to backward class leaders.

Six of the 16 candidates are from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and five from the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), which together comprise 63% of Bihar's population; three candidates are from upper castes, which make up only 15% of the population; and one each from Mahadalit and Muslim communities. Two of the candidates are women.

In the seat-sharing deal within the State's ruling National Democratic Alliance, the BJP was allotted 17 seats, while the JD(U) got 16, and the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) got five. The Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and the



Gearing up: Senior JD(U) leaders release the full list of 16 candidates for the Lok Sabha election, in Patna on Sunday. PTI

Rashtriya Lok Morcha were each allocated one seat of the State's 40 Lok Sabha seats. HAM(S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi and RLM president Upendra Kushwaha are likely to contest from the Gaya and Karakat parliamentary seats, respectively.

### 2 MPs dropped

In 2019, the NDA had swept the election in Bihar, winning 53% of votes and 39 of the State's 40 seats. The BJP and JD(U) had contested 17 seats each, leaving six seats to the then-undivided Lok Janshakti Party. The JD(U) had lost the lone seat of Kishanganj to the Congress.

This time round, the JD(U) has decided to drop two MPs: Kavita Singh from Siwan and Sunil Kumar Pintu from Sitamarhi. Two turncoats – Lovely Anand, who recently joined the JD(U) from the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD); and Vijay Lakshmi Kushwaha, the wife of Ramesh Singh Kushwaha, former RLM MLA from Ziradei, who has returned to the JD(U) – have been given ticket from the Sheohar and Siwan Lok Sabha seats, respectively.

In 2019, BJP leader Rama Devi had won the Sheohar Lok Sabha seat, but as the constituency has been allocated to the JD(U) this

time, the party has fielded Ms. Anand, wife of Anand Mohan Singh, an upper caste strongman from the Kosi area.

### New and old faces

In the Sitamarhi seat, JD(U) leader and chairman of the Bihar Legislative Council Devesh Chandra Thakur has been fielded in place of MP Sunil Kumar Pintu. Mr. Pintu is currently a JD(U) member, but was earlier in the BJP. From Kishanganj, the JD(U) has fielded Mujahid Alam, who was earlier the MLA from Kochadhaman, but had been defeated in the 2020 Assembly election by All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimen MLA Izhar Asfi. Apart from these four, the remaining 12 are JD(U) MPs, who are being fielded again.

Meanwhile, in the Opposition Mahagatbandhan camp, RJD leaders Lalu Prasad Yadav and his younger son Tejashwi Yadav are scheduled to reach Delhi by Sunday evening for a final round of talks with their ally, the Congress. RJD sources told *The Hindu* that it was willing to spare six seats, while Congress was demanding nine.

## INDIA intact, will cross 272 seats: Jairam Ramesh

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

The INDIA bloc is intact despite Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's "somersault" and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee deciding to be Mamata Banerjee, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has said, rejecting as "hollow" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pitch against the Opposition on corruption.

In an interaction with editors of the *Press Trust of India*, he said the Opposition will untidily cross the halfway mark of 272 in the elections, and oust the BJP from power.

Mr. Ramesh spoke on a range of issues, including electoral bonds, the arrests of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Hemant Soren and also addressed speculations around Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra potentially contesting the Lok Sabha election from Amethi and Raebareilly, respectively.

On Opposition unity, he said all 28 parties were together up to December 19, "but Nitish Kumar did a somersault and Mamata Banerjee decided to be Mamata Banerjee".

## INBRIEF



### Ex-IAF chief, ex-YSRC leader join BJP ahead of LS election

Former Indian Air Force (IAF) chief R.K.S. Bhaduria joined the BJP on Sunday along with former MP and YSRC leader Varaprasad Rao in the presence of Union Minister Anurag Thakur and party general secretary Vinod Tawde. Mr. Rao, a leader hailing from Tirupati, is likely to get BJP ticket from that seat as part of the party's seat-sharing agreement with the Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena Party. The former Air Chief, who is being considered for a seat in Uttar Pradesh, said his new innings gave him a chance to contribute to nation-building. He termed the last eight to 10 years of his service as a "golden period", praising the steps taken by the Modi government to boost self-reliance.

### Jarange asks Marathas to select candidates for LS poll

Quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil on Sunday appealed to the Maratha community to choose "Independent" candidates for the Lok Sabha election before March 30. The Maratha community holds sway over 17 to 18 Lok Sabha constituencies in Maharashtra, he claimed. With their influence, they can garner the support of not only Muslims and Dalit communities but also a wider section of the society, Mr. Jarange-Patil said, addressing a meeting of the Maratha community members, who had come from across the State, in Jalna district. Elections to the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra will be held in five phases. "I don't know politics and am not interested in it," Mr. Jarange-Patil said. He said the Maratha community members should choose candidates, irrespective of caste and religion and those not belonging to any political party. PTI

## Trinamool turncoats, Sandeshkhali victim in BJP's Bengal list

Shiv Sahay Singh  
KOLKATA

The second list of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates in West Bengal for the upcoming Lok Sabha election comprised a mixed bag, including former Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, two turncoats from the Trinamool Congress, and a woman from Sandeshkhali who was at the receiving end of the violence.

Former Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, who resigned from the Calcutta High Court recently, has been nominated from the Tamluk Lok Sabha seat. The party has fielded Arjun Singh from Barrackpore, and Tapas Roy from

Kolkata Uttar. Both Mr. Singh and Mr. Roy had quit the Trinamool Congress to join the BJP recently.

Mr. Gangopadhyay will take on Trinamool Congress youth leader Debangshu Bhattacharya at Tamluk, while Mr. Roy will be pitted against veteran Trinamool Congress MP Sudip Banerjee from Kolkata Uttar. Mr. Singh will be contesting against State's Minister and Trinamool Congress leader Partha Bhowmick from Barrackpore.

The woman from Sandeshkhali, who suffered violence allegedly at the hands of the local Trinamool Congress, has been fielded from the Basirhat Lok Sabha seat.

### Eye on details



Briefing time: Women polling officials attend a training programme on electronic voting machines and election-related information at Dispur College in Guwahati on Sunday. RITU RAJ KONWR

## Cong. drops Sunil Sharma from Jaipur City seat, fields Pratap Singh after uproar

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Following a political uproar over its choice of candidate for the Jaipur City Lok Sabha seat, the Congress on Sunday dropped Sunil Sharma and fielded former Minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas in his place.

Mr. Sharma has been associated with Jaipur Dialogues, a right-wing forum that is known to target and ridicule Congress leadership and target minority communities.

In a fresh list of three names on Sunday, the party fielded Mr. Khachariyawas, a Minister in the Ashok Gehlot government, from Jaipur. The party also named Murari Lal Meena from Dausa seat in Rajasthan. The third candidate, Pratibha Dhanorkar, has been given a party ticket for the Chandrapur seat in

### Sunil Sharma has been associated with Jaipur Dialogues, a right-wing forum known to ridicule Congress leadership

Maharashtra to contest.

On Saturday, Shashi Tharoor, senior leader and Lok Sabha member from Thiruvananthapuram, questioned his party's choice from Jaipur on social media. "He must have undergone some sort of Pauline epiphany on the road to 24 Akbari", he said in a post on X.

While refuting the allegations, Mr. Sharma said he was in no way related to the Jaipur Dialogues YouTube channel or its X handle. He denied being a director of Jaipur Dialogues and asserted that he had severed ties with the platform long back. "This is

completely fake news and false propaganda being floated to diminish the prospects of the Congress Party," Mr. Sharma said.

The Jaipur City Lok Sabha seat is considered a stronghold of the Brahmin community, which played a role in the selection of Mr. Sharma. However, his Brahmin identity was overshadowed by the allegations of his direct association with Jaipur Dialogues, as he was a regular participant in the conclaves organised by the platform.

"Jaipur Dialogues YouTube channel invited me to speak on various social issues as per the vision of Congress. I have advocated the noble traditions of India and always opposed religious narrow-mindedness strongly," he said.

Mr. Sharma joined the Congress in 1981 and has held various posts, including general secretary.

## Left candidates trounce ABVP in JNU students' union elections, win three posts

Ashna Butani  
NEW DELHI

Sloganeering accompanied with *dafli* and *dhol* reached a crescendo at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) as the counting for the students' union election progressed on Sunday. As evening fell, the outcome became clearer.

Around 11.30 p.m., the election committee declared that the United Left panel won three posts of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), while the Birs Aambedkar Phule Students' Association (BAPSA) won one post.

The RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) lost by a few hundred votes in all posts.

The United Left grouping comprises the All India Students' Association (AISA), the Students' Federation of India (SFI), the De-



Eager wait: Students waiting on the JNU campus during the counting of votes on Sunday. ANI

mocratic Students Federation (DSF), and the All India Students' Federation (AISF).

Dhananjay of the AISA won the president's post defeating the ABVP's Umesh Chandra Ajmeera.

Priyanshi Arya, a Dalit queer woman, won the general secretary post. Arya was fielded by the BAPSA. Avijit Ghosh from the SFI won the vice-president post. The joint secretary post was won by Mo

Sajid of the AISF. The Left candidate for the general secretary post, Swati Singh, was disqualified on Friday, the day of polling.

The JNU has been a stronghold of the Left parties over the years. However, the ABVP was hoping to change that this year.

The election was held after a four-year hiatus - initially due to the pandemic and later due to Ph.D admissions. Around 5,600 students voted this year.

### Chirag Paswan's party to announce LS candidates

National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ally Chirag Paswan on Sunday said his Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) will declare its candidates for the Lok Sabha election "immediately after Holi". Mr. Chirag, whose party has got five of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in Bihar, also said he was "ready for any challenge" that came from his estranged uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras. "We will announce all our candidates in a few days... immediately after Holi," said Mr. Paswan, but evaded a direct reply to the question whether he would accommodate Veena Devi and Mehboob Ali Kaiser.

### BJP will win Inner Manipur LS seat by huge margin: Biren

Asserting that the BJP has "opened the eyes of people" of the northeast, Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Sunday said the saffron party would win the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat by a massive margin. He said the BJP candidate for the seat would be known by Monday. "The BJP will win by a huge margin... Earlier speeches and qualifications mattered, but now, what is important is those who truly love the community and the land," he said. "The BJP has opened the eyes of people of the entire northeast. The winnability of the party is 200%," claimed the Chief Minister. The State has two Lok Sabha seats – Inner Manipur and Outer Manipur. Manipur will go to polls in two phases – on April 19 and April 26.

### SP changes Bijnor candidate, fields Hasan from Moradabad

The Samajwadi Party on Sunday renominated its Lok Sabha MP from Moradabad, S.T. Hasan, from the same seat and changed its Bijnor candidate by fielding Deepak Saini, the son of a party MLA. The party announced the names in a post on X. The Samajwadi Party had earlier named Yashveer Singh as its candidate from Bijnor. However, on Sunday, it named Mr. Saini as its candidate for the seat. He is the son of Ram Avtar Saini, the SP legislator from the Noorpur Assembly segment that comes under the Bijnor parliamentary constituency. The Samajwadi Party has so far released seven lists, announcing candidates for 48 seats. PTI



## IN BRIEF



## Exclude post-2003 items from Bhojshala survey: plea to ASI

A Muslim organisation has approached the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) amid its ongoing survey at the contentious Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Dhar urging it to exclude any items added to the premises post-2003. Following directives from the Madhya Pradesh High Court, the ASI team, accompanied by senior police and administrative officials, continued the survey for the third consecutive day at the disputed complex. "Our objection is that the ASI should not include in the survey the objects put up inside Bhojshala after 2003," the president of Kamal Maula Mosque Welfare Society, Abdul Samad, said. **PTI**

## Nine mosques in U.P. covered with tarpaulin ahead of Holi

At least nine mosques in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh and Sambhal districts have been covered with tarpaulin sheets ahead of Holi to prevent them from being smeared with colours, the police said on Sunday. The step was taken after talks with religious leaders to maintain law and order, police officials said. Circle Officer (City) Abhay Pandey that a flag march had been conducted in the sensitive areas. Additional Superintendent of Police (North) Shrish Chandra said six or seven mosques in Sambhal have been covered with a tarpaulin with mutual consent. **PTI**

## Bharat Biotech commences clinical trials of Spanish tuberculosis vaccine in India

N. Ravi Kumar  
HYDERABAD

Clinical trials of the Spanish tuberculosis (TB) vaccine MTBVAC have begun in India.

Vaccine maker Bharat Biotech is conducting the trials in partnership with Spanish biopharmaceutical company Biofabri which is responsible for clinical and industrial development of the vaccine "developed in the laboratory of the University of Zaragoza, with Dr. Brigitte Gicquel of the Pasteur Institute, Paris".

MTBVAC is the only vaccine against tuberculosis undergoing clinical trials based on a genetically modified form of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the pathogen that causes the disease. Unlike the BCG vaccine, the new vaccine contains all "the antigens present in strains that in-

## MTBVAC has been developed for the prevention of TB in adults and adolescents

fect humans". While trials to evaluate safety and immunogenicity of MTBVAC in India have begun, a pivotal safety, immunogenicity and efficacy trial is planned in 2025, Bharat Biotech said in an announcement coinciding with World Tuberculosis Day.

Bharat Biotech will be conducting a Phase 3 trial as Biofabri has completed the Phase 1 and 2 trials in other countries, a spokesperson said. "The MTBVAC vaccine has passed several milestones before entering clinical trials in India," executive chairman Krishna Ella said in a release.

Studying the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy

## Anti-piracy Act has been a great enabler, says Navy chief

The law empowers Navy and Coast Guard to board, seize, and arrest pirates and their vessels on the high seas; Admiral Kumar says the force has been ensuring 'optimal deployment' of assets

Dinakar Peri  
NEW DELHI

The Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, enacted in 2022, has been a "great enabler", said Indian Navy chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar as the Navy completed 100 days of Operation Sankalp in the Gulf of Aden.

"This [the Act] has empowered us to visit, board, search and seize. Any suspicious vessel, craft, or fishing boat or dhov that we suspect, we board, inspect, and if we find piracy triggers like skiffs, weapons, or ammunition, then we take action to ensure that they don't proceed with their mission," Admiral Kumar said in response to a question from *The Hindu* during a press conference on Saturday.

There are very few countries which have an Act like this, he stated.

In the past 100 days, as part of Operation Sankalp, the Navy has carried out over 1,000 boardings.

Admiral Kumar said that earlier they never had any law and it was quite nebulous.



Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R. Hari Kumar said that before the new law on piracy was enacted, the situation was quite nebulous. **ANI**

"In our earlier operations, whenever we captured [pirates], there was hardly any place where you could take them for handing over," he noted, and only the Yellow Gate police station in Mumbai (Mazgaon) was nominated for handling them.

But now all coastal police stations have been empowered.

"We have this anti-piracy Act which has been a great enabler for the security forces, particularly for the Navy, since we are involved in anti-piracy operations," Admiral Kumar said.

Talking about salient features of the Act, maritime expert Pooja Bhatt

said the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act empowers the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard to board, seize, and arrest pirates operating on the high seas, in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and beyond, and Indian courts can prosecute the perpetrators with life imprisonment, fine, or both.

"However, the Act also considers the offence as extraditable, where India has signed such treaties with those countries. India has an agreement with Somalia where Somali pirates have been extradited since 2017," Dr. Bhatt added.

According to the Act, it was enacted "to give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the

Sea (UNCLOS) relating to the repression of piracy on the high seas and for matters connected therewith". India ratified UNCLOS in 1995.

## 'Addressing threats'

Since mid-December, as part of Phase 2 of Operation Sankalp, the Indian Navy saw the deployment of over 5,000 personnel at sea, over 450 ship days (with over 21 ships deployed), and 900 hours of flying by the maritime surveillance aircraft to address threats in the maritime domain.

"As of yesterday (Friday), we had 11 submarines operating simultaneously in the sea, with more than 35 ships and over five aircraft deployed in different parts of the Indian Ocean Region," Admiral Kumar said adding, "So we are making sure that our assets are deployed in an optimal manner to ensure that it covers the area of interest and gives us the best information so that the maritime domain awareness and the requisite degree of transparency is achieved."

## Punjab CM meets kin of Hooch victims as BJP attacks him

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Sunday visited Gujran village in Sangrur district to meet the families of those who died due to suspected consumption of spurious liquor. At least 21 people have died in the incident.

Mr. Mann said the police have registered a murder case in the incident.

"FIR under Section 302 (of the IPC) has been registered against 10 accused. Killing somebody by giving poison is a murder," he said.

The Chief Minister added that those involved in selling spurious liquor will be nabbed.

"We are trying to find out if these accused have more links in Punjab. If there are more gangs selling spurious liquor, they will also be arrested and booked under Section 302," Mr. Mann said.

The Punjab Police said that two more people had been arrested in the case. With this, a total of 10 people have been arrested so far, Deputy Inspector-General (Patiala Range) Harcharan Singh Bhullar said.

Earlier, Union Minister



Anurag Thakur

Anurag Thakur hit out at Mr. Mann over the issue.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP's national headquarters in New Delhi, Mr. Thakur said it was shameful that Mr. Mann was stationed in Delhi and did not "utter a word about the incident, nor initiate an investigation".

"Chief Minister Mann stays put in Delhi to what he terms a fight for jailed accused in the excise policy case - Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh, and now Arvind Kejriwal - but when 21 people in his constituency died after consuming illicit liquor, his government is protecting liquor traders," said Mr. Thakur.

He declared that the people of India would never approve of the "sommolent" Punjab government and the Delhi government running from jail. **(With PTI inputs)**

## To curb illegal trade, Health Ministry tells States to plug gaps in compiling data of organ donors

S. Vijay Kumar  
CHENNAI

The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has expressed concern over some States not compiling data of living and deceased donors which are essential to monitor the implementation of the organ transplantation programme and prevent commercial dealings in organs.

In an advisory to all States recently, the Health Ministry noted that the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), established under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, was an apex organisation to provide for an efficient and organised system of organ procurement and distribution in the country and maintain a national registry of donors and recipients of organs and tissues, sources in the Transplant Authority of Ta-



Revise practices: Every transplanting hospital should register patients requiring transplants on the NOTTO web portal.

mil Nadu said. To fulfil the mandate, the hospitals carrying out organ and tissue transplantation, retrieval, or tissue banking were required to link with the NOTTO and provide both living and deceased organ and tissue donation and transplantation data for the National Registry.

However, it was observed that data were either incomplete or not provided by the States. Also, some States did not have a system for collecting living

donor data.

The Ministry asked State Health Secretaries to instruct all licensed or registered transplant hospitals (Organ Transplant, Non-Transplant Retrieval Centres, and Tissue Banks) to get linked up with the NOTTO web portal.

Every transplanting hospital needed to register patients requiring transplants in the 'subject demography format' as available on the NOTTO web portal and update their status.

The advisory said that it was essential that the data were updated online on a regular basis and monthly offline reports related to deceased as well as living donors were required to be compiled, verified and provided to the NOTTO.

The State Appropriate Authority, which had the powers of a civil court under the Act, was told to ensure compliance with the provision of data by the hospitals for the National Registry.

Non-compliance to the instructions should be dealt with by the authorities under the provisions of the THOTA, 1994.

## Robust registry

The Ministry said a robust National Registry was "absolutely essential for better programme implementation and monitoring with the objective to prevent possible commercial dealings in organs and also to promote deceased organ

donation," the sources quoted the advisory as saying. It was also desirable that every transplant hospital, whether public or private, promoted deceased organ donation and made efforts to achieve a minimum number of donations annually for which they would be required to establish a system for brain stem death certification and its monitoring, and facility for deceased organ donor maintenance.

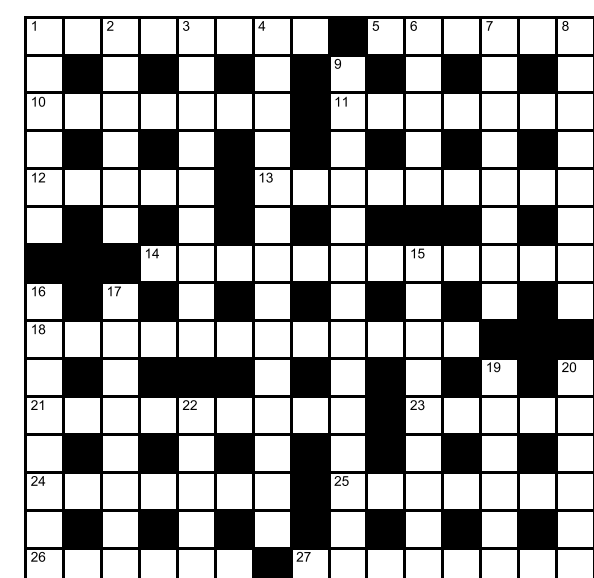
The advisory comes after the NOTTO issued a series of instructions to curb allegations of organs harvested from brain dead patients being transplanted on foreign nationals, overlooking deserving Indian patients on the waitlist.

Going by data, 16,041 organs were transplanted in 2022, most of which were kidneys and livers, harvested from live and cadaver donors. Delhi topped the list with 3,818 organ transplants, the sources added.

**THE CROSSWORD+ 14131**  
(set by Dr. X)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



- 13** Former US President aroused looters accepting suggestion of electoral victory (9)
- 14** Change the policy to gather data relating to evolutionary development (12)
- 18** Traitor caught! Maul rogue in trial (5,7)
- 21** Nonconformists in a mob shine out (9)
- 23** A little charming shack alongside English channel (5)
- 24** Men controlling union seen rioting in Spanish city (7)
- 25** They take a lot of interest as drug addicts outside university start to rave (7)
- 26** Unusual panic about onset of Covid-19 (6)
- 27** Row after club bowler becomes more mouthy (8)

## Down

- 1** Yes, parking found in clean secluded track (6)
- 2** Journeyed to catch husband and mistress finally in Greek city (6)
- 3** What one might get during happy hour for unfair remark (5,4)
- 4** Chap overwhelmed by beer after dope - time to get boss (7,7)
- 6** No ordinary colour spectrum (5)
- 7** Examines face of patient bitten by bugs (8)
- 8** Sad at heart, secures drug to get fix again (8)
- 9** Chum is at rave, drinking still? That was expected, according to me! (1,7,2,4)
- 15** Worthless American involved in deception, upset by poll (2-7)
- 16** Indecent drunkard endlessly consuming cocaine near seedy bar (8)
- 17** Hear opium's fantastic, leaving many in bliss (8)
- 19** Bones throb recurrently? That's about right (6)
- 20** Readjust switches to tackle a tricky problem (6)
- 22** Wild alcoholic in a motel knocking back drinks (5)

## Across

- 1** Accommodation for flyers in club maintained by special brigade (8)
- 5** Couple in a Rolls-Royce, more pretentious (6)
- 10** Press covering perfect radio programme (5-2)
- 11** Swimmer saves lives on island in African country (7)
- 12** Silly person in European city, losing article (5)

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

**Solution to previous puzzle**

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

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

## FAITH

## Holi heralds joy, purity

The festival of Holi is significant as it heralds the onset of spring and the end of a bleak winter. Celebrated on the last full moon day of the Hindu Luni solar calendar, the date varies with the lunar cycle. The night before Holi bonfires are lit in a ceremony known as *Holika Dahan*, also called *choti Holi*. People congregate near the fire and sing and dance as symbolically it signifies the victory of good over evil, said Prof. Kumool Abbi in a lecture.

The pure ritual of *Holika Dahan* subsumes all negativity and rancour and heralds joy, purity and gaiety. The ritual is traced back to King Hiranyakaship, father of Prahalad. He was a demonic and egotistical asura who secured boons bestowing special powers to prevent him from being killed. His son remained a steadfast devotee of Vishnu, thereby angering his father, who persecuted him endlessly. Cruelly, Prahalad's aunt Holika tricked him into sitting in a fire with her. While the fire destroyed her, Vishnu, the upholder of dharma, saved Prahalad. Vishnu took the form of Nrisimha and annihilated Hiranyakaship. Thus the ritual bonfire signifies the triumph of good over evil.

The next day, Holi, known as Dhuli, is celebrated with delight and lively colours are sprinkled everywhere. Delicacies such as *gujiya*, *mathri* and *thandai* are served (with *bhang* in certain localities). Holi is celebrated in other regions of Asia and Caribbean countries like Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago. The festival also celebrates the love of Radha and Krishna as can be seen in Garg Samhita, a work by sage Garga and is important in Vrindavan and Mathura.



# Can 'good sounds' help coral islands recover from bleaching?

Many coral islands, like Lakshadweep, are inhabited by people and their destruction will naturally affect the people there. Rising seas due to climate change is another problem: many island countries like Tuvalu and Vanuatu are facing the threat of submergence and have articulated their concerns at international climate conferences

V. Sasi Kumar

Climate change is the most serious environmental problem facing the world today. One of the main reasons for this is the global warming caused by the extraction of coal and oil, which have been underground for millennia, and burning them for industrial and non-industrial purposes to generate energy. The effects of these activities were exacerbated by other causes of global warming, such as deforestation.

Global warming has many consequences, including rising sea levels and changes in the frequency of extreme weather. Another is the destruction of coral reefs. India's Lakshadweep islands for instance are islands formed on such reefs.

## Coral reefs have started to die

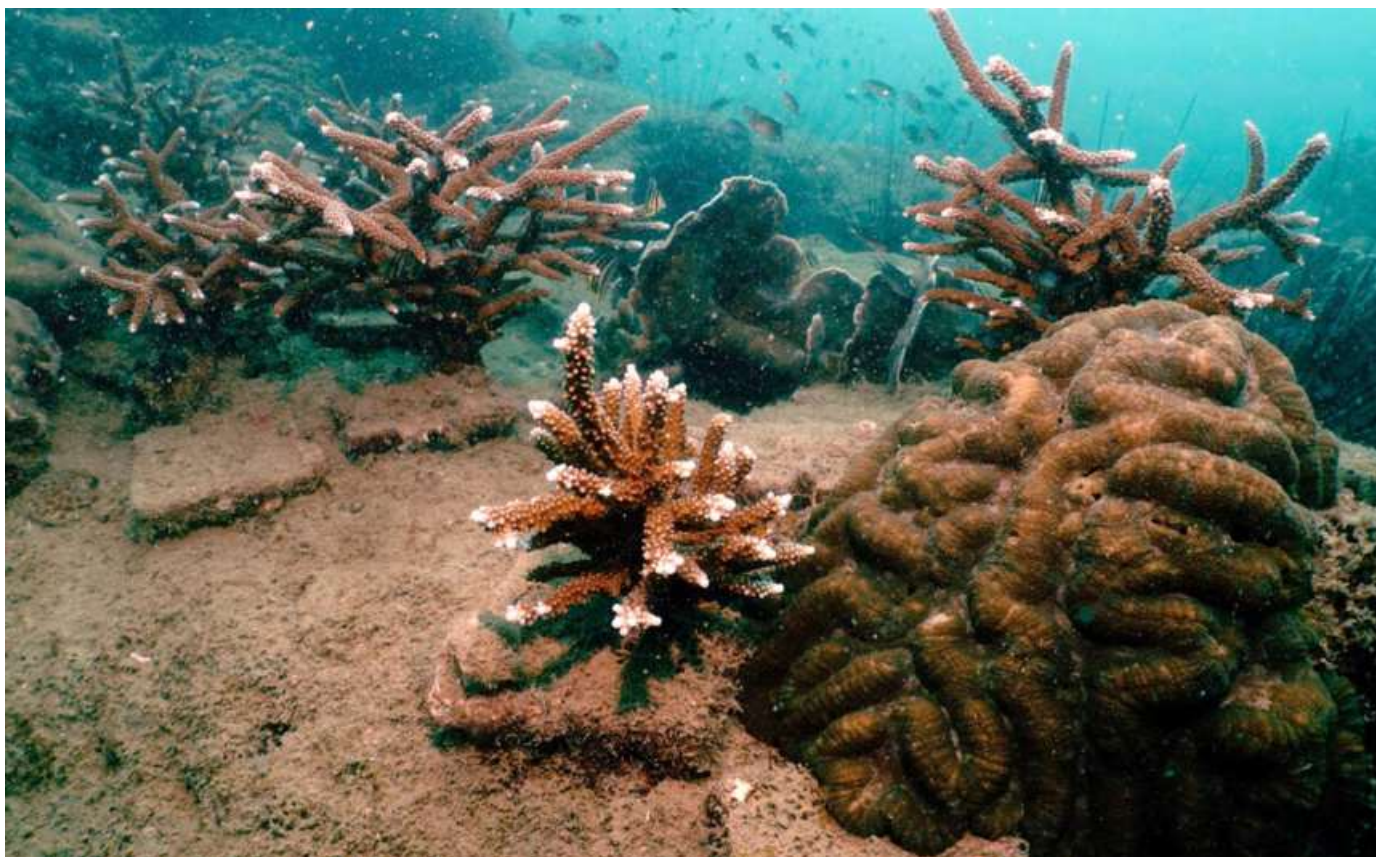
Coral reefs are built by a type of organism that, when it accumulates, forms reefs and islands. They live in large colonies. Corals have a symbiotic relationship with microscopic algae called zooxanthellae, which live in the corals' tissues. Life becomes tough when the temperature of the water around them rises. When it does, the corals expel the zooxanthellae. An important visual symptom of these effects is that the colour of the coral reef changes, and subsequently they die off in droves. This event is called bleaching.

However, not all coral bleaching events are due to warm water. Ocean acidification - which is when the pH of the water drops as more carbon dioxide dissolves in it - is another well-known cause. More acidic water reduces the availability of calcium minerals that the corals need to build and repair their exoskeletons.

In many parts of the world, coral reefs have started to die due to global warming experienced over the years. The U.S. lost half of its coral reefs in the Caribbean in one year in 2005 due to a large-scale bleaching event after warm waters around the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico expanded southward. When scientists collated satellite data of the region from the previous 20 years, they were able to confirm that the 2005 event exerted more thermal stress than those in the previous 20 years combined.

## A source of hope

The Great Barrier Reef in Australia is the largest coral reef in the world. Recently many people there protested strongly against a plan to open a new coal mine because they were worried about the survival of the reef - not because the mine would directly affect the reef but because



Staghorn corals seen in the waters off Man Nai Island, near Rayong province, Thailand in February. REUTERS

of the effects of burning fossil fuels at large.

Many coral islands like our Lakshadweep are inhabited by people. The destruction of these coral reefs will naturally affect the people there. A rising sea level due to climate change is another problem for them. Many small island countries like Tuvalu and Vanuatu are facing the threat of submergence and have articulated their concerns at international climate conferences. Their submergence is a certainty now; the only question is when it will happen. Therefore, it is very scary that the coral reefs themselves are being destroyed and, axiomatically, any chance of saving the corals can and does become a source of hope.

It is against this background that about 5,000 scientists gathered in New Orleans, in the U.S., in February this year for the American Geophysical Union's biennial 'Ocean Sciences' meeting. Here, Amy Apprill, a scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts and who studies coral reefs, provided information about a study she had been part of.

## The coral polyps

To understand this study, we need to first understand what a coral reef is. Coral reefs are built by an organism called a polyp. A coral group is a colony of a large



Global warming has many consequences, including rising sea levels and changes in the frequency of extreme weather. Another is the destruction of coral reefs

number of genetically identical polyps. Each polyp is a sac-like animal, usually a few millimeters wide and a few centimeters tall. It has a set of tentacles surrounding a mouth-like opening. Polyps are gregarious: they like to socialise.

Every polyp also sheds an exoskeleton at its bottom and over many generations this discarded substance accumulates to form a large structure up to several metres wide. The polyps organise their lives around this structure. A coral reef is formed when a large number of polyps collect in this way. Polyps use sound to communicate with each other. Naturally, the sound of a healthy colony will differ from that of an unhealthy colony. Dr. Apprill and her team used this distinction in their new study.

## The sound of a health colony

The investigators set about examining whether a degraded reef could be enriched by replaying healthy reef

sounds. They conducted a series of field studies in the Virgin Islands of the U.S., where they quantified the settlement rates of three species of corals with two different breeding strategies.

They found that in degraded coral reefs, the settlement rate increased when such sounds were played (using a novel underwater speaker system). They also reported that the settlement rate was higher closer to the speaker and reduced as one moved away from the speaker, indicating the impact of the sounds played.

Finally, it would be a mistake to think the researchers have solved the reef settlement problem posed by climate change. Their study was just an experiment. If what they did is tested repeatedly and at least a good fraction of instances are successful, then we can decide that their technique can help in practice. But we still don't know what problems might arise when this project is implemented on a large scale to save coral reefs. We also need to find out the volume at which the sound has to be played and if there are any other parameters to be controlled.

In sum, the new study is just a pointer, even if also a positive one.

(V. Sasi Kumar is a scientist formerly at the Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram.)

## THE GIST

Corals have a symbiotic relationship with algae called zooxanthellae. When the temperature of water rises, corals expel zooxanthellae. An important visual symptom of these effects is that the colour of the coral reef changes, and they die off. This event is called bleaching

Coral reefs are dying due to warming. The U.S. lost half its reefs in the Caribbean in one year in 2005 due to a large-scale bleaching event. When data of the region was collated, it confirmed that the 2005 event exerted more thermal stress than those in the previous 20 years combined

In degraded coral reefs, settlement rate increased when healthy reef sounds were played. The settlement rate was higher closer to the speaker and reduced as one moved away from the speaker, indicating the impact of the sounds played

## BIG SHOT



The Poza de la Becerra, a geological anomaly in the Cuatro Ciénegas wetland in the Chihuahuan Desert, in Mexico. The 170 cactus-ringed pools contain important species of fish, snails, turtles, bacteria, and unique living rock structures that offer important clues to life on the earth millions of years ago. However, water is rapidly draining from the wetland. REUTERS

## WHAT IS IT?

# Abel Prize: a Nobel for mathematicians

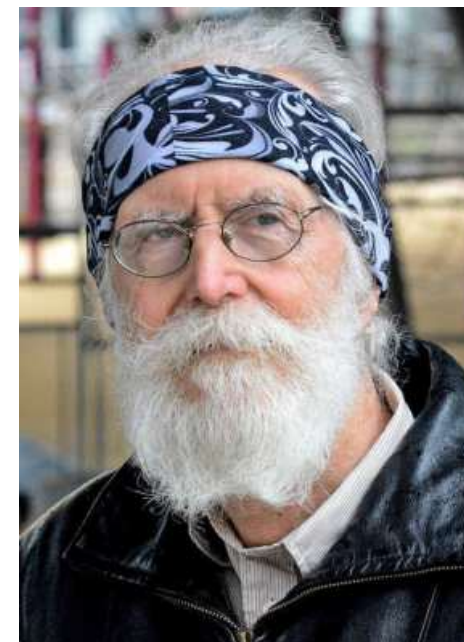
## Vasudevan Mukunth

The Abel Prize for 2024 has been awarded to French mathematician Michael Talagrand for "contributions to probability theory and functional analysis, with outstanding applications in mathematical physics and statistics".

Every year, the King of Norway awards the Abel Prize to at least one scholar who has made a significant contribution to mathematics. The Government of Norway has been presenting the prize since 2003, and has modelled it after the Nobel Prizes, awarded in neighbouring Sweden, including a cash prize of 9 million Norwegian kroner (approximately Rs 7 crore) for the laureates.

This said, the idea for the prize was first floated back in 1899, after the Norwegian mathematician Marius Sophus Lie found out that Alfred Nobel's will didn't include a prize for mathematics. The year 1899 was also the birth centenary of Niels Hendrik Abel, a famous Norwegian mathematician after whom the prize came to be named. The Abel Committee selects each year's winners.

Dr. Talagrand's work in particular has been credited with "making random processes more predictable," as one *Nature* article put it. According to his biography on the Abel Prize website, Dr. Talagrand couldn't see in one eye as the result of a genetic condition. A



French mathematician Michel Talagrand who has won the Abel Prize for Mathematics. He is an expert on probability theory and functional analysis. AFP

decade later, when he developed trouble in his other eye, he became scared and studied hard at school, eventually discovering his knack for mathematics.

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## Questionable conduct

Centre should be worried by Governors' reluctance to follow the Constitution

The conduct of the Tamil Nadu Governor, R.N. Ravi, has been constitutionally questionable for quite some time now. In the latest instance, his refusal to allow the re-induction of K. Ponmudy into the Tamil Nadu Cabinet has been exposed as unwarranted. Following some strident criticism from the Supreme Court, Mr. Ravi administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mr. Ponmudy, whose conviction in a corruption case was recently stayed by the Court, resulting in his eligibility to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly being restored. Mr. Ravi had taken the legally untenable stand that it would be against "constitutional morality" to re-induct Mr. Ponmudy based on the stay of conviction. In the Governor's interpretation, the order of the two-judge Bench, staying the conviction recorded by the Madras High Court, was only by way of interim relief, and that it meant that the conviction was "existent, but made non-operative" and did not amount to its being set aside. The interpretation was quite questionable, as the legal consequences that flow from a criminal conviction in a corruption case – loss of eligibility for being a legislator and, therefore, for being a Minister – stand suspended as soon as the conviction is stayed. Parliament and the State legislatures restore the membership of those convicted as soon as the conviction is stayed, even if their seats had been declared vacant. The Governor's confusion of "morality" and principles of good governance with legality seemed deliberate.

As Mr. Ravi's propensity to find new ways to get under the skin of the DMK regime becomes more apparent, two things stand out: his reluctance to accept the limitations of his office and the Union government's failure to act on the increasing instances of its Governors being pulled up by the Court. On an earlier occasion, the Court had noted that he had disposed of Bills pending with him only after his prolonged inaction was questioned by the Court. In the latest instance, he gave enough cause for the Court to ask, "If the Governor does not follow the Constitution, what does the State do except come to a constitutional court?" Things have come to such a pass that only a vocal court can discipline them. Given the plurality of litigation concerning the conduct of Governors, it is disconcerting that the Centre does not see any scope for remedial measures, when it ought to be its duty to replace Governors who are pathologically averse to following the Constitution. The only explanation is that their conduct is driven, not by constitutional norms, but by the political assignment given to them by those appointing them.

## Unbreakable

India and Bhutan have forged closer ties at a time of regional challenges

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhutan last week, while productive, was largely symbolic. Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay's lengthy bilateral with Mr. Modi a week earlier in Delhi, obviated the need for such a second back-to-back visit. The announcement of India's doubling of support for Bhutan's Five Year Plan, from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore, was significant, but has been under discussion, and could have been made later, post the elections as well. The highlight of the visit, of Bhutan's King conferring Bhutan's highest civilian award on Mr. Modi, had been announced in 2021 for India's support during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also need not have been done right now. The fact that Mr. Modi went ahead with the visit, despite India's electoral Model Code of Conduct in place, his campaign schedule, and inclement weather in Bhutan nearly derailing the programme, indicates how important it was. The symbolic messaging was three-fold: first, that India is fully committed to Bhutan's development, particularly the upcoming Gelephu Mindfulness City, a project likely to benefit from India's increase in financial support to its neighbour. Second, Bhutan is an integral part of India's infrastructure initiatives for road, rail, integrated check points, and also for energy exchanges on India's grid, both of which are pushing sub-regional trade and travel among India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Third, that India is mindful of Bhutan's increased engagement with China, for the boundary agreement they hope to forge soon, but that it does not intend to give Beijing space in areas of engagement such as trade and investment, where China has made inroads with India's other close neighbours.

As a result, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra may have feigned disinterest when he brushed aside a question on the China-Bhutan boundary talks, but they are important. China-Bhutan talks about the possible swap of land at Doklam to Bhutan's west are, in fact, seen as a threat to India's Siliguri Corridor, whereas China's claim to areas on Bhutan's east could imperil India's border connectivity projects in Arunachal Pradesh. Recent reports, which the Ministry of External Affairs has not denied, indicate that Bhutan may have even asked India to go slow on those projects until its boundary talks with China are complete. As a result, the most important message from Mr. Modi's sojourn was one of a united front at a time of change. Accepting his award, Mr. Modi called India-Bhutan ties "unbreakable". India and Bhutan will need to emphasise that lock-step even more in the days ahead to retain the permanence of their ties in the face of economic and social turmoil within their countries, as well as the challenge in the neighbourhood.

# TB control in India calls for person-centred solutions

Globally, and in India, tuberculosis (TB) continues to loom large as a public health challenge impacting millions. Despite ambitious goals set by India's health authorities to eliminate TB, the challenge is huge and progress is not fast enough. Access to efficient and high quality care – diagnosis, treatment and support – is still not available to every person suspected to have TB or diagnosed with the disease. As India grapples with the complexities of controlling TB, we need a paradigm shift urgently – one that places those affected and their lived experiences at the centre of tackling this ancient disease.

At the core of this shift lies a fundamental recognition: the needs and the interests of patients and communities must be prioritised within the care paradigm and the health-care system. This principle, echoed by survivors, communities, health experts and policymakers, underscores the need for a person-centred approach to TB care and management.

**Understanding lived experiences**  
Perhaps our greatest gap has been in understanding the lived experiences of the affected individual fighting and surviving TB. Too easily, we assume their needs, their challenges, and their expectations. In no other service paradigm are the voices of end users ignored. We have, at times, been guilty of over-medicalising this disease, as doctors and public health folks often do. We have often forgotten to see TB as a human crisis, a gendered crisis, an economic challenge, and a social and environmental one as well.

Over the years, this has been changing, with the emergence of strong TB survivor advocates who have stridently worked to put the needs of



**Dr. Soumya Swaminathan**

is the Chairperson of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). She was the Chief Scientist of the World Health Organization (WHO)



**Chapal Mehra**

is a public health specialist and the Convenor of Survivors Against TB (SATB)

Even though World TB Day (March 24) has passed, recognising the needs and the interests of patients and communities must form the basis of disease elimination

affected communities on the table. They have sought change in key areas and governments have listened and modified their own approach to meet community needs. A case in point is nutritional support, which while limited, is an important step. Further, the growing focus on patient support, addressing stigma, and gendered aspects of TB has also been important.

Is this enough? Not entirely. To provide high quality, person-centred care, we need to bridge the gap between policy intent and on-the-ground realities. For instance, India needs to prioritise targeted interventions aimed at improving and expanding access to TB diagnosis and treatment. We need to expand the reach of TB testing facilities, particularly in rural and underserved areas, and ensure the availability of free, affordable and quality-assured TB drugs. Molecular testing is the gold standard and less than a quarter of symptomatic patients are getting that as their first test. Recent reports of drug and diagnostics stockouts are troubling and unacceptable.

### Care needs to be more humane

Additionally, we need to focus on efforts to make care more humane. Hence, mental health support and gender responsive care become critically important. Efforts are also needed to strengthen community-based TB care models, empowering frontline health-care workers to deliver comprehensive care which addresses not just treatment but also social, economic and mental health needs and is closer to where patients live. This is important as survivor narratives tell us the stigma, discrimination and mental stress they go through, not to mention the side-effects of treatment.

By supporting frontline TB workers, strengthening supply chains and procurement mechanisms, decentralising TB services and empowering local communities, India can reduce

stigma, overcome barriers to access and enhance treatment outcomes.

While TB can affect people of any class, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, it disproportionately affects the most marginalised in society, including children, the urban poor, prisoners, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The disease has gone beyond being a health crisis alone. It is an economic crisis which by some estimates, costs India billions in losses each year and pushes families and communities into debt and poverty.

Addressing the socio-economic determinants of TB requires a multi-sectoral approach. Poverty alleviation, improvement in nutritional status, well-ventilated housing and better air quality will all contribute towards reducing TB. Recent research has shown that nutritional supplementation reduced TB incidence substantially in household contacts of adults with microbiologically confirmed pulmonary TB. By tackling the underlying root causes of TB, India can make significant strides towards eliminating the disease and improving the overall health and well-being of its population.

### Tapping technology

Leveraging technology and innovation holds promise in enhancing TB care efforts in India. The adoption of AI and digital health solutions for TB diagnosis, adherence and surveillance can revolutionise the way TB care is delivered and accessed in the country. By investing in developing better vaccines, we can hope to ultimately eliminate this airborne disease.

The path to TB elimination in India requires a concerted effort to prioritise person-centred care, address social determinants of health, and embrace innovation. By adopting a holistic and person-centred approach, India can overcome the barriers that stand in the way of TB control and create a healthier future for all its citizens.

## Actionable ideas for TB control

Every day, 3,500 people worldwide lose their lives to tuberculosis (TB), and around 30,000 people become infected with TB bacilli, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates. India alone accounts for 27% of global TB cases. This is jarring, given that TB is a detectable and curable disease and TB diagnosis and treatment protocols have been a part of existing health systems for a long time.

World TB Day, on March 24, commemorates Dr. Robert Koch's discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (the bacteria that causes tuberculosis) in 1882. Despite its discovery then, possible treatments using streptomycin in 1943 and the discovery of antibiotics such as isoniazid and rifampicin in the 1950s and 1960s, the war against the pathogen is far from been won, and there are multiple challenges to be overcome in combating the disease.

### Still a disease hotspot

India remains a TB hotspot. The TB control programme in India has undergone several changes since its inception in 1962, incorporating evidence from various domains of public health and health systems, including pharmacology, microbiology, epidemiology, the social sciences, and information technology.

The theme for World TB Day 2024 (March 24), 'Yes! We can end TB!', underscores the potential to eradicate TB with existing disease control mechanisms, infrastructure, training, and the political will. Yet, TB in its various avatars – drug-resistant (DR-TB), totally drug-resistant (TDR-TB), extensively drug-resistant (XDR-TB), pulmonary TB (P-TB) and non-pulmonary TB – seep out, akin to trying to hold sand in one's hand, only to have it slip through one's fingers.

We are in an era of hope where public health discourse has gained importance and technology has narrowed the gaps that were previously unimaginable. The COVID-19 pandemic, despite its disruptive and uncertain nature, has brought to the fore preventive aspects of public health, highlighting social determinants of health in the scheme of things. Despite the passage of World TB Day 2024, looking at rapid urbanisation, migration, and the stresses on the existing health



**Aruna Bhattacharya**

is Lead – Academics and Research, School of Human Development, Indian Institute for Human Settlements. She is a medical anthropologist and public health specialist with over two decades of experience of working on tuberculosis control

India remains a TB hotspot but there can be change with early diagnosis and continuous treatment that is accessible to all

systems, I propose a 10-point agenda towards 'ending TB'.

First, early detection. Given TB's aetiology, early detection is the key. Symptoms are often ignored and mistaken for other common ailments, leading to delays in reporting. Compulsory screening for family and contacts of each index case is essential, necessitating availability of laboratory facilities and efficient follow-up mechanisms within health systems.

Second, precise treatment categorisation. With increasing DR-TB, it is imperative to know the resistance status at the time of diagnosis to assign appropriate treatment regimens as per their phenotypic susceptibility.

Third, treatment adherence and follow-up. Unlike other bacterial diseases, TB requires a long period of sustained treatment. Often, this leads to non-compliance, which could be due to observable improvement in health status, or change of residence, movement across States and districts. Even though the TB control programme has a built-in follow-up system, compliance to complete treatment is not 100%. Leveraging technology to monitor compliance needs focus.

Fourth, zero mortality. Mitigating mortality due to TB, be it DR-TB or non-pulmonary TB, is necessary.

### Issue of drug resistance

Fifth, controlling drug resistance. Drug resistance in TB remains a man-made phenomenon. Unregulated use of antibiotics and non-compliance with treatment regimens lead to selective evolutionary pressure on the bacillus, in turn resulting in developing drug resistance. Poor regulatory mechanisms for drug control and non-compliance with treatment regimens are the main reasons for such a high degree of drug resistance.

Sixth, assessing the extent of drug-resistant TB. There needs to be data on the proportion of people diagnosed with TB who have rifampicin-resistant TB (RR-TB) and multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) – this is resistance to both rifampicin and isoniazid,

collectively referred to as MDR/RR-TB. This helps in better plan and design of the control programme, resource allocation for diagnosis, the treatment regime as well as availability of trained staff mandated for DR-TB.

Seventh, availability of appropriate medicines. Assured medical supply is mandated under the TB control programme. However, procurement challenges for DR-TB medications such as bedaquiline and delamanid must be addressed, in addition to ascertaining treatment facilities for all DR-TB cases which require in-patient care.

### Integration of intra-systems

Eighth, integration into larger health systems. Strengthening referral networks within and between different levels of public health systems and private health systems is vital to ensure no symptomatic cases are lost, no patients miss their dosages and are non-compliant, and, importantly, the screening of contacts for all positive cases of pulmonary TB cases (DR or non-DR).

Ninth, dynamic notification system. A robust notification system will ease the burden of health system personnel. While Ni-kshay has evolved – 'Ni-Kshay' (Ni=End, Kshay=TB) is the web enabled patient management system for TB control under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) – it requires improvements to capture real-time TB data between sectors, practitioners, time, and locations.

Tenth, considering population mobility and migration. Often, the productive aspects of life are overlooked when discussing disease and health care seeking, particularly in the context of TB, which suffers from social and cultural stigma. Interestingly, once TB is diagnosed and positive cases are put on treatment, health is restored quickly for the patient to resume their daily activities. Therefore, portability of TB treatment within the country is crucial at the policy level.

Let us pledge to create a TB-free India and world. With early diagnosis and continuous treatment accessible to all, we can achieve the goal of 'Yes! We have ended TB!'

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Moscow shooting

It is shocking and most disturbing that a country that has been engaged in a protracted war with Ukraine, and which has already resulted in large-scale casualties, finds itself the target of terror attacks (Page 1, "133 killed in Moscow concert hall shooting; 11 detained, says Putin", March 24). That a relatively peaceful country which is considered to be a global superpower had to bear the brunt of a deadly terror attack in recent times is a grim pointer to the fact that the menace of terrorism transcends nations and nationalities. Violence and bloodshed are totally unacceptable and antithetical to the ethos of a civilised world order.

**B. Suresh Kumar,**  
Coimbatore

Like-minded countries across the world should join hands in rooting out terrorism in all its forms and formats. We should not be carried away or fooled by claims that the IS is a spent force. The outfit seems to take different shapes and/or incarnations from time to time.

**R. Sampath,**  
Chennai

### The arrest of a CM

The arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raises serious questions about political vendetta and the misuse of investigative agencies. The timing, just ahead of the general election, strengthens the suspicion. When a sitting Chief Minister faces arrest, it undermines public trust. We

must safeguard our democratic institutions from undue influence and uphold the right to dissent. Mr. Kejriwal's arrest is not about one individual. It is about the soul of our democracy. Let us demand clarity, fairness, and an adherence to constitutional norms.

**Sam Oommen,**  
Venmoney, Chengannur, Kerala

That those facing corruption charges are left/let off the moment they join hands with the ruling national party is a known fact. The question arising in everyone's mind is whether Mr. Kejriwal can continue as the Chief Minister of Delhi while behind bars. Only legal eagles can answer this sensitive question.

**Mani Natarajan,**  
Chennai

It is surprising to note that some in the media have chosen to ignore certain vital facts leading to the arrest of Mr. Kejriwal. First, his blatant defiance to comply with as many as nine summons issued by the ED. His desperate efforts in getting protection from arrest failed. One of his Ministers is still in custody and all his attempts to get bail have failed. There seems to be enough material to back the allegations in the liquor policy. Mr. Kejriwal has only himself to blame himself for the situation he is in.

**A. Sundararajan,**  
Chennai

### Title, disharmony

As a connoisseur of Carnatic music, I am saddened by the war cries being raised against a fellow musician.

Why such hatred? The head of the Music Academy had issued a proper response. Disgruntled musicians and past awardees should ponder over their actions.

**P.A.K. Murthy,**  
Chennai

One is entitled to one's opinion that he or she is free to express in public as a basic constitutional right bestowed to the person exercising this right. But if it turns controversial and snowballs into an issue that deeply hurts the sentiments of others, causing disharmony, it is tantamount to abuse of the right. T.M. Krishna is, unquestionably, an accomplished artist, But what is disconcerting about him is his adopting a dual role, ideologically contradictory to each other,

as a Carnatic musician. Playing this dual role before very learned and informed people in this genre is despicable. The actions by some fellow Carnatic musicians are fair in their stand as they have a profound understanding of classical music.

**N. Visveswaran,**  
Chennai

### CSK off the blocks

Compliments to CSK to start this IPL on a winning note. There was no bite in the RCB bowling. It was a grand show at Chepauk and we expect the fireworks to continue through the IPL.

**N. Mahadevan,**  
Chennai

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



# The right diagnosis for tuberculosis

**T**uberculosis, commonly known as TB, is a disease which continues to impact millions globally. Ending the TB epidemic by 2030 is among the health targets of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India is working towards eliminating TB five years ahead of the global 2030 target. This is an ambitious time frame. How well-positioned is India to achieve this?

A macro view suggests that India has done exceptionally well so far. A strong political intent is driving the right policies. In fact, in November 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged India's success on two major fronts: in reducing TB incidence by 16% from 2015 to 2022 (close to double the pace at which global TB incidence is declining) and in reducing TB mortality by 18% during the same period, keeping in line with the global trend.

## The weakest aspect

However, as Dr. Madhukar Pai, Dr. Puneet K. Dewan, and Dr. Soumya Swaminathan pointed out in 'Transforming tuberculosis diagnosis' in *Nature*, globally, diagnosis continues to be the "weakest aspect of TB care". According to the WHO's 'Global Tuberculosis Report 2023', for the first time globally, 7.5 million patients were diagnosed with TB in 2022; yet there remained a large gap of some 3.1 million people who probably fell ill with TB but were not diagnosed and reported to national TB programmes. As the article summarised succinctly, "If we cannot find TB, we cannot treat TB. And if we cannot treat TB, we cannot end TB".

So, how do we find TB? We can detect it largely by leveraging and optimising the systems and processes already in place, as well as by quickly deploying newer proven technologies that take diagnosis as close to the point of care as possible.

Take, for instance, the first step



**Sarabjit Chadha**

is Regional Technical Director, India and South-East Asia at FIND

We can detect TB largely by leveraging the systems already in place, as well as by quickly deploying newer proven technologies

of screening patients: India regularly conducts active case-finding drives across the country. But it will be useful to reassess the screening procedures in place. A recent Lancet study as well as the Indian Council of Medical Research's 'National TB Prevalence Survey in India' showed that while screening people for symptoms is good, it is not substantive. Studies also show that in many cases, despite not showing any apparent symptoms, people may have infectious TB and may even be transmitting it.

X-ray imaging is a quick and efficient way to find these patients. X-ray technology has advanced dramatically. Now, we not only have portable hand-held devices, but also software driven by Artificial Intelligence that can read digital X-ray images and detect possible TB with a high degree of certainty. This must be used on a wider scale so that we can find and absorb potential patients into the care cascade faster.

While X-rays are good screening tools, it is imperative to detect TB bacteria in the patient with absolute certainty. The age-old sputum microscopy test has its limitations which are addressed by the newer molecular tests that are rapid, accurate, and even detect resistance against drugs. To be sure, India has scaled up molecular diagnostic capacity significantly. The NAAT (nucleic acid amplification test) machines in India have gone up from 651 in 2017 to more than 5,000 in 2022. But the utility of these tests is limited due to their high costs and issues with accessibility. Moreover, a large number of existing technologies including molecular testing are reliant on sputum collection and testing. This comes with its own challenges. First, it may not be as easy for everyone, especially young children, to produce sputum. Second, sample transportation, especially in remote and hilly districts, remains a challenge. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when an alternative to

nasopharyngeal swabs was introduced in the form of simpler nasal swabs, saliva, and self-collection, the testing coverage greatly increased. We must therefore be on the lookout for newer technologies and approaches to diagnosis.

## Other collection techniques

It is time to actively explore other collection techniques such as tongue swabs which can be a true game changer. Here, the sample is extracted by simply rubbing the swab in the oral cavity. This augments our point-of-care testing abilities and also reduces the costs for overall diagnosis of TB. We could also better utilise another invaluable resource: PCR machines, which served us well during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are already fitted with the right diagnostic technology and can get to the last mile across the country effectively.

Newer technologies such as the urine LAM test can also be used to detect cases in the general population effectively. This is a rapid test which is easily performed. It can help in screening for both pulmonary TB (lungs) and extra-pulmonary TB (organs other than the lungs).

The TB diagnostics pipeline is rich with several new innovative tests on the anvil. However, to maximise these tests, their rapid validation and adoption under the programme is critical. To ensure we truly reach the last mile, point-of-care testing and diagnosis is imperative. The good news is we already have a diagnostic framework that is forward-looking. We need to simply improve implementation and be more proactive in deploying new technologies. We need to ensure that new technologies are streamlined and rolled out faster and build capacity at the sub-district level to conduct such tests as needed. Minor re-adjustments will make a major contribution to India's TB elimination drive.



# Things fall apart; can AAP hold?

Kejriwal's arrest has put the AAP in a difficult position and the Congress in a quandary

## STATE OF PLAY

**Jaideep Deo Bhanj**

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**P**olitics in the national capital has come a full circle with the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on corruption charges by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Mr. Kejriwal, who rose to power a decade ago by launching scathing attacks over corruption against the Congress, and particularly former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, now finds himself having to prove his and his party's "kattar imandar" (very honest) credentials and that too from prison.

## An uneasy alliance

While Mr. Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) faces its biggest challenge yet, just before the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress too finds itself in a predicament. The party, which ruled Delhi for 15 years before the AAP rode to power in 2015, has no seats in the Delhi Legislative Assembly and no representation in Parliament. In this context, the 4-3 seat-sharing arrangement for Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats under the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc can be seen as an attempt by the Congress to stay in the political mix in Delhi. This alliance is an uneasy one, however, given that the two parties are rivals elsewhere. In Punjab, for instance, the AAP and Congress have chosen to fight it alone; this is where the AAP came to power defeating the Congress in 2022. While the cadre of both the parties are still awaiting instructions from their leadership on how they plan to support each other after being bitter rivals for so many years, the factor that

unites them is a dominant opponent in the form of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Meanwhile, the BJP remains confident. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while addressing an event in Delhi's Dwarka recently, commented on the alliance saying "0+0 is still zero" and expressed confidence that the BJP will win all seven seats for a third consecutive time. The mood at a Holi Milan organised in the Delhi BJP office a day after the arrest of Mr. Kejriwal was jubilant with leaders saying corruption has been "slayed" as Mr. Kejriwal, his former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, former Health Minister Satyendar Jain, and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh are all in jail.

The AAP has spent the weekend reacting angrily to Mr. Kejriwal's arrest. It has deputed Cabinet Ministers Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj, and Gopal Rai to take stock of the situation along with Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak. All of them have been reiterating that Mr. Kejriwal will continue to be the Chief Minister even if he is in jail. The Congress is yet to announce its candidates for its three seats. Meetings on how both these parties are going to tackle the elections are yet to be conducted. On March 31, the AAP, Congress, and other Opposition parties are scheduled to hold a rally at Ramlila Maidan against Mr. Kejriwal's arrest. Mr. Kejriwal, who has often publicly called top leaders of the parties that will be present at the rally "corrupt", will find solace in seeing them show up for him.

Reacting to Mr. Kejriwal's arrest, Congress leader and former President of India Pranab Mukherjee's daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee posted on X (formerly Twitter) that "karma catches up". She said, "He and [the] Anna Hazare gang were responsible for making [the] most irresponsible, baseless and wild allegations against [the] Congress including Sheila Dikshit saying he has "trunk loads" of evi-

# Charting women's trajectory in parliaments globally

As of 2022, in close to 60 countries, the share of women in parliament was 20% or less

## DATA POINT

### The Hindu Data Team

**T**he year 2024 is being hailed as the biggest year for democracy, with 45% of the global population preparing to exercise their voting rights or having already cast their ballots. It thus becomes imperative to assess how women are represented in politics and leadership roles.

Women's representation in political spheres improved in the latter half of the 20th century, with significant progress made in many nations in securing voting rights and parliamentary seats, and in climbing to the highest political offices. However, this has been uneven. And despite substantial gains, women continue to constitute a minority in most parliamentary bodies and are rarely seen in top political leadership positions.

Data compiled by political scientist Svend-Erik Skaaning and colleagues show that until the mid-19th century, universal suffrage was virtually non-existent for both men and women across the world (Chart 1). However, a stark divergence then emerged, as men in certain nations were granted voting rights while women were excluded. New Zealand broke this pattern by extending universal suffrage to women in 1893.

The gap between male and female political participation widened in the early 20th century, despite women gaining suffrage in more countries, as men's voting rights expanded even further. By the onset of World War II, men had the right to vote in one out of three countries, while women did in only one out of six countries.

The gap then rapidly closed when the voting rights discrimination against women ended in many countries, and both women and men gained the right to vote in many others. Chart 1 shows the share of countries where both

men and women have the right to vote, the share of countries where only men have the right to vote, and the share of countries where there is no universal right to vote.

In the early 20th century, women were largely absent from national parliaments, according to data based on the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project. Norway first saw women enter parliament in 1907; nearly 10% of the country's parliamentary seats were occupied by women (Chart 2). By the latter half of the 20th century witnessed a significant surge in the number of women entering parliament. This trend accelerated in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Rwanda's parliamentary composition surpassed the 50% mark for women's representation in 2008, setting a remarkable precedent. In the same year, countries such as Argentina, Cuba, Finland, and Sweden had between 40% and 50% women parliamentarians.

However, despite the progress, women's political representation has been limited and uneven. Women make up about half of all the representatives in only a few countries. As of 2022, in close to 60 countries, the share of women in parliament was 20% or less. And in three countries, there are no women (Chart 3). The chart shows the share of seats in the lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women as of 2022.

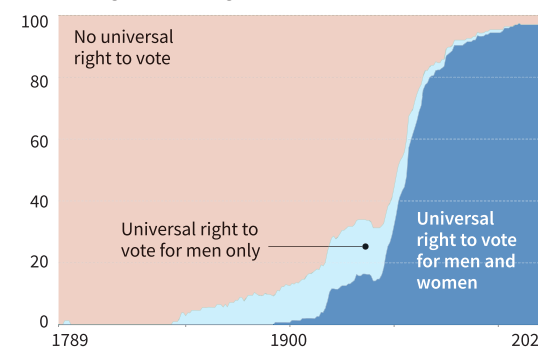
While women's representation in parliament is important, so is their representation in a country's highest political office. Data from V-Dem shows that at any given point in time, almost all political chief executives have been men (Chart 4). Here, the term "chief executive" means the head of state or head of government, depending on who has more power. There has been a slight increase in the share of countries led by women in the last three decades. However, the share of countries where women occupy the post of chief executive is still less than 10%.

## Unequal and uneven representation

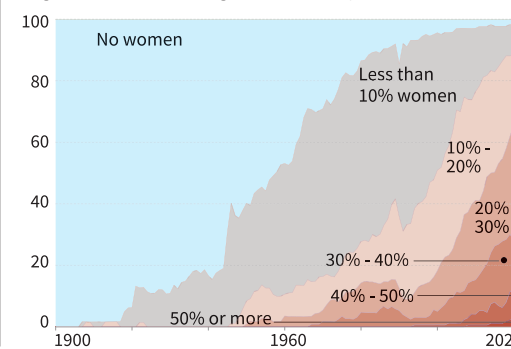
The charts were sourced from Our World in Data's article titled "Women have made major advances in politics — but the world is still far from equal".



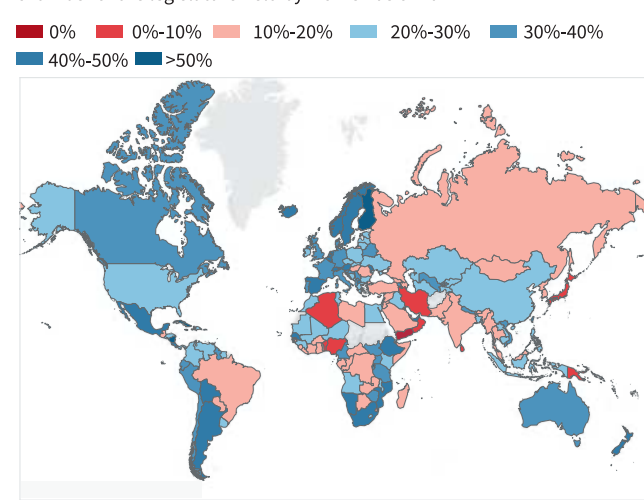
**Chart 1:** The chart shows the share of countries with universal right to vote. Figures in %



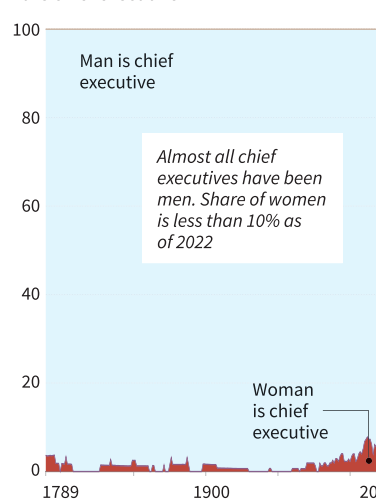
**Chart 2:** The chart shows the share of seats in the lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women over time



**Chart 3:** The chart shows the percentage of seats in the lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women as of 2022



**Chart 4:** Share of countries by gender of the chief executive



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 25, 1974

## Rebel troops' bid to overthrow Amin fails

Kampala, March 24: Rebel troops to-day appeared to have lost a machinegun and mortar battle to overthrow General Idi Amin's military regime. Government information organs remained silent after the fighting ended about dawn, giving rise to speculation that Gen. Amin had fled. But a newsman saw Gen. Amin driving an open, unescorted jeep along Kampala's main street about noon. Several friends were in the jeep with him.

Uganda Radio later broadcast a message said to be from Gen. Amin, asserting that conditions were back to normal. The message blamed the infighting on a false report that an invading force was trying to kill the General and take over the country.

Tanks and armoured cars patrolled Kampala this morning. Most soldiers withdrew to their barracks by mid-afternoon, leaving armed guards of Uganda Radio and the Information Ministry. Groceries were closed and a few civilians were on the streets.

Uganda Radio giving the Government's explanation said military police, members of the Mulire battalion and paratroop students had created "strong points" in Kampala following the false report of an impending invasion.

The broadcast said Gen. Amin spoke to the rebels this morning and told them that the officer who had spread the rumour later shot himself and "the others have run away".

Gen. Amin offered condolences to relatives of soldiers and others killed in the fighting, Uganda Radio said. The radio added that Gen. Amin told the Mulire battalion that if they were dissatisfied with his command, they should kill him or dismiss him, rather than "keep the good people of Kampala up all night running around."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 25, 1924

## Compulsory elementary education

A ladies meeting: A large number of ladies met at Madras Hindu Secondary School Washermanpet on Friday last and passed a resolution in support of the introduction of Free and Compulsory Elementary Education for boys and girls in the city of Madras. Miss Jabaganam B.A. presided at the meeting.



# Text & Context

THE HINDU

**NEWS IN NUMBERS**

**Amount invested by FPIs in equities in March so far**

**38,000** in ₹ crore. FPIs have shown a significant resurgence in their investment activity within the Indian equity markets this month. PTI

**Iran's currency against the dollar as it hits a record low**

**613.5** In hundred thousand. Iran's currency plunged as its people celebrated the Persian New Year. Many Iranians have seen their savings evaporate as the currency has fallen. AP

**Number of firms out of the top 10 that took a valuation hit**

**5** The combined market valuation of five of the 10 most valued firms eroded by ₹1,97,958.56 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the biggest hit amid volatile trends in equities. PTI

**The number of Palestinians dead in Gaza so far**

**32,226** The toll includes at least 84 deaths over the past 24 hours, a statement said, adding that 74,518 people have been wounded in Gaza since the war began. AFP

**Abducted Nigerian school children released from captivity**

**300** Kidnapped Nigerian schoolchildren were released more than two weeks after they were seized from their school in Kaduna. AP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## On the resurgence of mumps in Kerala

Is Kerala the only State witnessing an alarming increase in the number of mumps cases in children and adolescents? Why have there been many school-based outbreaks in the State? Why has the mumps vaccine been excluded from the Universal Immunisation Programme?

**EXPLAINER**

C. Maya

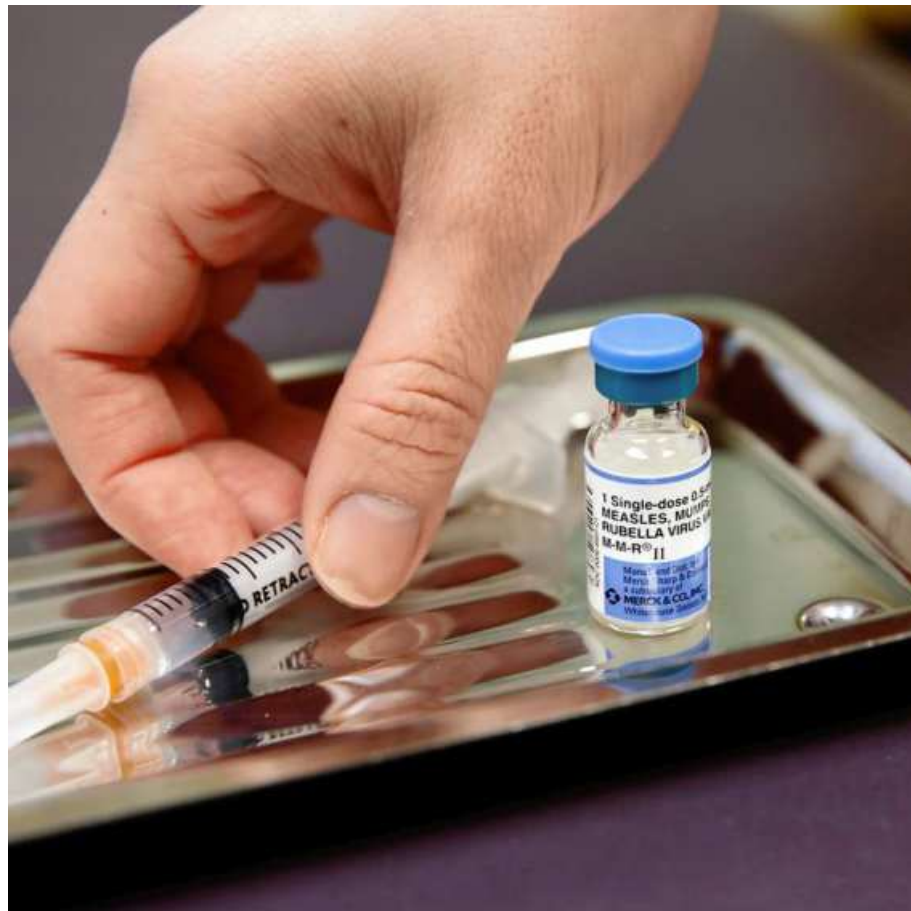
**The story so far:**

**M**umps, an acute viral infection which historically affects children, has been spreading like wildfire in Kerala, for the past few months. Not just Kerala, a resurgence in cases was being reported from several States, including Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as well. Cases which began appearing sporadically around November 2023 in the Malappuram and Kozhikode districts of Kerala, have since then spread to Palakkad and Thrissur too, resulting in major community outbreaks. The case tally this year alone has reached 15,637, as on March 22, with 6,675 cases being reported this month. Such an uncontrolled surge in cases could lead to an increase in the number of complications of mumps, like meningoencephalitis or pancreatitis, public health experts fear.

**Is it a cause for concern?**

Mumps is a self-limiting, airborne viral disease and presents as fever and headache in mostly children and adolescents, with painful swelling of the salivary glands (parotid glands) on both sides of the face. There is no specific treatment and the patient recovers with rest and symptomatic management in about two weeks. With only half of the infected children developing the classical disease and close to 30% remaining asymptomatic, cases mostly go unreported, indicating that the reported cases are a gross underestimation of the actual cases in the community.

From the view point of public health, measles, which can cause significant morbidity and mortality, has always been considered a priority, rather than mumps. However, with cases being reported in epidemic proportions, several cases arising from the complications of mumps like encephalitis, epilepsy, aseptic



**Stop the spread:** A vial of the measles, mumps, and rubella virus (MMR) vaccine. REUTERS

meningitis and acute pancreatitis, have been reported at Kozhikode Medical College hospital. The other significant complication brought forth by mumps is the virus's effect on the gonads (reproductive glands) in both males and females. In males, it presents the rare yet distinct possibility of infertility or a drop in sperm count in the long term.

**Why is the mumps vaccine not part of the national immunisation schedule?**

Despite being a vaccine-preventable disease, mumps has never been a part of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) because of the disease's no-mortality profile and the perception that it has low public health significance.

However, the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) has always maintained that the public health significance of mumps has been underestimated mainly because of the poor documentation of clinical cases, its complications and patients' follow-up data as well as the lack of published studies. There is no nationally representative data on incidence of the disease. There is very little information on the actual long-term morbidity profile of the disease, even though the disease is known to have some impact on reproductive organs.

**How can the current outbreaks be controlled?**

Health officials maintain that creating

public awareness about the disease and the importance of isolation is the most important tool in bringing down the transmission of the disease. Mumps is primarily being reported in un-immunised children and adolescents and hence improving general immunisation cover is important. Transmission of the disease begins before the symptoms actually manifest and isolation of the patient for a full three weeks is necessary to limit the spread of the disease.

Health officials reckon that one of the reasons for the large number of school-based outbreaks in Kerala is because children were allowed back to school as soon as there was symptomatic relief, before the three weeks isolation period was up. They hope that there will be a break in transmission and a drop in new cases once schools close for the summer break.

**What should be the strategy ahead?**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccination strategies targeting mumps control should be closely integrated with existing measles elimination and rubella control.

The IAP for one, has always advocated the use of MMR (Mumps-Measles-Rubella) vaccine in UIP, which has been available in the private sector for a long time. There are no studies from India on the effectiveness of the mumps vaccine. But globally, the protection from two doses is estimated to be between 70-95%, if the coverage is high.

In 2014, Kerala, as part of its own initiative to protect children from Rubella, had replaced the second dose of measles vaccination given at 18 months to infants in UIP, with MMR. However, in 2017, when the Centre introduced Rubella vaccine in the UIP, replacing the two doses of measles given at nine months and 15 months with the MR vaccine (Measles-Rubella), Kerala also followed suit. Kerala has now written to the Centre on the mumps resurgence happening in the State and the need to replace MR vaccine in the UIP with MMR vaccine.

**THE GIST**

Mumps, an acute viral infection which historically affects children, has been spreading like wildfire in Kerala, for the past few months.

Despite being a vaccine-preventable disease, mumps has never been a part of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) because of the disease's no-mortality profile and the perception that it has low public health significance.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccination strategies targeting mumps control should be closely integrated with existing measles elimination and rubella control.

## What are the new rules for elephant transfers?

What were the provisions regarding the ownership and transfer of elephants earlier? Why do experts and activists say that the law with respect to protecting elephants from trafficking has become lax?

Jacob Koshy

**The story so far:**

**T**he Centre has notified a set of rules called the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 that liberalises the conditions under which elephants may be transferred within or between States.

**What are the rules around the transfer and transport of elephants?**

Elephants are, according to the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, a Schedule 1 species and therefore, be it wild or captive, cannot be captured or traded under any circumstances. Section 12 of the Act allows Schedule I animals to be translocated for 'special purposes' such as education and scientific research. They can also be translocated for population management of wildlife without harming any wild animal and collection of

specimens for recognised zoos/museums. Captive elephants because of their historical role in forest management, timber transport, presence in estates of erstwhile royal families and in temple precincts for religious purpose can be owned and therefore come under a special category. However, strict rules guide the transfer of such elephants. Section 40 (2) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 prohibits the acquisition, possession and transfer of a captive elephant without the written permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State. Until 2021, however, these laws explicitly said that such transactions ought not to be of a 'commercial nature'. The Environment Ministry in 2021 brought in an amendment that allowed the transfer of elephants for 'religious or any other purposes'. Such a broad interpretation, activists and researchers said, could accelerate trafficking and illegal commercial transactions. A standing

committee, led by former Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh, opposed this section but it was passed into law.

**What do the updated rules say?**

These rules provide new relaxations under which captive elephants can change owners or be transferred. These include, for instance, situations when an owner is no longer in a position to maintain the elephant or when a state's Chief Wildlife Warden "deems it fit and proper" to transfer the elephant in circumstances which call for better upkeep of the elephant. Before a transfer within the State, an elephant's health has to be ratified by a veterinarian, and the Deputy Conservator of Forests has to establish that the animal's current habitat and prospective habitats are suitable. The Chief Wildlife Warden on receipt of such documents may choose to reject or approve the transfer.

If the transfer involves moving the

elephant outside of a State, similar conditions apply. Before a transfer is effected, the "genetic profile" of the elephant has to be registered with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Earlier rules required that an elephant being transferred from say, Assam to Gujarat would need permissions from the Chief Wildlife Wardens of every State that the elephant would pass through in the process of being ferried by road. Now only the originating and recipient States' permissions are required.

**What do the updates mean?**

The Wildlife Protection Act is essentially a prohibitive law. It puts in a variety of restrictions to curb the trafficking of wild animals. However independent researchers say that with regard to elephants the law has become lax. The establishment of India's largest private zoo in Jamnagar, Gujarat which is affiliated to the Reliance Foundation, has brought some of these questions to the fore. The facility, which is a rescue centre and ostensibly exists to rehabilitate traumatised and injured elephants, among other wildlife, hosts a reported 200 elephants and controversially also hosts "healthy animals," according to a recent journalistic investigation published in the periodical *Himal Southasia*. There are also concerns that some of these elephants aren't captive but sourced from the wild.

**THE GIST**

Elephants are, according to the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, a Schedule 1 species and therefore, be it wild or captive, cannot be captured or traded under any circumstances.

These rules provide new relaxations under which captive elephants can change owners or be transferred.

The Wildlife Protection Act is essentially a prohibitive law. It puts in a variety of restrictions to curb the trafficking of wild animals.



CACHE



GETTY IMAGES

# Digital financial frauds in India: a call for improved investigation strategies

A recent report by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre revealed that digital financial frauds accounted for a staggering ₹1.25 lakh crore over the last three years. Such fraud networks must be recognised as a serious crime and bail may be restricted by the Courts

**Bharat Reddy**

Cybercrime poses a burgeoning threat in India, impacting millions of individuals and organisations. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), cybercrimes in India in 2023 resulted in a staggering loss of ₹66.66 crore, with 4,850 reported cases. A recent report by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) revealed that digital financial frauds accounted for a staggering ₹1.25 lakh crore over the last three years. According to the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), in 2023, at least ₹10,319 crore was reported to be lost by victims of digital financial fraud. The Parliamentary standing committee on Finance in its report on “cyber security and rising incidents of cyber/white collar crimes” mentioned that the domestic fraud as reported by the SE (Supervising Entities) in FY’23 was ₹2537.35 crore. According to the report, the number of complaints received in 2023 alone was 6.94 lakh. Some of the problems faced during investigations are highlighted here with solutions for both prevention and detection of online financial frauds.

**How digital frauds work**

While various names have been given to diverse types of frauds, the general *modus operandi* of a fraudster is any one of the following: (a) convincing the victim to send money, either by impersonation (fake WhatsApp/FB/Insta, social media profiles) or by giving them a false promise of greater return (investment, crypto, held up custom package etc.) (b) by taking credentials such as Unified Payments Interface ID (UPI), Personal Identification Number (PIN), One-Time Password (OTP) or Internet banking ID/password from the victim and then using the same on other apps/websites and transferring money without the knowledge of the victim. For this the customer will either be given a fake link which looks exactly like a UPI

app screen/banking website or the victim will be conned into installing a screen sharing app. The scammers can also convince the victims over phone to give out those details. When these details are used on official banking apps this gives the fraudsters access to even the Fixed Deposits/Recurring Deposits which are also siphoned out in most cases. (c) by taking card details and convincing the victim to share OTP.

**After the scam**

After a fraudster empties a victim’s bank account, the money undergoes a series of circulations in broadly three stages. The first stage is a temporary account into which the fraudsters transfer victims’ money. This account will be used to receive money from various other victims as well. From here, the money is then transferred into a second stage account. The second category of accounts are a group of accounts among which money is circulated. There are a lot of middlemen who are money circulators. Their task is only to receive money from first level bank accounts for a nominal cut. The victim’s money is then split into small parts and then circulated within these accounts, by a person who is sitting in a different corner of the country. After sufficient churning, the money is then transferred into a third stage account which is a sink account. This can be a bank account, an e-wallet etc. Here, the total defrauded amount from a group of victims is re-collected. The money is then withdrawn in a large chunk through conventional methods of either ATMs/cheques or e-wallet cash outlets such as an e-wallet payments bank.

**How can frauds be prevented**

Most frauds can be prevented with some basic technological interventions: As a first, just as how Google accounts do not allow logging in from a new device unless permission is granted by the former, financial institutions must be mandated to replicate this feature in their

apps. As soon as a UPI ID, password or OTP is entered in a different device, an alert must be generated in a previous device with no further action being allowed until it is approved by the person. Secondly, the screen share facility must be disabled. Banking and financial apps must disable screen-sharing to run on top of them. And finally, in the bank statement, all banks/NBFCs/SEs must be mandated to provide comprehensible data. Currently only partly printed numbers are shown which even knowledgeable customers are unable to understand. The transaction description must contain the receiver’s account/mobile or any other identifying number irrespective of it being within the same bank or to an outside bank. One of the biggest hindrances law enforcement agencies face is in following the money trail. The siphoned off money hops across bank accounts and wallets within minutes but supervised entities/banks/NBFCs/wallets are not able to give the required details to agencies with the same speed. Most of the crime is reported after 24 hours of the commission. Due to stress and trauma most victims end up deleting much of the evidence from their devices/phones. By the time a money trail is established the money is already withdrawn from the system and there is no way to either identify the person or recover the money.

**Speeding up information access** Certain basic changes to the form of data provided to enforcement agencies can help in minimising delays: (a) the banks/NBFCs/SEs must be mandated to provide data in a predetermined format with all the terms explained. The data must be given in a CSV or XLSX file. For example, the CDR (Call Data Record) shared to enforcement agencies has a fixed format and fixed file types, such as .CSV or .XLSX. Currently the banks give the statement either in a printed hardcopy or in PDF format. This causes huge inconveniences to the

investigating officers. Most tech-savvy officers are often held back only because they do not get the data in a usable format. (b) The International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) must be recorded. All banking and financial apps must be mandated to save IMEI details of the device being used. Fraudsters use fake mobile numbers and fake bank accounts which span across different States with the goal of adding layers to increase anonymity and preventing agencies from prosecuting them. Thus, the IMEI becomes crucial evidence in determining the device and its location. Recording IMEI will make for stronger evidence in establishing a device and its connection to fraudsters in a court of law.

**The road ahead**

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 which is set to replace the Indian Penal Code of 1861, recognises ‘organised crime’ as a “continuous unlawful activity”. Digital financial frauds are very much covered in this definition. Law enforcement agencies face a lot of difficulties in conducting interstate raids and arrests. It requires a large team and coordinated effort. Interstate digital financial fraud networks must be recognised as a serious crime and bail may be restricted by the Courts. Additionally, digital frauds create a considerable amount of black money when seen from a macro-economic perspective. In conclusion, cybercrime being a subset of crime in general can be dealt like conventional offences, albeit with a different set of tools. Instead of a specialised unit, if the fintech and telecom industries are mandated to take certain preventive steps in their technology and provide data in a manner which enables speedier investigation, the prevention, detection, recovery and conviction will be much more effective. Faster availability of data will make it easier to identify and convict pan-Indian gangs. *The author is an IPS officer, currently posted as Addl DCP, Delhi Police.*



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

## What we need is a stop-gap solution

His hubris led him to think he could solve it on his own. It only made matters worse

**S. Upendran**

**How is the word ‘hubris’ pronounced? (Dr. Jayanth)**

There are different ways of pronouncing this word of Greek origin. A simple way is to make the ‘hu’ in the first syllable rhyme with the words, ‘cue’, ‘due’ and ‘few’, and the ‘i’ in the second, sound like the ‘i’ in ‘knight’, ‘chit’ and ‘bit’. The word can be pronounced ‘HYUU-bris’ with the stress on the first syllable. It comes from the Greek ‘hybris’ meaning arrogance or insolence. Hubris was looked down upon by the Greeks, and in Greek literature, those that had too much of it, were usually punished by the gods. Achilles, Icarus and Odysseus are three examples. You know what they say, ‘pride goes before a fall!’ Nowadays, the word ‘hubris’ is mostly associated with those who have excessive pride and foolish self-confidence – as a result, they behave in an outrageous manner, with little or no regard for the norms followed by all. *The movie mogul’s hubris ultimately led to his downfall.*

*Please be careful. You’re losing a lot of goodwill because of your hubris.*

**What is the meaning and origin of the expression ‘stop-gap’? (Khan Ashraf, Thane District)**

A ‘stop-gap’ solution to a problem is a temporary, and not a permanent solution to an existing problem. You hope to find a better solution, but till such time, you will continue to use the makeshift solution. Another term which is frequently used to refer to such a solution is ‘band-aid solution’.

*The two people we want to hire cannot join till the end of summer. Until then, we need someone as a stop-gap.*

*Till the inverter was fixed, we used the old diesel generator as a stop-gap.*

Stop-gap is the shortened form of the expression ‘stop a gap’; the ‘stop’ in the expression means to plug or close. So, when you ‘stop a gap’ what you are doing is plugging a hole as quickly as possible. You make use of whatever is available to plug or fix the leak.

**What is a female administrator called? (Jyotsana Gulati, Rohtak)**

This is a strange question to ask because, of late, the English language has been trying to become gender neutral. People, for example, have stopped using the suffix ‘ess’ to denote the female gender. Its use is considered rather old fashioned. Native speakers of English prefer to use the word ‘actor’ to refer to both male and female artists. Similarly, the suffix ‘man’ in words like ‘chairman’, ‘spokesman’, etc. has been replaced by ‘person’. The words ‘chairperson’ and ‘spokesperson’ do not really indicate if the individual in question is a male or female. So, to answer your question, most people today would refer to her as the ‘administrator’. *upendrankye@gmail.com*

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

## A quiz on the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi award that has been in the news of late

**V. V. Ramanan**

**QUESTION 1**

Though the Music Academy Sabha was established in 1928 and began its annual music conferences in 1929, in which year did everyone, who had presided till then, get the title of Sangita Kalanidhi?

**QUESTION 2**

If Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer is the youngest male artiste to get the Sangita Kalanidhi, who is the youngest female awardee?

**QUESTION 3**

The award was not bestowed in 1946 and 1967 because of Thyagaraya’s death centenary and bicentenary of his birth respectively. Why was it not given in 1975?

**QUESTION 4**

Before G.J.R. Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, the last sibling pair to get the coveted award was the ‘Bombay Sisters’ in 2010. Name them.

**QUESTION 5**

In 1973, who became the first dance artiste to be honoured with the Sangita Kalanidhi?

**QUESTION 6**

Musicologist Ananthakrishna Sarma was honoured primarily for what pioneering work?

**QUESTION 7**

Name the Carnatic legend who refused to accept the honour when he was first approached by the Academy saying there were other seasoned artistes who should be honoured before him before finally receiving the accolade in 1958.



**Visual question:** Name the Sangita Kalanidhi paying his respects to another Sangita Kalanidhi. FILE PHOTO

**Questions and Answers to the March 22 edition of the daily quiz:**

- The only overseas player to have the Orange Cap thrice. **Ans: David Warner in 2015, 2017 and 2019**
  - The only overseas player to hold the wicket keeping record of five dismissals in an innings. **Ans: Kumar Sangakkara**
  - The only overseas player to have scored a century in an IPL final. **Ans: Shane Watson**
  - This overseas player holds the record for having played the most number of matches for a single franchise. **Ans: Kieron Pollard from Mumbai Indians**
  - The only overseas player to have taken five or more wickets in an innings twice. **Ans: James Faulkner**
  - This player holds the record for having won the most ‘player of the match’ awards. **Ans: AB de Villiers**
  - The overseas player to have figured in the most number of finals. **Ans: Dwayne Bravo**
  - The only overseas player from a non-test playing nation to have been part of the final. **Ans: Ryan ten Doeschate from The Netherlands**
- Visual: Identify this player and the feat he achieved. **Ans: Mustafizur Rahman. He is the only overseas player to win the ‘Emerging Player’ award in 2016. Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Rajmohan. V**

## Word of the day

**Scurrilous:** expressing offensive reproach

**Synonyms:** opprobrious, abusive

**Usage:** *That was a scurrilous attack on his integrity.*

**Pronunciation:** bit.ly/scurrilouspro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /skʌr.jə.ləs/

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



## MONEYWISE

## ASKUS



## Vidya Bala

**Q** I invest only in mutual funds and not equity shares. I buy directly from the AMC's through their websites.

I have three SIPs (systematic investment plans), which are smoothly deducted from my accounts.

I wanted to sell some of the units and I went to the AMC's websites where I bought directly.

When I clicked on the redemption option, in all three AMC's, it says "your mutual fund units are not redeemable here as they are in demat". My queries are:

1) Investors like me want to buy directly from an AMC to save on commission but why are the AMC's not giving a redemption option?

Is it wrong to have converted the units into demat?

2) The NSDL sends monthly statements and has an app called SPEEDE. In this app, too, there is an option to enable redemption, but when you click to activate it asks you to contact the DP.

3) When I contacted DP, the answer is - give redemption form physically.

I feel this is an unwanted hassle. In a way, the investment is online, but redemption doesn't happen online the same way without an intermediary. How to rectify this? Please advise.

DR. HEMAKUMAR

**A** Your hassle is understandable. But unfortunately, you were not aware of the implications of converting MF units into demat. Let us deal with them one by one.

First, it is neither efficient or necessary to hold mutual fund units in demat unless you want to hold your funds and stocks in one place. Since you have stated you do not have shares, you could have kept your mutual funds in a non-demat form.

## Cumbersome exercise

Second, there was no need for you to go to an individual AMC to buy their 'direct' plans. In fact, it is a cumbersome exercise since you need to visit each website for any transaction and keep three logins and so on.

There are now plenty of platforms with good user experience to buy direct plans of MFs.

And, if those do not instill confidence, then there are MF Central (a joint platform by the RTAs) and the mutual fund association MFU (AMFI's MF Utility) platforms to transact online in one place for all your funds.

Third, if you had chosen to demat your units, for whatever reason, you should have made sure you do it with a brokerage platform that offers the facility to buy and redeem direct plan units online.

There are places where you can demat units but not transact online. They serve no purpose in these cases.

The AMC's are right in saying that your units must be sold through the exchange if they are in demat form.

They can process them directly only if it is in a non-demat form.

## Two options

You have two options at this point. One option now is for you to move to an online brokerage platform by transferring the demat units. This is a one-time task and easy to handle.

Else, you can convert these back to physical units. Unlike converting physical units into demat, there's no online process for switching demat units back to physical form (rematerialisation) with the NSDL or the CDSL.

You'll need to visit your Depository Participant (DP) in person and submit a physical request.

Expect to fill out a rematerialisation form specific to the RTA (like CAMS/Karvy) handling your mutual fund house. This process, according to media reports, typically takes two-four weeks to complete.

(The writer is Co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in) ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



**Barometer of performance:** While there may be many parameters for categorising companies, market cap is popular. PTI

## Market capitalisation of stocks and what it means

Market capitalisation is the total value all shareholders have assigned to a firm listed on the stock exchange; it is computed by multiplying the market price of a share with outstanding shares

## VALUING FIRMS

## Joydeep Sen

**Y**ou would be hearing a lot, about the run-up in prices of small and mid-cap equities and the stress test the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) asked Mutual Funds to conduct on small and mid-cap funds. This article will help you make sense of what is happening.

Market capitalisation is the total value all shareholders have assigned to a firm listed on the stock exchange. It is computed by multiplying the market price of a share with outstanding shares.

As an illustration, the market price of MRF Ltd. is about ₹1,40,400, subject to daily fluctuations. This does not mean MRF is the most valuable stock in the country; it is the priciest.

MRF's market capitalisation stood at ₹46,200 crore in December 2023, which had risen in March, along with rise in stock price. The most valuable firm in the market viz. the one with the highest market cap is Reliance Industries.

"The market cap of Reliance was ₹16.4 lakh crore in December, which had risen in March, along with a rise in stock price. This shows the contrast between the firm with the highest market cap and the priciest stock. When the number of shares issued by the firm is relatively on the



You need to look at the allocation to small- and mid-caps in your portfolio and re-evaluate, in light of the current stretched valuation levels

lower side, the value tends to get distributed, pushing up the stock price.

## Relevance of concept

While there may be many parameters for categorising firms, market cap is popular. As the size of a business grows, the market assigns a higher value. That is referred to as large cap in the market. When the size of a business is small, only a limited number of stockholders are interested in it and the value is relatively lower. That is referred to as small-cap stock. In between, there are mid-cap stocks. Now the question is, what is the definition of large- or small-cap stocks. Equity analysts/fund managers have estimates and assume a number, beyond which the company is classified as a large-cap or mid-cap.

For categorisation, there is a definition from SEBI that is applicable to mutual funds but can be taken as a proxy for the entire market. The definition counts the top 100 listed stocks, as per market cap, as large-cap stocks.

The next 150 i.e. from stock number 101 to 250,



consultation with your advisor/mutual fund distributor would be useful; do-it-yourself (DIY) investors would have to gauge it for themselves

are categorised as mid-cap. Beyond this, all stocks are classified as small-cap.

To give you a perspective, the stock ranking number 100 (border line of large- and mid-cap) as on December 2023 had a market cap of ₹67,000 crore. The one ranking 250 (border line of mid- and small-cap) had a market cap of ₹22,000 crore.

As per market terminology, there is another category viz. micro-cap. Firms that are small and vulnerable, which can be gauged from the relatively lower value assigned by the market, are referred to as micro. The implication is large-cap stocks are well discovered by market participants, the business is stable, upside scope i.e. market price moving up is there, but only so much, as the business is already tracked by a large section of the market.

## Higher risk

On the other hand, in small-cap stocks, the potential for the firm to grow and along with it, the stock price, is relatively higher. However, the risk is also higher as the firm is yet to

gather critical mass and the vulnerability to business failure is relatively higher. Stock-market performance shows over a long period of time, small-cap funds offered by the Mutual Fund industry has delivered returns higher than large-cap funds. However, the volatility, as measured by the standard deviation of the returns, is higher in small-cap funds.

The implication is you should have some allocation for small-cap stocks/funds in your portfolio.

However, it should not be a major allocation of equity component of the portfolio. Over the last one year, small-cap stocks performed significantly better. While this is good for investors, volatility risk is even higher now at these levels.

At this juncture, SEBI asked mutual funds to hold stress tests on small- and mid-cap funds. MFs declared how many days it would take them, if need be, to liquidate 25% and 50% of the portfolio.

You need not take any action based on this - the fund that would take a longer time to liquidate is not necessarily that bad.

You need to look at the allocation to small- and mid-caps in your portfolio and re-evaluate, in light of the current stretched valuation levels. Consultation with your advisor/MF distributor would be useful. DIY investors would have to gauge it for themselves.

(The writer is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

## Turn a new page in FY24-25

## COVERNOTE

Now that 2023-24 and its investment logistics are behind us, get going with the following, right at the beginning of a fresh new year

## K. Nitya Kalyani

Now that you have invested, saved and paid your taxes, let's see how you start early for the next financial year.

It's a good practice to invest the maximum in your Public Provident Fund (PPF) in one shot on the first bank working day of April.

## Icing on the cake

This way, the investment earns interest for the entire year. It gives about the best returns among tax-saving instruments and compound interest is the icing on the cake.

But the real advantage in this is to peg the investment target date so that you are prepared ahead of time. If you are starting a new investment, say a life insurance policy, let the renewal be on your birthday or that of one of your family members.

Or on the wedding day. Hard to forget (for your own good!) and a clear date to plan for.

Going back to the previous instalment of CoverNote on how to cross over to the new regime, you have to start thinking of all such investments on their own merits.

Life insurance, health insurance, ELSS, tax-saving fixed deposits or the palette of small-savings schemes, each has its relative position in the returns matrix, and viewing them for what they are minus the tax saving is important.

## One-time commitment

Remember to start considering them as one-time vs. repetitive commitments.

You can buy fresh national savings certificates for the next few years and stop and walk away if the tax-break is withdrawn. But if you commit now to a life policy with long-term premium payments, you will not get tax breaks when the system changes and this is a commitment you can't abandon!

The life policy is valuable IF you have thought it through for what it offers.

Or, you could have bought a single premium policy. Or, maybe some other investment entirely. It's like committing to a recurring deposit thinking it's a fixed deposit.

Health insurance is also going to lose its tax benefits. It is costly today, and is getting costlier and the loss of the tax-break will be a difficult blow to take.

On the flip side, Section 80 also offers tax breaks on donations to specified charities. If 80G goes, please don't withhold future donations. There are always those who need a helping hand and causes that need to be upheld.

In the reckoning of a life well lived, what you give away is what you truly keep in your credit.

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

## Personal Loans

Rates and Charges	Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
<b>Name of Lender</b>	<b>Interest Rate (%)</b>	<b>EMI (Rs)</b>	<b>Processing fee</b>
HDFC Bank	10.50 onwards	10,747 onwards	2,149 onwards
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards
State Bank of India	11.15-15.30	10,909-11,974	2,182-2,395
ICICI Bank	10.80 onwards	10,821 onwards	2,164 onwards
Bank of Baroda	11.05-18.75	10,884-12,902	2,177-2,580
Axis Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards
Bank of India	10.75-14.75	10,809-11,829	2,162-2,366
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453
Punjab National Bank	10.40-17.95	10,772-12,683	2,144-2,537
HSBC Bank	9.99-16.00	10,621-12,159	2,124-2,432
Federal Bank	11.49 onwards	10,994 onwards	2,199 onwards
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403
Bajaj Finserv	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards
Punjab & Sind Bank	10.75-13.50	10,809-11,505	2,162-2,301
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268
IDFC First Bank	10.75 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265
Karnataka Bank	13.43	11,487	2,297
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards

## Car Loans

Rates and Charges	Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
<b>Name of Lender</b>	<b>Interest Rate (%)</b>	<b>EMI (Rs)</b>
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.45	10,307 - 10,735
Punjab National Bank	8.75 - 10.60	10,319 - 10,772
Bank of Baroda	8.75 - 12.10	10,319 - 11,148
Canara Bank	8.70 - 12.70	10,307 - 11,300
UCO Bank	8.45 - 10.55	10,246 - 10,759
State Bank of India	8.75 - 9.80	10,319 - 10,554
IDBI Bank	8.80 - 9.60	10,331 - 10,525
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.70 - 13.00	10,307 - 11,377
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.85 - 12.00	10,343 - 11,122
ICICI Bank	9.00 onwards	10,379 onwards
HDFC Bank	9.20 onwards	10,428 onwards
Karnataka Bank	8.88 - 11.36	10,350 - 10,961
Federal Bank	8.85 onwards	10,343 onwards
Punjab and Sind Bank***	8.85 - 10.25	10,343 - 10,685
South Indian Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards
City Union Bank	14.45 - 14.95	11,751 - 11,882

\*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders  
\*\*0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 750 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.20% to borrowers for financing Electric 4 Wheelers. 0.20% concession to existing Housing Loan Borrowers  
\*\*\*Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam  
Rates and charges as on March 20  
Source: Paisabazaar.com



## Alt-financing promises to leave none behind



**Trend setter:** With tools such as AI, alternative financing mirrors the dynamic nature of its user base. REUTERS

**Bhavik Vasa**

Backed by the extraordinary growth of India Stack and platforms such as Unified Payment Interface (UPI), India is well-positioned to enable more small businesses to access formal financial services. Today, Indian start-ups are grappling with inflationary pressures and diminishing profit margins. That said, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) struggle from a lack of access to affordable financing.

Financing products and approval rates look very different today from a decade ago.

Alternative financing, cash flow-based financing, revenue-based financing, invoice financing, recurring-revenue financing, and other modern solutions offer start-ups an unprecedented degree of access, flexibility, transparency, and speed needed to thrive in today's dynamic landscape.

Leveraging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), alternative financing mirrors the innovative, flexible, and dynamic nature of its emerging user base – namely asset-light and digital-first. Initiatives like the Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN) are further instrumental in streamlining lending and borrowing processes.

Fintech lenders in India have shifted towards a personalised approach to underwriting. They incorporate segment-specific policies that leverage alternative data sources to take advantage of the unique market opportunities across diverse sectors.

(The writer is co-founder and CEO of Getvantage)

# Jindal expands canvas with electric vehicles and paint ambitions

JSW Group chairman Sajjan Jindal wants to recreate a Maruti moment in EVs and scale up the Group's fledgling paints business; but the entry of a commodity company like JSW into the consumer-focused automotive and paints segments already dominated by large players has puzzled many

**NEWS ANALYSIS**

**Suresh Ivengar**

For JSW Group's Chairman, Sajjan Jindal, making cars has been a childhood passion. "I built my first car in a garage when I was 12 years old. It was a small car and I used to go around it in our factory in Hisar, Haryana," says the 63-year-old industrialist. However, Jindal's passion took a back seat as he decided to join the family business of making steel.

But 52 years later, after building the world's seventh-largest steel company, excluding China, Mr. Jindal is now making his automotive dream a reality. Last week, the JSW group outlined its strategy to corner a 33% market share in the electric vehicle segment through a joint venture with China's SAIC Motor, the owner of MG Motors.

"This idea of making cars in India by the JSW Group always remained in my head and during 2015-16 when the new technology for electric vehicles came in, I thought that this is an opportunity to enter this business," he said.

To start with, JSW Group, along with other investors, MG Motor India dealers and employees will invest ₹5,000 crore for a 51% stake in JSW MG Motor



**Broad bet:** JSW is not only looking to manufacture vehicles but also ensure presence across the entire EV ecosystem, including batteries and components, to bring down cost and widen adoption. REUTERS

India while the remaining 49% will be held by Chinese state-owned SAIC Motor. The joint venture plans to roll out a new model every three to six months. "We are all set to recreate a Maruti moment. I recall in 1984 when Maruti first launched its vehicle there was so much excitement and everybody wanted to own one. Today, they have 50% market share," he said.

### A large canvas

Auto is not the only market where Jindal is looking to disrupt. Mr. Jindal is eyeing multiple new areas of growth including a significant play in the ₹70,000 crore paints industry, and EV battery manufacturing to capitalise on the boom-



In 1984, when Maruti first launched its vehicle there was so much excitement. Today, they have a 50% market share

**SAJJAN JINDAL**, Chairman, JSW Group

ing electric vehicle segment.

In the paints segment, JSW is eyeing a capex of ₹750-1,000 crore over the next 2-3 years as it looks to up production capacities by 2 lakh kilo litres (kl) per annum and a plan to corner a market share of 8-10% over the next three years. JSW Paints, the Group's latest venture, is on course to cross revenue

of ₹2,000 crore and will break even at the EBITDA level by the end of this fiscal.

Launched in 2019, the company has recorded a revenue of ₹1,616 crore in FY23. It has achieved a market scale and coverage of over 60% in paint-selling towns and increased its retailer network by adding more than 2,000 retailers every year.

However, it is the entry of a commodity company like JSW Group into the consumer-focused automotive and paints segment that has puzzled many. Both these markets already have large players dominating the consumer mind space. In the auto space, for example, Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra

have taken considerable lead in the EV segment. Similarly, in the paints business, there are players like Asian Paints and Berger Paints that dominate the market.

### Banking on headroom

But this does not worry JSW group. "As they always say, good things take time to start," Mr. Jindal said. His confidence comes from the fact that these markets have a huge headroom for growth. According to experts, the paint segment grows at 1.5 times the GDP growth. This provides enough scope for new market entrants to establish their presence without necessarily impacting the current pecking order.

In the electric vehicle space, the adoption in India has been slow due to high cost, lack of proper charging infrastructure and after sales services. Starting on a clean slate, JSW Group has the advantage of adopting the latest technology.

Mr. Jindal ties his passion to build cars to the national cause of reducing the import bill. "I believe electric vehicle is the only answer to cut our import bill on oil. We produce our own energy as we have enough sunlight and wind to produce renewable energy to charge the batteries in the cars," he says.

JSW is not only looking to manufacture vehicles

but also ensure presence across the entire ecosystem of EVs including batteries and components to bring down cost and widen its adoption.

But how will JSW deal with issues like the lack of charging infrastructure? Mr. Jindal cites the example of how public calling offices (PCOs) made telephones accessible to the masses before mobile phones came in. "Every shopkeeper used to hang a telephone outside his shop for people to make calls. Similar solutions will emerge for charging electric cars," Mr. Jindal said adding that his group company JSW Energy will also be partnering with a few start-ups to put up charging stations at major locations.

"We believe in scale and are going to churn the whole industry and create some sort of a disruption in the industry," he said.

When Maruti drove into India 40 years ago it changed the auto industry and brought in very efficient lightweight cars. The Ambassadors and the Fiats went into oblivion, he said. "I believe with MG we can recreate the same moment in the new energy vehicle space. That is why JSW, a commodity player with presence in steel, cement and energy, has come into this B2C consumer product," he explains.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

## Flavours of Easter



**'Bitter' chocolate:** Chocolate Easter candy is displayed on a shelf at a Target store in Novato, California. Cocoa futures prices have more than doubled since the beginning of the year and hit a record high of \$8,940 per tonne today. The spike in price is due to a shortage of cocoa and will likely result in higher prices for chocolate products ahead of the Easter holiday. AFP

## 'Repair, don't junk payments banks'

**Hamsini Karthik**

Payments banks have, unfortunately, received little support from the banking fraternity since their inception in 2014. Many experts rushed to brand the idea a failure even before it could take off. Most payments banks eventually took at least 5-6 years to generate net profit.

The Paytm Payments Bank saga has deepened the mistrust.

But what most fail to see is that the concept was probably much ahead of its time. It wasn't fleshed out enough to run the long race. What's more, when payments bank was conceived as an idea, digital payments were nowhere near as popular as they are today.

Few could appreciate the float money opportuni-

### Bunching all payments-related licences under the payments bank umbrella can help streamline business

ty involved and the possibility of payments feeding into the mainstream current account business. Revenue streams and opportunities were mapped very differently a decade ago as compared to today.

### Regulated business

Also, in the last 3-4 years, payments as a regulated business has evolved at a mind boggling pace. While licences have long been in existence in the payments space – whether as payment gateways, aggregators, third-party application providers and so on –

their strict enforcement is a recent phenomenon.

Meanwhile, there are fintechs claiming to offer banking as a service (BaaS), replicating the role of payments banks but without a licence. Ironically, among investors these businesses are garnering eye-popping valuations, even as the payments bank model is hastily being dumped as a failure.

Perhaps a new thought process is needed to infuse fresh life into payments banks. Irrespective of the form factor, payments is the next big opportunity in the banking industry. If pursued well, it can lead to profitability on the lines of the lending business.

Instead of having fragmented licensing models, bunching all payments-related licences under the umbrella of payments

bank can help streamline the business. Each bank can choose the segments it wants to operate in. Given that existing payments banks are lobbying for small-ticket lending opportunities to deploy deposits, it begs the question whether every payments bank should be accepting deposits.

After all, when some non-banking financial companies can accept deposits while others cannot, why not use the same yard stick in the payments space as well? No bank licensing category has been shuttered down so far in India; payments bank as a category may also continue to exist. Then why not attempt a refresh and upgrade one last time, before deeming it a failure.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

# It's time organisations set up WATCH to check workplace abuse

**Kamal Karanth**

The sudden demise of a senior journalist recently and the reported connection to the repeated abuse he seemed to have suffered from his boss refreshed my memories about the abuses senior leaders suffer and inflict on others.

A VP at a bank had once told me about how he often got shouted at by his CMO. When I asked him why he was still working there, he said his ESOPs were like gold cuffs, and he got a handsome bonus the year before. A year after the chat, he is still there.

### EuStress

I am sure you have heard, experienced, or unknowingly supported workplace bullying, abuse, or toxicity.

Some of us deliberately use phrases like "let's apply pressure and see" on colleagues who aren't performing.

Austrian-born Endocrinologist and the author of the book *The Stress of Life*, Hans Selye coined the term "eustress" or good stress. He argued that there could be some benefits due to Eustress until it reaches a certain level when it becomes distress.

For example, we tend to believe sales roles perform better under pressure. A few industries like Consulting, Media and BFSI are known for the duress the employees go through.

Add contexts like month, quarter and year-ends and the triggers for negative stress on many roles in revenue and TRP-



**Unhealthy sign:** Being abusive has the largest negative impact on how employees rate their company's culture. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

driven industries get compounded. It's everywhere. A study of 1,071 Indian IT professionals published in the *Indian Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine* found that 35% were classified as having

poor quality of life in the psychological domain.

### Silent spectators

We once called over a manager who was shouted at and asked to leave a team meeting by his boss, who

had a reputation for losing his temper frequently. The manager completely denied that such a thing had even happened, whereas two colleagues had reported the same incident the previous day. When we went back to those colleagues about the manager's denial, they explained the inaction of management in the past and the leader's top performing track record context. That day I started to believe in Stockholm syndrome wherein victims sympathise with their abusers and even feel they "deserve" it.

### Legislation works

Countries with workplace anti-bullying laws, like Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, and France, have single-digit rates of

employees reporting workplace bullying than countries that don't have laws, like the United States, South Africa, Canada and Russia, which are in the range of 30-60%. Would a Workplace Abuse & Toxicity Check (WATCH) legislation help India, which has started to realise a significant proportion of its GDP from the services sectors?

### Toxic attributes

Out of 118 Indian unicorns, 94 have a Glassdoor rating of less than 4. If you look at Fortune Great Places to Work Global Best 100, only 49% have a rating of more than 4. If you are a little more curious or desperate, you might dive deep into the leadership or culture comments. MIT Sloan Management Review did

exactly that. After studying 1.3 million Glassdoor reviews, it focused on the negative comments, used text analytics to measure 128 topics, and grouped them into five toxic attributes. They stated that being disrespectful, non-inclusive, unethical, cut-throat, and abusive has by far the largest negative impact on how employees rate their company's culture in Glassdoor reviews.

### The manifestation

Language, volume, and meeting participation are three key indicators of a team or organisation's leadership culture. The WFH world has given us a good glimpse into many enterprises, town halls, and meetings. The higher volume, single voice partici-

pation and the cuss words were indicative of the disrespectful, non-inclusive, and abusive world of some of the organisations our family and friends work for.

### Matter of heart

One of the oldest medical journals, *Lancet*, published a study by Mika Kivimaki that said a combination of high psychological demands combined with little control of decision-making leads to physiological strain. They followed up for a mean of 13.9 years and concluded that job strain increased the risk of mortality.

It's time organisations introduced WATCH if we want to curb this malaise.

(Kamal Karanth is the co-founder of Xpheno, a specialist staffing company)



## DAKAR

## Senegal votes in a tightly contested presidential race after major unrest



Voting opened in Senegal on Sunday in a delayed presidential election taking place against a turbulent political backdrop that has triggered violent anti-government protests and boosted support for the Opposition. There are 19 contenders vying to replace President Macky Sall, who is stepping down after a second term. **REUTERS**

## ABUJA

## 137 schoolchildren in Nigeria's north freed after weeks in captivity



At least 137 of nearly 300 Nigerian children abducted more than two weeks ago from their school in the northwestern state of Kaduna in Nigeria were released on Sunday, the nation's military said. Gunmen had invaded the Kuriga school on March 7 and marched the children into the forests before security forces could arrive. **AP**

## MOGADISHU

## 16 arrested for attack on hotel in Somalia capital Mogadishu



Somalia's intelligence agency said 16 suspects had been arrested over a deadly attack on a popular hotel in the capital Mogadishu 10 days ago. Three people were killed after Al-Shabaab jihadists stormed the SYL hotel near the highly fortified presidential palace compound on March 14, leading to a siege of over 13 hours. **AFP**

## ATHLONE

## Simon Harris set to be Ireland PM after appointed party leader



Ireland is poised to get its youngest-ever premier next month after 37-year-old Simon Harris secured the leadership of the Fine Gael party on Sunday, replacing Leo Varadkar who announced his surprise resignation last week. Mr. Harris is expected to be formally elected premier in the Irish Parliament in early April. **AP**

## Poland scrambles F-16s amid Russia's air strikes on Ukraine

Warsaw demands an explanation from Moscow after a Russian missile entered its air space; Polish Defence Minister Kosiniak-Kamysz says he is monitoring the ongoing attack on Ukraine

**Associated Press**  
KYIV

Poland demanded an explanation from Russia on Sunday after one of its missiles strayed briefly into Polish airspace during a massive missile attack on Ukraine, prompting the NATO member to activate F-16 fighter jets.

The incident came as Russia launched its third massive missile attack on Ukraine in the past four days, and the second to target the capital of Kyiv.

The head of Kyiv's military administration, Serhiy Popko, said Russia used cruise missiles launched from Tu-95MS strategic bombers. An air alert in the capital lasted for more than two hours as rockets



Police officers inspect a part of a Russian Kh-55 cruise missile, intercepted during a missile strike, in Kyiv on Sunday. **REUTERS**

entered Kyiv in groups from the north. He said the attacks were launched from the Engels district in the Saratov region of Russia. According to preliminary data, there were no casualties or damage in the capital, he said.

Armed Forces Operational Command of Po-

land, a member of NATO, said in a statement that there was a violation of Polish airspace at 4.23 a.m. (0323GMT) by one of the cruise missiles launched by Russia against towns in western Ukraine.

The object entered near Oserdów, a village in an agricultural region near

the border with Ukraine, and stayed there for 39 seconds, the statement said.

## Situation monitored

Poland's Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz later told presspersons in a televised news conference that the Russian missile would have been shot down had there been any indication that it was heading towards a target in Poland.

He said that Polish authorities monitored the attack on Ukraine and was in contact with Ukrainian counterparts. Polish and NATO F-16s were activated as part of the strategic response.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, there have been a number of intrusions into Polish airspace.

## Ukraine says it struck two Russian ships near Crimea

**Reuters**  
KYIV

The Ukrainian military said it hit two large Russian landing ships in attacks on the annexed Crimean peninsula early on Sunday, as well as a communications centre and other infrastructure used by the Russian Navy in the Black Sea. The statement did not say how it hit the targets, but a Moscow-installed official in the region reported a major Ukrainian air attack and said air defences had shot down more than 10 missiles over the Crimean port of Sevastopol.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russian-installed governor of Sevastopol, said on the Telegram messaging app that transport infrastructure including passenger boats and buses were partially damaged in the overnight attacks.

## Israel besieges hospitals in Gaza, demands evacuations

**Reuters**  
CAIRO

Israeli forces besieged two more Gaza hospitals on Sunday, pinning down medical teams under heavy gunfire, the Palestinian Red Crescent said, and Israel said it had captured 480 militants in continued clashes at Gaza's main Al Shifa hospital.

Israeli forces say hospitals in the Palestinian enclave where war has been raging for over five months have frequently been used as strongholds of Hamas militants harbouring bases and weapons. Hamas and medical staff deny this.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said one of its staff was killed when Israeli tanks suddenly pushed back into areas around Al-Amal and Nasser hospitals in the southern city of Khan Younis, amid heavy bombardment and gunfire. Israeli armoured forces



Palestinians check the rubble of a building destroyed in Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. **GETTY IMAGES**

sealed off Al-Amal Hospital and carried out extensive bulldozing operations in its vicinity, the Red Crescent said in a statement, adding: "All of our teams are in extreme danger at the moment and are completely immobilised."

It said Israeli forces were now demanding the complete evacuation of staff, patients and displaced people from Al-Amal's premises and were firing smoke bombs into the area to try to force out

its occupants.

A displaced Palestinian was killed inside the hospital compound after being hit in the head by Israeli fire, the Red Crescent said in an update later in the day.

The Israeli military said its forces were hitting "infrastructure" in Khan Younis used as lairs for numerous militants. Hamas denies using hospitals for military ends and accuses Israel of war crimes against civilian targets.

## Chad junta's main opponents barred from presidential vote

**Agence France-Presse**  
N'DJAMENA

Authorities in Chad said on Sunday they had barred 10 candidates, including two fierce opponents of the military regime, from standing in the presidential election on May 6.

The constitutional court said the candidates' applications – namely those of outspoken opponents Nassour Ibrahim Neguy Koursami and Rakhis Ahmat Saleh – had been rejected because they included "irregularities".

Ten other candidates remain in the race – most prominently the current junta leader Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno and his Prime Minister Succes Masra, a former opponent whose participation has been denounced by the Opposition as a front for plurality.

## The Opposition accuses the junta of putting up a front of plurality and a democratic poll

"It is a candidacy under the pretext that we need other candidates against Deby to say that there is a democratic game," agreed political scientist Kelma Manatouma of the University of N'Djamena.

## Change of stance

General Deby Itno was proclaimed President by a junta of 15 generals in 2021 following the death of his father Idriss Deby Itno, who had ruled the Sahel country with an iron fist for more than three decades.

The new President promised to hand power back to a civilian government

within 18 months and told the African Union he would not stand for election as President. But he then extended the transition period by two more years and on March 2 officially announced he would run for the top office.

Mr. Masra, a former opposition leader, signed a reconciliation deal with the junta leader earlier this year.

The Opposition says his candidacy is a ploy to give a veneer of pluralism to an election that Mr. Deby Itno is certain to win, since his main rivals are dead or in exile.

The constitutional council also announced it was opening a preliminary investigation for alleged forgery and use of forged documents against Mr. Koursami over suspicions with papers in support of his candidacy.

## Traumatic date



Hundreds hold a banner with portraits of nearly 30,000 people who were killed or forcibly disappeared during the military dictatorship (1976-1983), upon arrival at Plaza de Mayo Square to commemorate the 48th anniversary of the coup in Buenos Aires, on Sunday. **AFP**

## Ecuador's youngest mayor found shot to death

**Reuters**  
QUITO

Ecuador's youngest mayor, Brigitte Garcia, and an adviser were found shot dead in a car early on Sunday, said police in the South American country, which is in the grips of a wave of violence that authorities blame on drug trafficking.

National police said they were investigating the deaths of Garcia, the 27-year-old mayor of San Vicente, and Jairo Loo, after the discovery of their bodies in the province of Manabi. Both suffered gunshot wounds, police said in a statement.

Garcia is the latest political figure in the country to be killed following the assassination of presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio last August.

## Sirisena to be quizzed over Easter bombings

**Press Trust of India**  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's former President Maithripala Sirisena will face police questioning on Monday on his recent remarks on the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings that he was "aware" of the masterminds of the attacks that killed 270 people, including 11 Indians.

Mr. Sirisena, 72, was President between 2015 January and 2019 November. He had previously denied any knowledge of the attacks.

Police chief Deshabandu Tennakoon told reporters on Sunday that Mr. Sirisena's statement would be recorded on Monday.

Speaking in the central town of Kandy on Wednesday, Mr. Sirisena said he was aware of the masterminds of the attacks.

On April 21, 2019, nine suicide bombers belonging to the local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka.

## U.S., Israel intel chiefs leave Qatar after talks on Gaza truce and hostage release

**Agence France-Presse**  
DOHA

U.S. intelligence chief Bill Burns and his Israeli counterpart David Barnea left Qatar late on Saturday following talks on a Gaza truce and hostage release deal, a source briefed on the talks said.

The CIA and Mossad chiefs "departed Doha to brief their respective teams back home on the latest round" of talks, the source said on condition of anonymity because of the

sensitivity of the discussions.

"The talks focused on details and a ratio for the exchange of hostages and prisoners", the knowledgeable source added, explaining that "technical teams remain in Doha".

U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators have been engaged in weeks of behind-the-scenes talks in efforts to secure a second truce in the war between Israel and Hamas, and the release of captives in exchange for Palestinian pri-

## U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators have been engaged in weeks of talks to secure a truce

soners being held in Israeli jails.

Israel had said on Friday that the head of its spy agency was to return to Doha for his second trip in a week after talks were restarted following failed efforts to secure a truce before the Muslim holy

month of Ramzan, which began last week.

The war began when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack from Gaza that left about 1,160 dead in Israel, mostly civilians.

Israel's military has waged a retaliatory offensive against Hamas that has killed 32,226 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Palestinian militants seized about 250 Israeli and foreign hostages during the October 7 attack on Israel but close to 130 still remain in Gaza.

## U.S. forces engage six Houthi drones

**Reuters**

U.S. forces engaged six Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over the southern Red Sea after the group launched four anti-ship ballistic missiles toward a Chinese-owned oil tanker, the U.S. Central Command said on Saturday. Iranian-backed Houthi launched the missiles in the vicinity of M/V Huang Pu, a Chinese-owned oil tanker, the Central Command said in a post on X.

A fifth missile was fired toward the oil tanker,

## Houthis launched the missiles near a Chinese-owned oil tanker

which issued a distress call, the Central Command said, adding that no casualties were reported in the incident and a fire on board was extinguished.

U.S. forces then engaged six UAVs, five of which crashed into the Red Sea, and one flew inland into Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, the CentCom said.





**Swiped off:** Rubble of houses destroyed by landslips following heavy rains in Petropolis, Brazil, on Saturday. AFP

## Rescue efforts on as rain and storms kill 20 in Brazil

**Agence France-Presse**  
PETRÓPOLIS

Rescuers in boats and aircraft raced against the clock on Sunday to help isolated people in Brazil's mountainous southeast after storms and heavy rains killed at least 20 people.

With more rain predicted on Sunday, the deluge pounded the States of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo, where authorities described a chaotic situation due to flooding. The death toll rose there from four to 12 on Sunday as rescuers advanced.

The most affected municipality is Mimoso do Sul, a town of almost 25,000 inhabitants located in the south of Espírito Santo, where at least 10 people died in floods, though officials fear the toll may yet rise. State Governor Renato Casagrande described the situation as "chaotic," saying that so far it has not been possible to assess the damage in some of the more isolated areas, with fears the toll could yet rise. Search teams rescued a girl buried for more than 16 hours in the city of Petropolis. Her father, who was found dead next to her on Saturday, had "heroically protected the girl with his body," a neighbour said.

The deluge came as Brazil, South America's largest country, suffers through a recent string of extreme weather events, which experts say are more likely to occur due to climate change.

Such tragedies "are intensifying with climate change," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said in a post on X, adding that thousands had been left homeless by the storm. He expressed sympathy for the victims, and said his government was working with state and local authorities to "protect, prevent and repair flood damage."

# As Russians mourn concert attack, relatives wait for word of their kin

With rescuers continuing to search the damaged concert hall for survivors a day after the deadliest attack on Russian soil in years, cultural events were cancelled, flags were lowered to half-staff and television entertainment were suspended as the country observed a day of national mourning

**Associated Press**  
MOSCOW

**F**amily and friends of those still missing after an attack that killed more than 130 people at a suburban Moscow concert hall waited for news of their loved ones as Russia observed a day of national mourning on Sunday.

Events at cultural institutions were canceled, flags were lowered to half-staff and television entertainment and advertising were suspended, according to state news agency RIA Novosti. A steady stream of people brought flowers to a makeshift memorial near the burnt-out concert hall.

"People came to a concert, some people came to relax with their families, and any one of us could have been in that situation. And I want to express my condolences to all the families that were affected here and I want to pay tribute to these people," Andrei Kondakov, one of the mourners who came to lay flowers at the memorial, said.

"It is a tragedy that has affected our entire country," kindergarten employee Marina Korshunova said. "It just doesn't even make sense that small children were affected by this event." Three children were among the dead.

The attack, which has been claimed by an affiliate



**Holding close:** People lay flowers at a makeshift memorial in front of Crocus City Hall in Krasnogorsk, Russia, on Sunday after a massacre that killed more than 130 people. AFP

of the Islamic State (IS) group, is the deadliest on Russian soil in years.

As rescuers continue to search the damaged building, some families still don't know if relatives who went to the event targeted by gunmen on Friday are alive.

### 'No response'

Igor Pogadaev was desperately seeking any details of his wife's whereabouts after she went to the concert and stopped responding to his messages.

He hasn't seen a message from Yana Pogadaeva since she sent her husband two photos from the Crocus City Hall music venue.

After Mr. Pogadaev saw the reports of gunmen opening fire on concertgoers, he rushed to the

site, but couldn't find her in the numerous ambulances or among the hundreds of people who had made their way out of the venue. "I went around, searched, I asked everyone, I showed photographs. No one saw anything, no one could say anything," Mr. Pogadaev said in a video message.

He watched flames bursting out of the building as he made frantic calls to a hotline for relatives of the victims, but received no information.

As the death toll mounted on Saturday, Mr. Pogadaev scoured hospitals in the Russian capital and the Moscow region, looking for information on newly admitted patients.

But his wife wasn't among the 154 reported in-

jured, nor on the list of 50 victims authorities have already identified, he said.

The Moscow Region's Emergency Situations Ministry posted a video on Sunday showing equipment dismantling the damaged music venue to give rescuers access.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir Putin appears to be trying to tie Ukraine to the attack, something its government firmly denies.

Russian media broadcast videos that apparently showed the detention and interrogation of the suspects, including one who told the cameras he was approached by an unidentified assistant to an Islamic preacher via a messaging app and paid to take part in the raid.

Kyiv strongly denied any

involvement, and IS's Afghanistan affiliate claimed responsibility.

IS, which fought against Russia during its intervention in the Syrian civil war, has long targeted Russia. In a statement posted by the group's Aamaq news agency, the IS Afghanistan affiliate said that it had attacked a large gathering of "Christians" in Krasnogorsk.

The group issued a new statement on Saturday on Aamaq, saying the attack was carried out by four men who used automatic rifles, a pistol, knives and firebombs. It said the assailants fired at the crowd and used knives to kill some concertgoers, casting the raid as part of the Islamic State group's ongoing war with countries that it says are fighting against Islam.

In October 2015, a bomb planted by IS downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacationers returning from Egypt.

The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed responsibility for several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Putin didn't mention IS in his speech to the nation, and Kyiv accused him and other Russian pol-

iticians of falsely linking Ukraine to the assault to stoke fervor for Russia's fight in Ukraine, which recently entered its third year. But U.S. intelligence officials said they had confirmed the IS affiliate's claim.

"ISIS bears sole responsibility for this attack. There was no Ukrainian involvement whatsoever," National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement.

### 'Information shared'

The U.S. shared information with Russia in early March about a planned terrorist attack in Moscow, and issued a public warning to Americans in Russia, Ms. Watson said.

The raid happened just days after the Russian leader cemented his grip on the country for another six years in a vote that followed the harshest crackdown on dissent since the Soviet times.

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who have relentlessly suppressed any opposition activities and muzzled independent media, failed to prevent the attack despite the U.S. warnings.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement that the U.S. condemned the attack and said that the IS is a "common terrorist enemy that must be defeated everywhere."

## Pro-Kurdish activist fights for migrants' rights in local Turkish polls

**Agence France-Presse**  
BOLU

A pro-Kurdish candidate, who lost his arm in prison during a police raid after a hunger strike in 2000, has turned three decades of social activism into a fight against the anti-migrant sentiment dominating local elections in Turkey.

Veli Sacilik, 47, is fighting anti-refugee rhetoric which dominates the campaign for municipal elections on March 31 in the city of Bolu in northwestern Turkey. Standing for the pro-Kurdish Dem (Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party) party, Mr. Sacilik wants to "offer a democratic alternative" for his city which he says is "stuck between racism and a rent economy".

The debate on Turkey's 3.3 million Syrian refugees has virtually disappeared since the May 2023 presidential election, except in Bolu, where Mr. Sacilik's opponents have built their campaign on anti-migrant sentiment. One such opponent is the outgoing mayor Tanju Ozcan of the main opposition CHP party, known for displaying an anti-Syrian refugee banner at Bolu's entrance.

Despite Syrian refugees making up just 1.2% of the city's population, Mr. Ozcan has tried to pursue anti-migrant policies including a failed attempt to charge them ten times more for water or to withdraw business permits. "Tanju Ozcan is a populist. If you don't fight against wars and for the environment, you can't solve immigration issues," said Mr. Sacilik,

## No kidding



**Serious affair:** Activists from the global environmental movement Extinction Rebellion dressed as clowns walk on the grounds of a TotalEnergies refinery in Danges, France during a demonstration on the company's 100th anniversary on Saturday. AFP

## Hungary 'projects' new tales for children in old filmstrips

**Agence France-Presse**  
BUDAPEST

Tablets and mobile phones may have to be prised from the fingers of children elsewhere, but in Hungary storytime can be all about a 100-year-old piece of tech - filmstrip.

Generations of kids there have been enthralled with stories told with the help of a projector.

Alexandra Csoz-Horvath turns off the lights and reads *Sleeping Beauty* from a series of still captioned images projected onto the bedroom wall - her three- and seven-year-old clearly under her spell. "We're together, it's cozier than the cinema yet it's better than a book," said the 44-year-old lawyer.

Filmstrip - a century-old storytelling medium that was killed off in the West by the video cassette in the 1980s - is not just hanging on in Hungary, it is



Filmstrip is thriving in Hungary with a new wave of enthusiasts charmed by its slower-paced entertainment. AFP

thriving with a new wave of enthusiasts charmed by its slower-paced entertainment. Printed on rolls of film, the still images were never meant to move.

"Between the 1940s and the 1980s filmstrips were used worldwide as a visualisation tool in education and other fields," Levente Borsos, of Seoul's Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, said.

But while it was surpassed by more advanced technologies in the West, it became a popular form of

home entertainment in the Soviet bloc where TVs and videos were harder to come by.

When communism collapsed, filmstrip began to disappear - except in Hungary, where the since privatised Diafilmygarto company survives as the country's sole producer.

"Continuous filmstrip publishing and slide shows at home can be considered a Hungarian peculiarity, a special part of the country's cultural heritage," Mr. Borsos said.

## Paris museum takes visitors back 150 years to the birth of Impressionism

**Agence France-Presse**  
PARIS

The Orsay Museum in Paris is marking 150 years of Impressionism from Tuesday with an unprecedented reassembling of the masterpieces that launched the movement, and a virtual reality experience that takes visitors back in time.

Using VR technology, visitors to *Paris 1874: Inventing Impressionism* can take a plunge into the streets, salons and beauty spots that marked a revolution in art.

Through VR helmets, they can walk alongside the likes of Claude Monet,

Edgar Degas and Paul Cezanne on April 15, 1874, when, tired of being rejected by the conservative gatekeepers of the official art Salon, these rebellious young painters put on their own independent show, later seen as the birth of Impressionism.

### Strong 'impression'

The Orsay has brought together 160 paintings from that year, including dozens of masterpieces from that show, including the blood-red sun of Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*, credited with giving the movement its name, and his *Boulevard des Capucines* where the



*Impression, Sunrise* by French painter Claude Monet on display at the Paris 1874: Inventing Impressionism show in Paris. AFP

excitement and restlessness of a new, modern age emerging out of a devastating war with Prussia and a short-lived Parisian revolt a few years earlier. "The Impressionists wanted to paint the world as it is, one in the midst of major change," said Sylvie Patry, co-curator of the exhibition.

"They were interested in new subjects: railways, tourism, the world of entertainment... They wanted to put sensations, impressions, the immediate moment at the heart of their painting," she added. Thanks to loans from the National Gallery in

Washington and other museums, it is the first time that many of the paintings - including Renoir's *The Parisian Girl* and *The Dancer* - have hung together in 150 years.

Rejection of 'tradition'

The exhibition also includes works from that year's official Salon, showing how the Impressionists rejected the stiff formalism of traditionalists and their obsession with great battles and mythological tales, but also how there was some cross-over, as all sorts of painters gradually adopted new styles.

"The story of that exhibition is more nuanced than we think," said Ms. Patry. "The artists all knew each other and had begun painting in this different style from the 1860s." Impressionism did not take off immediately: only some 3,500 people came to the first show, compared with 3,000,000 to the Salon, and only four paintings were sold out of some 200 works. It would take several more exhibitions in the following years for the movement to make its mark.

The Orsay exhibition runs to July 14 and moves to Washington from September.



## STARTING TROUBLE

## Mumbai Indians loses its IPL season opener yet again



VIJAY SONEJI

Mumbai Indians couldn't break the streak of losing IPL season openers as it went down to Gujarat Titans by six runs in a humdinger in Ahmedabad on Sunday. MI last won its season opener in 2012 when it beat Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai.

## SILVER LINING

## Porel's knock a big positive for Capitals, says asst. coach Amre



R.V. MOORTHY

Delhi Capitals' campaign was not off to the best of starts as it went down to Punjab Kings by four wickets. However, Abhishek Porel's scintillating cameo was a big positive, says DC assistant coach Pravin Amre. "We can also see the positive about Porel, the guy came in and scored runs at a strike rate of more than 300."

## GEM IS BACK

## It's just a matter of time before Pant regains form, feels Sidhu



R.V. MOORTHY

Former India opener Navjot Sidhu is confident that it is just a "matter of time" before Rishabh Pant returns to form. "He is playing good cricket and it's just a matter of time before he regains his form. More importantly, Indian cricket has got its gem back and we should be happy that he has returned to the field," said Sidhu.

## REPRIMANDED

## Rana fined 60% of match fee for violating IPL code of conduct



K.R. DEEPAK

KKR pacer Harshit Rana, who bowled a match-winning final over, was fined 60% of his match fee for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Kolkata on Saturday. According to a statement, Rana breached the rules under Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct.

## Titans keep their nerve, MI loses its poise and the plot

Sai Sudharsan guides the home team to a respectable total despite Bumrah's brilliant spell of three for 14; Hardik's men undergo a scarcely believable downturn to crash to a six-run defeat

## IPL-17

N. Sudarshan  
AHMEDABAD

Shubman Gill passed his first captaincy test as Gujarat Titans eked out a nervous six-run win over Mumbai Indians in their Indian Premier League opener at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday.

Pursuing 169, MI was coasting along at 107 for two after 12 overs. But Sai Kishore trapping Rohit Sharma (43, 29b, 7x4, 1x6) leg-before and Mohit Sharma sending back Dewald Brevis (46, 38b, 2x4, 3x6) and Tim David triggered a scarcely believable downturn.

It wasn't as if there was no life left in MI. When 27 runs were needed from 12 balls, Tilak Varma sent Spencer Johnson soaring over long-on to raise hopes only for the left-armed to account for both Tilak and Gerald Coetzee the same over.

With 19 needed from six, Hardik Pandya – who was mildly booed on the day by the 80,000-strong crowd – appeared to have turned the tie when he smashed Umesh Yadav for a six and



Pulling together: Titans applied pressure by picking wickets at crucial junctures to derail Mumbai Indians' chase after Sai Sudharsan's valuable knock. VIJAY SONEJI

a four. But he holed out to long-on off the next ball to effectively hand GT the win.

Earlier, Jasprit Bumrah's sensational return to IPL (3/14) had ensured that GT

would end up with only a moderately challenging score. He prised out Wriddhiman Saha (19, 15b, 4x4) with a splendid yorker; foxed David Miller with a slower delivery before

sending back the set B. Sai Sudharsan (45, 39b, 3x4, 1x6).

But a blazing start from Saha and Gill (31, 22b, 3x4, 1x6), some middle-order consolidation from Azma-

tullah Omarzai and Sai Sudharsan and an end-overs flourish from Rahul Tewatia (22, 15b, 2x4, 1x6) kept GT in the hunt.

There was a time when GT seemed set to finish

with an under-par total as Sai Sudharsan couldn't accelerate, Miller was dismissed and the side was reduced to 134 for five. With not many boundaries, it was a canine intruder that

held up play for nearly five minutes in the 14th over that received the loudest cheers. But Tewatia ensured it was not all gloom, caning left-arm pacer Luke Wood

## SCOREBOARD

**GUJARAT TITANS**  
Wriddhiman Saha b Bumrah 19 (15b, 4x4), Shubman Gill c Rohit b Chawla 31 (22b, 3x4, 1x6), B. Sai Sudharsan c Tilak b Bumrah 45 (39b, 3x4, 1x6), Azmatullah Omarzai c Tilak b Coetzee 17 (11b, 1x4, 1x6), David Miller c Hardik b Bumrah 12 (11b, 1x4), Vijay Shankar (not out) 6 (5b), Rahul Tewatia c Dhir b Coetzee 22 (15b, 2x4, 1x6), Rashid Khan (not out) 4 (3b); Extras (lb-4, nb-1, w-7): 12; Total (for six wks. in 20 overs): 168.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-31 (Saha, 3.6 overs), 2-64 (Gill, 7.4), 3-104 (Omarzai, 11.6), 4-133 (Miller, 16.1), 5-134 (Sai Sudharsan, 16.3), 6-161 (Tewatia, 19.1).

**MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING**  
Hardik 3-0-30-0, Luke Wood 2-0-25-0, Bumrah 4-0-14-3, Mulani 3-0-24-0, Chawla 3-0-31-1, Dhir 1-0-13-0, Coetzee 4-0-27-2.

**MUMBAI INDIANS**  
Ishan Kishan c Saha b Omarzai 0 (4b), Rohit Sharma lbw b Sai Kishore 43 (29b, 7x4, 1x6), Naman Dhir lbw b Omarzai 20 (10b, 3x4, 1x6), Dewald Brevis (Impact Player in place of Wood) c & b Mohit 46 (38b, 2x4, 3x6), Tilak Varma c sub (Abhinav) b Johnson

25 (19b, 1x4, 1x6), Tim David c Miller b Mohit 11 (10b, 1x4), Hardik Pandya c Tewatia b Umesh 11 (4b, 1x4, 1x6), Gerald Coetzee c & b Johnson 1 (3b), Shams Mulani (not out) 1 (1b), Piyush Chawla c Rashid b Umesh 0 (1b), Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 1 (1b); Extras (w-3): 3; Total (for nine wks. in 20 overs): 162.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-0 (Kishan, 0.4), 2-30 (Dhir, 2.6), 3-107 (Rohit, 12.1), 4-129 (Brevis, 15.5), 5-142 (David, 17.6), 6-148 (Tilak, 18.2), 7-150 (Coetzee, 18.6), 8-160 (Hardik, 19.3), 9-160 (Chawla, 19.4).

**TITANS BOWLING**  
Omarzai 3-0-27-2, Umesh 3-0-31-2, Rashid 4-0-23-0, Sai Kishore 4-0-24-1, Johnson 2-0-25-2, Mohit (Impact Player in place of Sai Sudharsan) 4-0-32-2.

**Toss:** MI.  
**PoM:** Sai Sudharsan.  
GT won by six runs.

## Next assignment

**GT:** March 26 vs. CSK  
Chennai, 7.30 p.m.  
**MI:** March 27 vs. SRH  
Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.

## RR rides on Samson's rousing innings to subdue LSG

P.K. Ajith Kumar  
JAIPUR

When Rajasthan Royals lost its star openers by the fifth over, the dressing room may not have got fidgety. Sanju Samson was still there, after all. And he has this nice habit of beginning the IPL with an excellent innings.

The skipper's unbeaten 82 (52b, 3x4, 6x6) proved good enough in the end for Royals to start their campaign in the IPL's Season 17 on a winning note.

The host, which made 193 for four after winning the toss, defeated Lucknow Super Giants by 20 runs at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium on Sunday. This was Samson's fifth consecutive fifty-plus score in his first match of an IPL season since 2020.

The track was a challenging one, and his team needed Samson to hold the innings together after the loss of Jos Buttler and then Yashasvi Jaiswal.

The in-form India opener (24, 12b, 3x4, 1x6) fell to a Mohsin Khan bouncer. He could not get hold of his pull shot and gave a skier to mid-on.

Buttler had already been back in the dugout, falling to a superb low catch behind the stumps by K.L. Rahul off Naveen-ul-Haq. Samson reached the middle after that dismissal, off the last ball of the second

over, and he stayed there till the end of the innings.

Giving him company was Riyan Parag who made most of his promotion to No. 4 – his stunning form in domestic cricket as well as some good fortune – to hit 43 (29b, 1x4, 3x6).

Parag added 93 for the third wicket with Samson, who paced his innings beautifully, while playing those handsome strokes of his.

**Not the best of starts**  
Chasing a daunting target, LSG didn't get the best of starts, as Trent Boult sent back Quinton de Kock and Devdutt Padikkal in his first two overs. When Impact Player Deepak Hooda (26, 13b, 2x4, 2x6) was dismissed by Yuzvendra Chahal, the visitors slid to 60 for four.

But Rahul (58, 44b, 4x4, 2x6) and Nicholas Pooran (64 n.o. 41b, 4x4, 4x6) brought them back into the match with their 85-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

Sandeep Sharma accounted for Rahul and his death bowling ensured there was no second life for LSG.



Packing a punch: Samson's innings was interspersed with his trademark strokes. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

## SCOREBOARD

**RAJASTHAN ROYALS**  
Yashasvi Jaiswal c Krunal b Mohsin 24 (12b, 3x4, 1x6), Jos Buttler c Rahul b Naveen 11 (9b, 2x4), Sanju Samson (not out) 82 (52b, 3x4, 6x6), Riyan Parag c sub (Hooda) b Naveen 43 (29b, 1x4, 3x6), Shimron Hetmyer c Rahul b Bishnoi 5 (7b), Dhruv Jurel (not out) 20 (12b, 1x4, 1x6); Extras (lb-1, w-6, nb-1): 8; Total (for four wks. in 20 overs): 193.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-13 (Buttler, 1.6 overs), 2-49 (Jaiswal, 4.6), 3-142 (Parag, 14.5), 4-150 (Hetmyer, 16.3).

**SUPER GIANTS BOWLING**  
Mohsin 4-0-45-1, Naveen 4-0-41-2, Krunal 4-0-19-0, Bishnoi 4-0-38-1, Yash Thakur 3-0-43-0, Badoni 1-0-6-0.

**LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS**  
Quinton de Kock c Burger b Boult 4 (5b, 1x4), K.L. Rahul c Jurel b Sandeep 58 (44b, 4x4, 2x6), Devdutt Padikkal b Boult 0 (3b), Ayush Badoni c Buttler b Burger 1 (5b), Deepak Hooda (Impact Player in place of Yash) c Jurel b Chahal 26 (13b, 2x4, 2x6), Nicholas Pooran (not out) 64 (41b, 4x4, 4x6), Marcus Stoinis c Jurel b Ashwin 3 (4b), Krunal Pandya (not out) 3 (5b); Extras (lb-5, w-9): 14; Total (for six wks. in 20 overs): 173.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-4 (de Kock, 0.5), 2-10 (Padikkal, 2.2), 3-11 (Badoni, 3.1), 4-60 (Hooda, 7.3), 5-145 (Rahul, 16.1), 6-154 (Stoinis, 17.3).

**ROYALS BOWLING**  
Boult 4-0-35-2, Burger (Impact Player in place of Hetmyer) 3-0-30-1, Ashwin 4-0-35-1, Avesh 3-0-21-0, Chahal 3-0-25-1, Sandeep 3-0-22-1.  
**Toss:** Royals.  
**PoM:** Samson.  
Royals won by 20 runs.

## All praise for Russell and Ramandeep's contributions



Good beginning: Salt said the debutant Ramandeep took the pressure off him and set a platform for Russell. K.R. DEEPAK

Y.B. Sarangi  
KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad camps acknowledged Andre Russell's special performance, which enabled the host to manage a narrow four-run win in the IPL at the Eden Gardens on Saturday night.

KKR opener Phil Salt said Russell's onslaught was nothing new for him. "I've played with Dre in the Hundred. He's a phenomenal ball striker. The best in the world on his day. To see him do what he did, obviously is incredible. Love watching it, but it's no surprise to me," said Salt.

SRH coach Daniel Vettori had similar opinions. "His power is second to

none, so you have to challenge yourself on being perfect with the execution."

Both Salt and Vettori were impressed with Ramandeep Singh, whose cameo on debut put KKR back on track.

"Ramandeep took the pressure off me. He had a hell of a cameo and we started to put a partnership," said Salt. Vettori said Ramandeep set a platform for Russell. "With Salt well set, it allowed him (Ramandeep) to play his game."

Vettori said that with Heinrich Klaasen in SRH never lost hope in the chase. Salt praised young pacer Harshit Rana for holding his nerve in the crucial final over and helping KKR defend its total.



**IN BRIEF**



**Dhananjaya, Kamindu slam their second ton of a Test**

Dhananjaya de Silva and Kamindu Mendis both slammed their second century of the match as Sri Lanka set a 511-run target for Bangladesh before pushing the host to the corner in the first Test at Sylhet on Sunday. The visitor was all out for 418 in its second innings, with Mendis making 164 to go with his 102 in the first innings and de Silva, who also scored 102 in the first essay, adding 108. Sri Lankan pacers reduced Bangladesh to 47 for five at stumps.

**The scores:** Sri Lanka 280 & 418/10 in 110.4 overs (Karunaratne 52, Dhananjaya de Silva 108, Kamindu Mendis 164, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 4/74) vs Bangladesh 188 & 47/5 in 13 overs (Vishwa Fernando 3/13).



**Austria's Baumgartner scores fastest international goal**

Austria's Christoph Baumgartner scored six seconds after kickoff in Saturday's 2-0 friendly win over host Slovakia in Bratislava, the fastest recorded goal in international football. The 24-year-old sprinted from the centre circle and skipped past three challenges before firing a low shot from outside the box into the bottom corner. The goal was one second faster than Lukas Podolski's strike for Germany against Ecuador in 2013. The Austrian FA described Baumgartner's effort as the fastest goal in the history of international football. Meanwhile, later on Saturday, Wirtz was just as fast against France in a friendly in Lyon. The Leverkusen player beat keeper Brice Samba with a superb shot under the crossbar. The fastest goal scored in a World Cup was by Turkey's Hakan Sukur against South Korea in 2002 after 11 seconds.



**Gavaskar's 'prototype' bat used in 1979 fetches £8,000**

A Duncan Fearnley 'prototype' bat used by Sunil Gavaskar during the second Test against England at Lord's in 1979 fetched £8,000 (about ₹8,42,000) at an auction conducted by Knights, a specialist auctioneer of sporting memorabilia, on Friday. The 'Run Reaper' bat, which had eleven holes to make it lighter, was tested by several cricketers before it was outlawed by the TCCB and the MCC following its use by Gavaskar in the Test where he scored 42 and 59. The bat was in the private collection of the reputed bat manufacturer.

**Arjun-Jeevan pair finishes runner-up in Murcia Challenger**

Arjun Kadhe and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan were beaten 7-5, 6-1 by the top seeds Theo Arribage and Victor Cornea in the doubles final of the €74,825 Challenger tennis in Murcia, Spain. The champion team collected \$4,250 and 75 ATP points. The Indians won \$2,450 and 50 points.



**Hockey Haryana women crowned National champions**

Hockey Haryana beat Hockey Maharashtra 3-0 in a shoot-out to claim the 14th Hockey India senior women's National championship at Pimpri on Saturday, after both the teams were tied 1-1 at the end of regulation time. It was Haryana's third title having won it in 2013 and 2020. Jharkhand finished third.

**RCB back in familiar setting after loss to CSK**

The Bengaluru side, in the first of three successive outings at home, takes on PBKS which enters the contest on a high; another slip will prove fatal for the hosts at the batting-friendly venue

**IPL-17**

**Ashwin Achal**  
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will bank on home support to get its IPL 2024 campaign on the right track. After a loss to Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in Chennai in the opener, RCB will find solace in the familiar setting of the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium.

In the first of three successive outings in Bengaluru, RCB takes on Punjab Kings (PBKS) here on Monday.

At the training session on Sunday, the RCB batters – Faf du Plessis, Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell, Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar – had long stints in the net.

**Goal**

The goal was to find rhythm after a disappointing night out in Chennai, when a top-order collapse left the side at 78 for five. RCB will be aware that another slip up will prove fatal at this batting-friendly venue.

**Silver lining**

The silver lining came from Anuj Rawat and Dinesh Karthik, who pulled out the big hits to take RCB to a



**Turning it around:** Royal Challengers' Maxwell will hope to come good after a first-ball duck against Super Kings. K. MURALI KUMAR

A well-rounded Punjab Kings bowling attack will make things difficult for the home side. Faf du Plessis, Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell, Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar have long stints in the net.

respectable score.

A well-rounded PBKS bowling attack will make it difficult for RCB.

In Arshdeep Singh and Harshal Patel (a former RCB player), PBKS has two

fine death bowlers.

Left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar keeps it tight, while Kagiso Rabada offers all-out pace.

The visitor enters the contest on a high, having shut down Delhi Capitals (DC) by four wickets on Saturday. England all-rounders Sam Curran and Liam Livingstone carried PBKS with the bat, and Arshdeep proved his worth as an impact player with the ball.

**Today's match**



**Bengaluru, 7.30 P.M.**

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**

Played: **31**

RCB **14** | PBKS **17**

**PREVIOUS MEETING**

RCB won by 24 runs, 2023

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA



**Bring it on!** Rawat's knock, while insufficient to see RCB through, proved that he is up for a fight. K. MURALI KUMAR

**Rawat hopes to settle into his role as a finisher**

**Ashwin Achal**  
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will take heart from the exploits of Anuj Rawat in its IPL 2024 campaign opener against Chennai Super Kings.

Coming in at six, the southpaw rescued the side with a 25-ball 48 in the company of Dinesh Karthik.

It was not enough to earn a win for RCB, but Rawat's rearguard action proved that he is up for a fight.

**Limited success**

The wicketkeeper-batter featured in seven games for RCB last season, with limited success.

This year, he hopes to better settle into his role as

a finisher.

"The communication from our team management is clear. I will bat down the order, and if we lose early wickets, then I will bat in the middle-order," Rawat said here on Sunday, on the eve of RCB's fixture against Punjab Kings.

Virat Kohli was slow off the blocks against CSK, at one stage stuck on 11 off 12 balls.

Kohli, eventually dismissed for a 20-ball 21, has no reason to change his game plan, Rawat said.

"We have seen Virat play for so many years; he plays the same way. We cannot say that he batted slow.

He didn't his chance to face many balls in the Power Play," Rawat said.

**Haryana boxers assured of 19 medals at sub-junior Nationals**

**Sports Bureau**

Haryana boxers continued their dominant show at the third sub-junior National championships in Greater Noida with 19 from the state reaching the semifinals across various weight categories to confirm their medals.

Bhoomi (35kg) and Nischal Sharma (37kg) registered contrasting victories to kickstart a productive day in the ring for Haryana.

While Bhoomi thrashed Delhi's Apexsha with Referee Stopping Contest (RSC) in round three, Nischal had to work hard for a narrow 3-2 win over S. Sarah of Tamil Nadu.

Rakhi (43kg) and Navya (55kg) also advanced on RSC while Diksha (40kg), Diya (61kg), Sukhreet (64kg) and Manshi Malik (67+kg) all managed unanimous 5-0 victories as 10 Haryana girls reached the last-four stage to assure at

least a bronze.

Khushika (49kg) and Naitik (52kg) completed the tally.

Among the boys, nine from the state sealed semifinal spots. Uday Singh, Nitin (40kg), Ravi Sihag (49kg), Naman (58kg), Siddhant (61kg) and Kartik Dagar (70kg) all had easy 5-0 wins. Sanchit Jayani (46kg), Lakshay (52kg) and Anmol Dahiya (64kg) were the others to reach the last-four.

**Endrick's goal does it for Brazil against England**



**Star in the making:** Endrick is touted as the next big thing in Brazilian football. REUTERS

**FOOTBALL**

**Agence France-Presse**  
LONDON

Brazil's new boss Dorival Junior started his bid to revive the five-time world champion with a 1-0 win against England as teenage sensation Endrick bagged his first international goal in Saturday's friendly at Wembley.

Brazil hopes Dorival Junior can trigger a revival in time to challenge for the 2026 World Cup.

On a cathartic evening for Brazil after its wretched 2023, it was fitting the highly-rated Endrick

bagged Brazil's late winner.

The Palmeiras forward, due to join Real Madrid in July, has been tipped to succeed Neymar as Brazil's latest superstar and his match-winning cameo appearance off the bench was a suitable coming of age moment in his third appearance.

Aged 17 years and 246 days, Endrick is the youngest senior international goal-scorer at Wembley. Endrick's emergence is a breath of fresh air for Brazil after an unusually stale period for the Selecao.

**The result:** England 0 lost to Brazil 1 (Endrick 80).



Rasmus with his big prize. X@CHALLENGE\_TOUR

**Rasmus holds nerve to win Kolkata Challenge**

**Sports Bureau**  
KOLKATA

Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen held his nerve on the final day to win the Kolkata Challenge at the Royal Calcutta Golf Club course here on Sunday.

**The scores (fourth round; Indians unless specified):** 272: Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen (Den) (68, 65, 68, 71); 274: David Horsey (Eng) (69, 71, 67, 67); 277: Rahul Gangjee (70, 68, 67, 69); 277: Alexander Levy (Fra) (70, 69, 68, 70); 278: Kristoffer Broberg (Swe) (70, 72, 67, 69); Veer Ahlawat (67, 70, 70, 71); Mikael Lindberg (Swe) (70, 69, 66, 73); 279: Wil Besseling (Ned) (68, 69, 72, 70); Om Prakash Chouhan (72, 69, 68, 70); Angad Cheema (70, 70, 67, 72).



**Triumphant:** Odisha FC topped the seven-team table with 31 points from 12 matches. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**Odisha FC lifts maiden IWL title, Gokulam Kerala runner-up**

**FOOTBALL**

**Sports Bureau**

Former India under-17 captain Lynda Kom scored a hat-trick while Pyari Xaxa netted twice as Odisha FC blanked Kickstart FC 6-0 and won its maiden Indian

Women's League football title in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

Odisha topped the seven-team table with 31 points from 12 matches while three-time champion Gokulam Kerala FC, which defeated East Bengal FC 5-1 in Kozhikode, finished runner-up with 29 points.

Kickstart (21) was third.

**The results: At Bhubaneswar:** Odisha FC 6 (Lynda Kom 11, 66 & 77, Pyari Xaxa 13 & 22; Karthika Angamuthu 58) bt Kickstart FC 0.

**At Kozhikode:** Gokulam Kerala FC 5 (Soumya Guguloth 30 & 48, Sandhya Ranganathan 34, Fazila Ikwaput 61, Muskan Subba 86) bt East Bengal FC 1 (Sulanjana Raul 64).

**Swiss Open: Srikanth makes semifinal exit**

**Press Trust of India**  
BASEL

Indian shuttler K. Srikanth's run at the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament came to an end after a semifinal loss to Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi in Basel on Saturday. He squandered a lead to go down 21-15, 9-21, 18-21.

The match marked Srikanth's first semifinal appearance in 16 months. After taking the opener, Srikanth took an early 4-1 lead in the second game. However, errors started to creep into his game and Srikanth lost the momentum to go down tamely in the next game with Lin,



Srikanth. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

forcing a decider. Srikanth did get his rhythm back in the decider. The Indian managed to take a slender lead at the interval. At 16-16, Lin manage to take a three-point lead. Srikanth did manage to cut down his deficit but nerves got the better of him.

**Martin wins Portuguese MotoGP, Bagnaia crashes out**

**Agence France Presse**  
PORTIMAO (PORTUGAL)

Jorge Martin hit the front in the first lap and never relinquished his lead to win the Portuguese MotoGP in Portimao on Sunday, in the second race of the season. Enea Bastianini was second and teenage rookie Pedro Acosta third.

Martin took top spot in the standings from champion Francesco Bagnaia who crashed out after a collision with Marc Marquez.



# Libero Anand – a game-changer with exceptional digs

The Delhi Toofans player, who feels the role has not been really acknowledged, says things are slowly changing with the advent of the PVL; the 21-year-old makes the crowd involve itself in the game through his remarkable retrieving ability and uninhibited celebration



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## K. Keerthivasan

Volleyball is a sport full of gigantic players whose average height is six feet and seven inches. Invariably, the shorter players remain under-appreciated. Generally, it's the attackers and blockers who receive all the attention, accolades and rewards.

Of the six players in a team, there is one with a different jersey colour than the rest of his teammates, and he/she is referred as libero, who is the second line of defence against the attackers of the opposition.

Their key roles are receiving serve, digging attacks, and making passes from the second row to set up the team's offence.

However in India, liberos have remained in the shadows and have not been given due credit.

K. Anand, the libero of Delhi Toofans in the recently concluded Prime Volleyball League (PVL) in Chennai, has been an exception to the rule. Toofans lost to Calicut Heroes in the final. In fact, it was a great performance given that it was the team's debut in the PVL.

The 21-year-old from Kerala has been a game-changer with his exceptional digs. His acts of jumping high and celebrating a point made the crowd involved with the game. To put it short, he was the livewire of Toofans.

In fact, after seeing one of his diving photos and of Anand's on twitter, former South African cricketer Jonty Rhodes wrote: "At least you (Anand) managed to get into the same frame as the ball – I need to work on my reach!"

K. Sai Prakash, CEO, Toofans, lavished praise on Anand. "He has been the darling of our team and the crowd when it comes to performances. He is the only libero in this edition so far to be given the Game-changer of the Match Award. He creates a lot of energy in the team and remains a great asset. I hope to see him as truly an International professional. With PVL gaining popularity, I hope Anand realises one of his dreams of becoming a professional who can play in foreign leagues. I hope the Indian sports system helps him in his quest."

Born in the volleyball-crazy Kannur, Anand started in Class VIII, when he played with seniors. It was in Thrissur that his role of becoming a libero was established. His coach Shivakumar changed his position from that of a setter/

attacker to libero when he was in Class XI and there has been no looking back. At the SAI Centre in Kozhikode, Anand's journey as a proper volleyballer began.

He represented the Kerala sub-junior, junior and senior teams in the National Championships. Anand strongly believes the sport has not really acknowledged the role of liberos but it is slowly changing with the advent of PVL.

"Liberos are not valued enough because they are not getting points. But in modern volleyball, we have many important roles like reception and defence. When an opponent serves – going all out while doing it – it becomes difficult to receive the ball. Liberos do it. That's one of the main points of defence. PVL is changing the perception of libero," he said.

Liberos are generally agile, athletic and alert, and according to Anand, they need courage to showcase their talent. "We need courage to dig the balls, The mindset is important. We need courage to

save the team. If the ball is going far from us, we need the courage to dive," he said.

His celebration of jumping high and pumping his fist when his team wins a point is a delight to watch. Anand said it is his style and he celebrates it in the same way when he or his team wins a point.

"I do it if anyone from my team wins a point. I just need to celebrate. In my mind, I always think I have to take my point and you need to celebrate every point," said Anand, a huge fan of French libero Jenia Grebennikov.

## Learning from foreigners

This is his third season in the PVL. Having featured in the previous two editions for Hyderabad Black Hawks, Anand is revelling in his role for Toofans. He said he has learnt a lot from the foreigners in the league.

"The league has helped me become a professional as the foreigners have taught me many things, especially, Lazar Dodic (Serbia) and Daniel Aponza (Colombia).

They tell me how to 'dig' and the art of movements."

Anand emphasised that there is a lot of difference between the playing styles of India and Europe. In foreign leagues, attackers have power and precision while the liberos' defence is top-class, which forces one to be at his best all the time.

"However, we need to change many things to get better and PVL is the right step in that direction," said Anand.

It's not just the fans and Toofans teammates who have appreciated Anand. Mumbai Metors' libero Hector Mata of Venezuela is all praise for the youngster.

"Hector said I am doing good and have all the qualities to play in foreign leagues. That means a lot coming from a foreigner of a rival club," said Anand.

He, however, has an unfinished dream. "I want to be in the National senior team. That's my dream. I was in the National camp last year but was not selected and I hope to be named in the coming years," he said.

## THE GIST

Liberos are generally agile, athletic and alert, and according to Anand, they need courage to showcase their talent

Anand's dream is to break into the Indian senior team

After seeing one of his diving photos and of Anand's on twitter, former South African cricketer Jonty Rhodes wrote: "At least you (Anand) managed to get into the same frame as the ball – I need to work on my reach!"







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