



PM questions silence of INDIA bloc leaders NEWS » PAGE 4





U.S. drone sales to India progress to next stage IEWS > PAGE

BENGALURU'S WATER WOES The parched IT capital of India City's water crisis may worsen as long, hot summer is expected OUND ZERO » PAGE

during and after the

police officials said that

there were no leads so far on any group being res-ponsible for the blast. The

Google delists

after row over

Tech major Google on Fri-day delisted certain matri-monial and dating apps, in-cluding Bharat Matrimony, Truly Madly, and Quack

Quack, and two streaming services, Balaji Telefilms's

ALTT and the audio plat-form Kuku FM.

several apps

platform fee

Aroon Deep NEW DELHI

the



Paltan defeat Steelers for PKL-10 title SPORT » PAGE 13

INSIDE



Raiva Sabha MP. team meet rebel army in Myanmar

NEW DELHI

New DELHI Weeks after a township of Myanmar near the Indian border was captured by the rebel Arakan Army, an Indian delegation led by Rajya Sabha member K. Vanlalvena on Thursday met with the Arakan Army inside Myanmar and held talks. » PAGE 3

India to establish alliance to protect big cats

NEW DELHI The Union Environment Ministry plans to set up and coordinate an International Big Cat Alliance The Cabinet approved the proposal on Thursday. So far, 16 countries have given their writter consent to be part of the alliance, » PAGE 3

Thousands attend Navalny's burial in Moscow

MOSCOW Thousands of people bade farewell on Friday to Alexei Navalny at his funeral in Moscow. Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critic, died two weeks back in a penal colony. His supporters said several churches refused to several churches refused to hold the funeral. » PAGE 11

46 killed in shopping mall fire in Dhaka

DHAKA A six-storey shopping mall that caught fire in Dhaka had no fire exits, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on Friday, as the death toll rose to 46. The fire started late on Thursday in a restaurant in the Green Cozy Cottage Shopping Mall. » PAGE 11



An explosive material, yet to be identified, was

plosion in the city in nearly

plosion in the city in nearly a decade. The last such blast in the city, using an IED, occurred on Church Street, in the city's central business district, on De-cember 28, 2014.

"Result of appeasement" The BJP said the blast was a result of the "appeasement politics" practised by the Congress government in

the State, even as senior

left at the restaurant by a customer, say police

Turn of events: A CCTV video grab shows the Rameshwaram Cafe b

low-intensity blast, in Bengaluru on Friday, SPECIAL AR

the accused.

All injured out of danger from the low intensity blast; Chief Minister confirms the use of an IED

The Hindu Bureau ter Siddaramaiah firmed that an IED had been used in the blast.

been used in the blast. **Timer device** Senior police officials said an explosive material, yet to be identified, was packed with nuts and bolts in a bag with a timer dev-ice, which has been reco-vered. The IED were the theory actly at 12.55.32, as the CCTV footage shows. The footage also shows another explosion, five seconds la-ter. However, police said that a single IED had been planted there. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shiva-kumar, who visited the spot, said a man aged around 30 years came to the restaurant at around noon, and left the bag near the hand wash area. It ex-ploded nearly an hour la-The neople were in-jured in a low-in-tensity bomb blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe, a popular restaurant in Brookefield in Bengalu-ru's Information Technolo-ay corridor on Friday after. gy corridor on Friday after-noon. All the injured are said to be out of danger. nöön. All the njurged are said to be out of danger. Police said the blast had been caused by an Impro-vised Explosive Device (IED), which seemed to have been left at the res-taurant by a customer. The blast occurred during the busy lunch hour, shocking customers and others in the vicinity with an ear-shattering explosion, fol-lowed by smoke engulfing the area. The quick-service eatery had over 200 pa-trons when the blast oc-curred, sources said. Karnataka Chief Minis-



The police are now ana-lysing CCTV footage to

Set to shine



This is the first IED ex-



Clay craft: Potters prepare earthen lamps for sale ahead of the Maha Shivaratri festival, in Bhuba

China out, Bengaluru-based company inks pact with Sri Lanka energy body to build hybrid power project

Meera Srinivasan

Three years after objecting to a Chinese energy project in northern Sri Lanka, barely 50 km off Tamil Na-du's coast, India is set to implement a hybrid power project in three islands off Jaffna peninsula with a \$11-million grant. million grant. The Sri Lanka Sustaina-

ble Energy Authority, the Government of Sri Lanka, Government of Sri Lanka, and Indian company U-So-lar Clean Energy Solutions on Friday signed the con-tract for building "Hybrid Renewable Energy Sys-tems" in Delft or Nedun-theevu, Nainativu and Ana-laitivu islands off Jaffna peninsula in the island's north penin: north.

CM CM

"The project, which is aimed at addressing the aimed at addressing the energy needs of the people of the three islands, is be-ing executed through grant assistance from the Go-vernment of India. The hy-brid project combines va-rious forms of energy rious forms of energy including both solar and wind, towards optimising capacities," the Indian High Commission in Colombo said in a press release.

In a post on social media platform 'X thanking the Government of India, Sri Lanka's Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijeconstructed at the 3 Is Minister Kanchana Wije-sekara said: "The project with 530 kw Wind power, 1,700 kw Solar power, 2,400 kwh Battery power and 2,500 kw of stand by

Joint effort: Santosh Jha, India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka.

at the hybrid power project site in Nainativu island. x/@ diesel power system will be

the Sri Lankan government for Indian firms, officials said.

3rd project in country The initiative is the th The initiative is the third India-backed energy pro-

hank. Concerned by the prospect of a Chinese pro-ject very close to India's southern coastline, New Delhi offered to implement the same project with a

Probe is on and incident should not be politicised. says deputy CM while assuring safety of the city

Heard explosion, saw smoke, say eyewitnesses

and there was a pungent smell. I do not know how the blast occurred. I saw many injured," said Sachin

Lamani, a security guard.

treated at the Brookefield

Hospital. The institute's medical director Pradeep Kumar said Ms. Naraya-

FULL REPORT

» PAGE 2

<u>The Hindu Bureau</u>

"I was outside the restaurant and a little after 1 p.m., I heard a loud explosion inside. I saw smoke and fire near the hand wash area

staff members and customers had said that someone came and left a bag below the hand wash area. the hand wash area. Started in 2021, The Ra-meshwaram Cafe has four branches across the city and is known to be bus-ting with people. Of the l0 injured, Swar-namba Narayanappa, 49, an accountant in an IT firm, suffered nearly 40% burn injuries and is being

on any group being res-ponsible for the blast. The CM and his Deputy have said that the incident is be-ing thoroughly probed and should not be politicised. Ruling out earlier specu-lations of a fre accident, Divya Raghavendra, ma-naging director and foun-der of The Rameshwaram Cafe. told The *Elindu* that Cafe, told The Hindu that

Kumar said Ms. Naraya-nappa was out of danger but will need plastic surge-ry. "She has suffered cut in-juries on the right side of her body andHer eardrum is damaged due to the loud explosion. There are no rip-off injuries, indicating it was a low intensity ex-nolosin." he said. burn injuries and is being plosion," he said.

GST collections up + 12.54% in February

Top collection

India's GST gross revenues surpassed ₹1.68 lakh crore ir February, achieving the fourth highest monthly tax colle



The move comes after e Supreme Court de-Vikas Dhoot the Supreme Court de-clined to provide the com-panies behind these apps interim relief in their battle against the search giant's platform fees for in app payments on Google Play, the company's mobile app marketplace for the An-droid operating system. NEW DELHI

rch 2019

stand at ₹16.36 lakh crore. Among the States, five recorded contractions in nevenues in February, while 18 States clocked low-er upticks than the nation-al average growth of 13.9% in revenues from domestic transactions. Revenues dropped 14% and 13% for Mizoram and Manipur res-pectively, while Nagaland (5%), Bihar, and Jhark-hand (both +1%) reported milder declines. India's gross revenues from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) grew at a three-month high pace of 12.54% in February to cross ₹1.68 lakh crore, marking the fourth-highest monthly collections from the tax. February's GST revenue February's GST revenue growth reflected the third highest uptick in 2023-24 and lifted the total collec-

tions so far this year to ₹18.4 lakh crore, 11.7% above the same period last year. The gross GST kitty of

while State of Jammu and Kashmir (23%), Assam (25%), Maharashtra (21%), as well as Kerala and Delhi (up 16% each). February's (up 16% each). February's gross GST intake included 33,785 crone of Central GST (CGST), 739,615 crore of State GST (SGST) and 784,098 crore of Integrat-ed GST or IGST, of which 735,593 crore was collect-ed on imported goods. The GST compensation cess collections stood at 722,399 crore, with a little under a thousand crore rupees re-

stand at ₹16.36 lakh crore.

to CGST and ₹35,953 crore to SGST from the IGST collected. This translates to a total revenue of ₹73,641 crore for CGST and ₹75,569 crore for SGST after regu-lar settlement," the Minis-try said in a statement.

The gross GST kitty of ₹1,68,337 crore in February was 3.3% lower than Ja-nuary's updated collection numbers of ₹1,74,106 crore, the second-highest tally since GST was launched in July 2017. 'Growth momentum' The GST numbers "de-monstrate continued growth momentum and positive performance", the Finance Ministry asserted, noting that collections from domestic transac-tions rose 13.9% while

tions rose 13.9%, while goods imports delivered an 8.5% rise in revenues. After refunds, the Minis-

try pegged last month's GST collection at ₹1.51 lakh crore. 13.6% over February

Quicker growth Revenues grew faster than the national average in 12 States, including the erst-



constructed at the 3 is-lands by U-SOLAR." The Bengaluru-based company was chosen through a competitive bid-ding process conducted by

ject coming up in Sri Lan-ka's north and east. The National Thermal Power Corporation is spearhead-ing a solar venture in the eastern Sampur town, while the Adani Group is setting up renewable ener-gy projects in Mannar and Pooneryn in the north. The Sri Lankan Cabinet first cleared Sinosoar

first cleared Sinosoar-Etechwin Joint Venture in China to execute renewa-ble energy projects in the three islands. The compa-ny was chosen through a competitive bid backed by

the Asian Development Bank, Concerned by the

grant instead of a loan, and Sri Lanka took it up. A Memorandum of Un-derstanding was signed in March 2022 during Exter-nal Affairs Minister S. Jaish-ankar's visit to Sri Lanka. China's displeasure at the turn of events is no secret.

turn of events is no secret. The Chinese Ambassador in Colombo voiced rare criticism of Sri Lankan authorities for suspending the original projects for "unknown reasons" and

:::

sending out the "wrong message" to potential investors.

investors. Meanwhile, Sino Soar Hybrid Technology, whose energy project was sus-pended in Sri Lanka in De-cember 2021, signed a deal to implement a similar pro-ject in the Maldives.

2023's collections. Overall net GST reve-nues this year have grown at a sharper pace of 13% than gross revenues, and

THE HINDU -States

INBRIDE



Assam CM's security upped after threat from Sikh outfit

The Assam Police have strengthened the security of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma following a threat from a banned Khalistani outfit. A caller, claiming to be a supporter of pro-Khalistan leader Amritpal Singh, who is currently lodged in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh Central Jail, alleged that the latter was being tortured in captivity along with nine associates. He added that Mr Sarma would face "consequences" if the 10 Sikhs, who are on a hunger strike, die in jail.

Five arrested in connection with Haldwani violence

The Uttarakhand Police on Friday arrested five women in connection with the recent Haldwani violence in the town's Banbhoolpura area over the demolition of an illegal madrassa, officials said. This takes the total arrests in connection with the Deformers 0 fixed into a 00 Theo fixe with the February 8 incident to 89. The five women arrested – Shahnaz, Soni, Shamsheer, Salma and Reshma - are all residents of Banbhoolpura, officials added. PTI

VBA ready to contest 46 seats, says Prakash Ambedkar

Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi chief Prakash Ambedkar on Priday expressed confidence that his party could independently secure at least six Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra in the upcoming polls, and that it was ready to field 46 candidates if the alliance with the Opposition's Maha Vikas Aghadi didn't materialise. He added that WA constituents Silvi Sen of IBPT and Courses were constituents Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress were experiencing "tensions" over seat-sharing

Heard explosion, saw smoke, say witnesses of Bengaluru cafe blast

They report hearing a loud bang at 1 p.m., followed by clouds of dense smoke and an acrid smell after a blast at Bengaluru's popular Rameshwaram Cafe; bystanders band together to help

The Hindu Bureau

ike any other typical Friday afternoon, many had assembled at the Rameshwaram Cafe's Brookfield outlet in Bengaluru for lunch when a low-intensity blast occurred.

While 10 people, includ-While 10 people, includ-ing three staff members of the cafe, suffered injuries, CCTV footage showed the remaining customers and employees at the restau-rant running in panic.

Help and rescue Sachin Lamani, a security guard with the cafe, said, "I was outside the restau-rant and a little after 1 p.m., I heard a loud explosion in-side. As I rushed inside, I saw smoke and fire near the hand wash area and there was a pungent, burn-ing smell. I do not know how the blast occurred. I

narrated. Speaking to pressper-sons near the restaurant, Shabarish, another eyewit-ness, said, "There was a loud sound around 1 p.m. which must have been aud-ible in one-kilomette radi-us. There was a lot of smoke around the cafe. When 1 went and checked there, a few customers and employees were injured how the blast occurred. I saw many people injured and helped them rush to a baspital". Suresh, an eyewitness who was near the restau-rant when the blast hap-pened, said he heard a huge explosion and imme-diately rushed to the cafe. "There was dense employees were injured and bleeding. Some tiles were also broken. Some of "There was dense smoke and none of us could go in. It took us over 10 minutes to get inside the us who had gathered there



make authentic South in-dian food accessible beyond Bengaluru, has al-so been frequented by ce-lebrities from across the country. **'Unattended bag'** Speaking about Friday's in-cident with *The Hindu*, Ms.

Rao, said, "It is very clear that the blast has not hap pened because of any cy-linder or any other kitch

en-related equipment as none of them were near the blast site. All our equip-ment remains at the back of the restaurant. There is only a handwash area with a sink, dustbin, and a stand to collect plates. Some peo-ple toid us that someone came and kept a bag there and left, and the blast hap-pened after that. We have found a bag that exploded at the spot." She also added that three of the staff members who were injured in the in-cident were "out of dan-ger", according to the docof the restaurant. There is

ger", according to the doc-tors.

Assam braces for anti-CAA protests

The Hindu Bureau

Assam is set to face anoth-er round of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) of 2019, with a conglomerate of 16 political parties and about 30 NGOs announc-ing a parties of orientime. ing a series of agitations. The anti-CAA p

pro grammes are scheduled to start with a motorcycle rally in every district, fol-lowed by the burning of the CAA rules after they

the CAA rules after they are notified. The NGOs headed by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) will also observe a 12-hour hunger strike on March 9 during Prime Minister Na-rendra Modi's two-day visit to the State

rendra Modi's two-day visit to the State. The 16-party United Op-position Forum (UOF), headed by Congress, has threatened a mass agita-tion against the law. "As-sam is already burdened with lakhs of foreigners. We cannot take any more. We shall seek an anyonir We shall seek an appoint ment with the Prime Minis ter to discuss the issue. We will protest if the Centre is CAA," State Congress presi-dent Bhupen Kumar Borah aid

"The Assamese neonle "The Assamese people will never accept the CAA and we will continue our democratic and legal fight against the Centre's bid to impose it on us," AASU president Uppa Isama said on Thursday, slamming Home Minister Amit Shah for announcing that the rules of the CAA would be framed soon for framed soon for



UOF leaders submitted a memorandum against the CAA to the Governor . ANI

implementation. The Assam government The Assam government The Assam government has warned the anti-CAA groups against imposing shutdowns and damaging public property. Referring to a Gauhati High Court or-der on bandhs, State Direc-tor General of Police G.P. Singh said the State sus-tained a loss of 1,643 coree from a day of *bandh*. The loss would be recovered from those who call bandhs, he said. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said anti-CAA

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said anti-CAA protests would be irrele-vant as Parliament had passed the law. "People have the right to like or dis-

have the right to like or dis-like the CAA but they should ideally approach the Supreme Court which has the authority to termi-nate legislation," he said. The CAA seeks to pro-vide Indian citizenship to Hindu, Jain, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Parsi people who came to India from Bangladesh, Pakis-tan, and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014, after five years of living in after five years of living in the country.

+ Congress disrupts Governor's address over farmers' agitation

Press Trust of India

Punjab Governor Banwari-lal Purohit's address to the State Assembly on the opening day of the Budget Session on Friday was dis-rupted by the Opposition's Congress MLAs, who raised the issues of protest-ing farmers and resorted to slowneering sloganeering. As soon as the Governor

began his address, Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring raised the farmers' issue, saying that homage should be paid to 21-year-old Shubh-karan Singh, who died dur-ing clashes between the protesting farmers and Ha-ryana security personnel. Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa added that Haryana had sealed its borders with Punjab. "You

Banwarilal Purohit have not been able to pro-

Dubbing the Congress MLAs' behaviour in the MLAS behaviour in the House as "drama", Mr. Cheema said that they did not want to hear about the achievements of the Bhag-want Mann government in the store

want Mann government in the State. "To gain cheap publici-ty, they boycotted the ad-dress," the Minister said, adding that the Congress party "did not believe in democracy".

Privanka Gandhi targets BJP over exam question paper leak

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday targeted the Bharatiya Ja-nata Party (BJP) govern-ment in Uttar Pradesh over the question paper leak in the Class 12 board exami-

learn to build their future. If such a big betrayal hap-pens to them right here, what will they do next? To save the examination mafia and the corrupt people sit-ting in the government, the BJP is also hollowing the foundation of crores of foundation of crores of children and youth," al-leged Ms. Vadra, in a post on X.

Board examinations are the first challenges that children face when they

leged Ms. vadra, in a post on X. On Thursday, the Dis-trict Inspector of Schools in Agra petitioned the pol-ice to register an FIR against the centre superin-tendent of Antar Singh In-ter College and others for making viral the question papers in a WhatsApp group during the exam. The Uttar Pradesh Board of Secondary Educa-tion, however, refuted alle-gations of the paper leak. pal Councils, situated in 27 districts, by designating the nearest urban bodies

Rajasthan extends urban jobs scheme to new municipal bodies The Hindu Bureau Villagers had lost out

In major victory for labourers,

on employment after village panchayats In a big win for the villagers were converted to urban local bodies

who lost employment op-portunities after the con-version of village pan-chayats into urban local bodies, the BJP govern-ment in Rajasthan has agreed to launch the urban as the in-charge for the task. The regular posts of officials for operating the scheme in the newly conemployment guarantee scheme in 42 newly creatscheme in 42 newly creat-ed Municipal Councils. The decision came over the week-end after a month-long agitation at Bhin in Rajsamand district. The Local Self Govern-ment Department has is-sued orders for starting the guaranteed employment works in the new Munici-pal Councils, situated in 27 stituted municipal areas are yet to be created. The works under the Mahatma Gandhi National

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gua-rantee Scheme were stopped in the village pan-chayats converted into ur-ban local bodies in July last waar pecing a maior chal year, posing a major chal-lenge to the villagers who depended on the scheme for their livelihood. As the demand for restarting the works went unheeded even after the change of go-vernment in the State, the villagers started an indefi-nite strike at Bhim in January-end. The Devdungri village in Bhim tokeli whore the

Bhim tehsil, where the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's (MKSS) headquar ters are situated, is also known as the centre stage of the movement for right to information, which led to the enactment of the RTI Act in 2005.

Act in 2005. MKSS executive presi-dent and RTI activist Shan-kar Singh said the agitation was aimed at securing the right to work as a guaran-tee. "We will continue to hold government officials accountable for equitable distribution of work," he said.

Unrestrained poaching plays big role in decline of Odisha's leopards

Satyasundar Barik

Odisha has witnessed a Odisha has witnessed a sharp decline in its leopard population – approximate-ly one-fourth lost – prima-rily due to poaching bet-ween 2018 and 2022. The 'Status of Leopards India' report released on Thursday presented a dis-mal picture of the big cat population in the State.

population in the State

"The leopard popula-tion in Odisha is estimated at 568. The population has significantly declined since the last countrywide esti-mate of 760. However, the leopard densities from both the tiger reserves in the State have increased significantly. This indicates that the major efforts of re-covery is restricted to tiger

CM CM

have not been able to pro-tect your farmers," he said, drawing the Governor's ast-tention to the matter. As Congress MLAs in-sisted that farmers' issue be discussed first, the go-vernor said, "As per the agenda and custom, I am supposed to deliver my speech. After my speech, you can raise any issue. There might be so many sereserves," said the leonard

reserves," said the leopard census. The drop of 1921e-opards is estimated to be 25.26% of the population. The report added that leopard occupancy has been reported exclusively within Protected Areas such as Similpal and Sat-kosia tiger reserves, Hira-kand Kotagarh wildlife sanctuaries, and their ad-pioning forest divisions. "The leopard occupant

"The leopard occupan-cy has declined from the previous occupied regions previous occupied regions. Leopard presence was not recorded from Nayagarh and Ghumsur forest divi-sions in this cycle of coun-trywide monitoring," it observed.

Widespread poaching According to the report, the biggest threats to the

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Three leopard hides seized by a Special Task Force of the Odisha Police last year. FILE PHOTO

dwindling leopard popula-tion are poaching of prey for bush meat, targeted poaching for tiger and leo-pard skins and body parts, and habitat loss due to mining and other human activities. Road accidents, incidentally, are also a sig-nificant cause for leopard fatalities

The high number of leopard skins seized by both the Odisha Police and the State Forest and Environ ment Department indi-cates how poaching re-mains the prime cause behind the disappearance of leopards in the State.

isible for selection of news under the PRB Act)

As per the information furnished by the Forest De-partment in the State As-sembly, as many as 59 leo-pard skins were seized from wildlife smugglers between 2018 and 2023. Si-milarly, the Special Task Force (STF) of the State Police recovered 57 leo-pard skins from poachers and wildlife article dealers between 2019 and 2024. Put together, IIG leopards were killed for their skins. Wildlife experts added that As per the information Wildlife experts added that in dozens of cases, leopard skins might have reached their destinations unnotmoney iced and unintercepted.

Need for State action "The State action efforts towards effective patrolling, prey recovery and habitat management crucial.

outside tiger reserves, since a major population of the leopards, about 55%, lives outside the protected area network," suggested the census report. J. N. Pankaj, Inspector-General of the police's STF, said, "After the seizure of leopard skins, we deliber-ately do not disclose the value of the contraband. As its value is greatly exag-gerated by the method and differ timinas or locals get encouraged, and look at the poaching of leopards the poaching of leopards as a way of making

For Odisha, which has a forest cover of 52,156 sq. km, constituting 33.50% of the State's total area, effective patrolling and law en-forcement are especially

...

Case against M.P. MLA for 'extortion attempt' Press Trust of India BHOPAL the one who filed the pur

Madhya Pradesh MLA Kamleshwar Dodiyar, who heads the Bhartiya Adivasi Party (BAP), faced accusa-tions of attempting to ex-tort ₹1 crore from a medi-cal store proprietor

cal store proprietor, a charge denied by him. Facing possible arrest once police get clearance from the State Assembly Speaker, the 33-year-old le-gislator, in a defiant video statement, vowed to coun-ter baseless charges, attri-buting them to a conspira-cy by the ruling BJP government. He also affirmed his commitment to exposing deceptive medi-cal practitioners, including

the one who filed the pur-portedly false complaint. Ratlam Superintendent of Police Rahul Lodha said charges including extor-tion, assult for monetary gain, violence, use of offen-sive language, and criminal threats were filed against the MLA on Thursday. "After following the leag aprocedure like inform-ing the MLA sasembly Speaker, the MLA will be arrested," the official said

arrested," the official said. Mr. Dodiyar, whose or ganisation represents tri-bal political factions in cerbal political factions in cer-tain areas bordering Rajasthan, had stated in his political affidavit during the recent Assembly elec-tions that he was contest-ing with a mere ₹10,000.

A IN-X

rupting the speech and "disrespecting" the House. nation (mathematics and biology), accusing the saf fron party of hollowing out the foundational education the foundational education of crores of children while axing the examination maña and other corrupt entities. "Paper leaked once again. After all, under BJP rule, from job exams to board exams – almost ev-ery paper is getting leaked. Board examinations are the first challenges that

rious questions. I agree. But this is the time to deliv-er my speech. I request you, this House is for de-bate, you will get ample time," Purohit said. However, due to the uproar, Mr. Purohit cut short his address, leading State Finance Minister Har-pal Singh Cheema to slam the unruly MLAs for dis-rupting the speech and The Hindu Bureau



JMM-Cong. govt. stands for 'jam kar

ke khao', says PM at Dhanbad rally

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Congress have looted the people of Jharkhand and created mountains of

unaccounted assets for themselves, says Modi accusing both parties of promoting nepotism, politics of appeasement

RS member. team meet Myanmar rebels over road project

Kallol Bhattacherjee

Weeks after a township of Myanmar near the Indian border was captured by the rebel Arakan Army, an Indian delegation led by Rajya Sabha member K. Vanlakwan on Thursday Vanlalvena on Thursday met with the Arakan Army inside Myanmar and held talks about the road net-work that is vital for a flagship Indian project aimed at firming up overland and nectivity with vater cor Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia. The Arakan Army re-vealed to the Indian side that the road corridor of the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project is at present just a muldøy track. "The discussion with the Arakan Army was focused on the refugee problem that we have been problem that we have been problem that we have been is important for India. The part of the Kaladan project on the Indian side is ready on the Indian side is ready



dispensation in Jharkhand of corruption, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday called the Jharkhand Mukti as the road infrastructure Morcha (JMM)-Congress combine "anti-poor" and has been completed on our side but nothing has been "anti-development", and done on the Myanmar side said it believed in the "pol itics of nepotism and appeasement". Speaking at a rally in Dhanbad's Sindri village as so far. We drove twelve ki-lometres inside Myanmar

Amit Bhelari

using the ruling

Dhanbad's Sindri village as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prepares for the Lok Sabha election, Mr. Modi saidh e could hear cries of "Abki baar, 400 paar (This time, above 400)" whereve er he went. "The only motive of the BJP is fast development. However, the Congress and its allies are the biggest enemies of development. The JMM-Congress com-

So fair, we under weiter & F lometres inside Myanmar on the Kaladan road and saw that it is a dint track," said Joseph Lalhmingthan-ga Chinzah, General Secre-tary, Central Young Lai As-sociation (CTLA) of Mizoram who was part of the team that met the Ara-kan Army. The Kaladan project is nearly \$484-million con-nectivity scheme which re-mains affected by the dete-riorating security situation riorating security situation and technical challenges. The JMM-Congress com-



ime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda during a meeting in Dhanbad on Friday. ANI

Sabha member from Ihark

bine stands for 'jam kar ke khao (eat until you are full). They have looted the people of Jharkhand and created mountains of un-accounted assets for them-selves;" he alleged. The PM also alluded to the seizure of cash and gold worth nearly 2350 crore last year from the premises of Congress Rajya some of the assets.

'I had seen mountains of coal, but never such

ountains of currence mountains of currency notes. This money belongs to the poor tribals of Jhark-hand. Would you accept if anyone takes your money? There should be strict action against such people and the looted money has to be returned," Mr. Modi told the gathering.

Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda, BJP State chief Babulal Marandi, and other party lead-ers, Mr. Modi accused the JMM-Congress combine of using the people of the State as vote banks.

Sabha member from Jhark-hand Dhiraj Sahu, saying he had "never seen such a huge amount of money in my entire life". Mr. Sahu reportedly re-vised his Income Tax re-turns to explain the seized income and paid taxes on some of the assets.

anti-people. The more they anti-people. The more they throw mud on us, the more the lotus (the BJP's symbol) will bloom," he added. The PM also listed va-rious development works undertaken in the State by the BJP-led Centre, includ-ing the airport and on Al ing the airport and an AI-IMS in Deoghar.

Sharing the stage with "Hundred per cent elec trification of railways has been done and three Vande Bharat trains have Vande Bharat trains have been given to Jharkhand," the PM said. Earlier in the day, the PM inaugurated projects worth nearly ₹36,000 crore in the \$tate, includ-ing the revived \$indri fertil-izer plant. Monitored by Hindustan Uvarak and Ra-sayan Limited, the plant is expected to produce

'Modi's guarantee' "The JMM is run by one fa-mily. They think about their own children, not your children, not your children, not your children is my gua-rantee and the country trusts in Modi's guarantee. The IMM and the Congress expected to produce around 12.7 lakh tonnes of

urea per annum. He also flagged off the Deoghar-Dibrugarh train The JMM and the Congress are anti-development and service.

India 'deeply shocked' at attack on Gaza civilians

3

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

India has expressed "ex-treme concern" after more than 100 Palestinians were killed in an alleged Israeli shooting and bombing in northern Gaza on Thurs-day. India has maintained a day. India has maintained a cautious position so far, calling for a two-state solu tion to the crisis, and expressing opposition to ter-ror since the beginning of the conflict.

India has been in con tact with multiple stake ders in this conflict, which has so far claimed more

ders in this continct, which has so far claimed more than 30,000 lives. "We are deeply shocked at the loss of lives in North-ern Gaza yesterday during delivery of humanitarian assistance. Such loss of ci-vilian lives and the larger humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to be a cause for extreme con-cern," the External Affairs Ministry said in a state-ment on Friday.

Displaced persons in Manipur can vote at camps

Dinakar Peri

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) for procurement of CMT) for procurement of CMT (MS) and High-Power Radar (HPR) and two with Brah-Mos Aerospace Private Li-mited (BAPL) for procure-ment of BrahMos missiles and ship-borne BrahMos cruise missile systems. "These detais will furth-er strengthen indigenous capabilities, save foreign exchange and reduce de-pendency on foreign origin

pendency on foreign origin equipment manufacturers in future," the Ministry

said in a statement. The contracts were exchanged

in the presence of Union Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh at South Block. The contract for RD-33 aero engines for MiG-29 aircraft was signed with

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) for

The Hindu Bureau GUWAHATI

The Election Commission (EC) of India has notified a scheme for internally dis placed persons of Manipur to vote at the relief camps the State's Chief Electoral Officer Pradeep Kumar Iha announced on Friday. More than 60.000 peo

ple were displaced due to the violence. Most of them

the violence. Most of them are lodged in relief camps. An EC statement said that the displaced electors were still enrolled at the places where they were or-dinary residents before the conflict started. After due consultations with the Un-ion and State govern-ments, it was decided that these electors would "conthese electors would "con-tinue to be borne on the electoral rolls of the As-sembly and Parliamentary constituencies concerned in Manipur, it said.

Referring to "past prece-dent", the EC said the in-ternally displaced electors would be provided with the facility to vote at "spe-cial polling stations" to be set up in the relief camps.



Centre signs five contracts to procure

arms and ammunition for ₹39,125 cr.

ingine for MiG-29

HAL at a cost of ₹5,249.72 MiG-29 fleet for the resicrore and will be manufac dual service life." Of the two

crore and will be manufac-tured by the Koraput Divi-sion of HAL manufactured under a Transfer of Tech-nology (TOT) licence from the Russian OEM. The pro-gramme will focus on the indigenisation of high va-lue critical components, which would help increase the indigenous content of future Repair and Overdual service life." Of the two contracts with L&T, the contract for CIWS is worth 77,668.82 crore while the deal for HPR is at a cost of 75,700.13 crore. The CIWS will pro-vide terminal air defence to select locations of the country. the statement country, the statement said, adding that direct and future Repair and Over-haul (ROH) tasks of RD-33 indirect employment gen erated by this project would be approximately an average of 2,400 per-sons per year for five years. The Indian Air Force (IAF) operates three squadrons of Mi-29UPG which

sons per year for five years. The HPRs contracted will replace existing long-range radars of the IAF with modern active aper-ture phased array-based HPR with advanced surarons of M1-290PG which have been upgraded. "These aero engines are expected to fulfil the need of the IAF to sustain the op-erational capability of the

manufacturing technology as it would be first of its kind radar built by the priv-ate sector in India," the statement said. "The direct

statement said. "The direct and indirect employment generated by this project would be approximately Two contracts were signed with BAPL, one for the procurement of mis-siles for 719,518.65 crore and procurement of ship-borne BrahMos system for 7988.07 crore.

project is likely to generate employment of nine lakh man-days in Joint Venture entity and around 135 lakh

man-days in ancillary in-dustries [including MSMEs]," the Defence Ministry said.

India to establish international alliance to protect big cats

given their written consent to be part of the IBCA.

There are 96 countries that harbour 'big cats' and the alliance is also open to oth-er countries, conservation

organisations, scientific or-ganisations, businesses, and corporates interested in supporting 'big cats'.

Jacob Koshy

veillance features, accord-ing to the statement and will significantly enhance the terrestrial air defence capabilities of IAF with in-tegration of sophisticated sensors capable of detec-tion of small radar cross-The Union Environment Ministry plans to set up and coordinate an Interna-tional Big Cat Alliance (IBtion of small radar cross-section targets. "It will be a boost to indigenous radar CA), along the lines of the International Solar Al liance, an India-headquar tered initiative to promote solar installations globally. The Union Cabinet ap-proved the proposal on

"India's global leader-ship in tiger conservation

outfit and training require-ments of the Navy. This



So far, as many as 16 countries have given their written consent to be part of the IBCA. AFI

no international body ad-The advantages of mem no international body ad-dressing the conservation challenges of big class across their range glass tats. The pioneering and long-standing tiger and other big cat conservation good practices which have been evolved in India may be replicated in many oth-er range countries, Mr. Ya-dav said. So far, IG countries have The advantages of mem-bership, an accompanying document noted, are a cen-tral common repository for technical know-how and a corpus of funds. The al-liance will strengthen exist-ing species-specific inter-governmental platforms, networks, and transnation-al initiatives on conservaal initiatives on conserva-tion and protection. Fron-So far, 16 countries have

tline staff in member-countries will be trained in eliciting local support for big-cat conser-vation, and research and development in wildlife monitoring. Communities living near forests will be trained in developing eco-tourism and livelihood opportunities. development in wildlife

Centre's housing scheme for tribal groups facing hurdles due to lack of accurate data

aero-engines, it said.

Sobhana K. Nair NEW DELHI

Trying to collect data on beneficiaries

Trying to Cinet Characteristics of the project is while simultaneously im-plementing the project is slowing down the housing component of PM Janjait Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhi-yaan (PM-JANMAN). Of the nearly five lakh houses that were to be con-structed, the government had set a target of sanction-ing 2.5 lakh by February 15. But more than a fortnight later, only 1.59 lakh houses could be sanctioned. could be sanctioned.

Going into an election year, this scheme is being implemented at a lightning speed. The PM-JANMAN was announced in the Union Budget in 2023 and was launched by Prime Minis-ter Narendra Modi on Noember 15, with the target of rolling it out by January

As The Hindu reported on February 17, the govern-ment relied on the PM Gati



ginning from December 15. They were asked to come back to the Centre with an action plan by January 15, so that the sanctioning of houses could begin from January 25.

A tribal house at Lanjigarh block in Kalahandi district of Odisha. BISWARANJAN ROUT

January 25. A majority of the States, according to sources, be-gan work with half-com-pleted surveys to meet the deadline. "As we are going along, there are many dis-crepancies between the data with the Tribla Jffairs Ministry and ours. We have been told that for now, we can sanction houses only in the villages notified by Shakti portal to estimate the total population of 75 tribes, which have been grouped under the Particu-larly Vulnerable Tribal in the villages notified by the Centre, till the two da-tabases are reconciled," a Groups (PVTG) across the Groups (PVTG) across the country. The government has three different esti-mates for the total PVTG population – 28 lakh to be-gin with in November, which increased to 36.5 senior official from Kerala

explained. For example, Madhya Pradesh, in multiple letters which increased to 36.5 lakh by mid-January and ballooning further to 44.64 lakh by January-end. Based on the numbers given by the Gati Shakti app, the State governments were given a month to con-duct their own survey beto the Union government, has flagged the fear that many beneficiaries will be hany beneficiaries will be left out. The State govern-ment has listed out several instances where the PVTGs are found in villages out-side the ones notified by

er static. Especially since these groups fall under the most vulnerable category, they migrate regularly looking for employment. We are trying to ensure that every eligible house-hold is covered," Sandeep Rathore, Secretary of Trip-

ura Rural Development De-partment, explained. The scheme has a total outlay of ₹24,104 crore to be spent over three years, of which nearly 80% is on-ly for construction of hous-es and roads.

In the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the

Union government is spending around ₹15 crore is spending around tiS crore in five States to procure bags with the photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that would be used to distribute foodgrains un-der the Pradhan Mantri Ga-rib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). Activist Ajay Bose re-ceived replics under the Right to Information (RTI) Act that the regional offices

Act that the regional offices of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in Rajasthan, Sikkim, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya have final ised tenders for procuring "woven laminated bags

with an indicative logo of Mr. Modi" to distribute foodgrains. Under the PMGKAY, the government distributes free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana

he Rajasthan office of the FCI has ordered 1.07 crore bags at an stimated cost of ₹13.29 crore. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT and Priority Households. tender to procure 4.22 The Union government claims that over 75 crore people benefited each year lakh bags at ₹12.5 apiece, to Plascom Industries LLP, with the total spending beunder the PMGKAY in 2020-21 and 2021-22. ing ₹52.75 lakh.

Food Corporation to spend ₹15 crore in five

States to buy foodgrain bags with PM photo

Another company named S.S.S. Services has bagged tenders for both According to the reply, the Rajasthan office of the FCI has ordered 1.07 crore FCI has ordered 1.07 crore synthetic bags, each capa-ble of holding 10 kg of grain, at a cost of ₹12.375 per bag, with the total ex-penditure being ₹13.29 crore. Similarly, the Megh-alaya office has awarded

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bagged tenders for both Mizoram and Tripura at a slightly higher price of 74.3 per bag. The FCI's regional office in shillong stated in the RTI reply that Mizoram would procure 1.75-lakh Modi-branded bags for 725 lakh,

lymers Pvt. Ltd. has been selected for supply of PMGRAV bags in the State, but the process is pending the solution of the pro-duced. For Sikkim, the FcI is looking to procure 98,000 bags at 214.65 apiece, while spending 74.35 lakh. "For West Bengal re-gion, selection of company for production of bags is

for production of bags is under process," the RTI

distribution under PMGKAY that started in PMGKAY that started in 2020 when the pandemic began, unbranded 50-kg jutte sacks were used to dis-burse grain. The branding of bags with faces of politi-cal figures has begun in 2024, ahead of the elec-tion," said an official in the Ministry of Consumer Af-fairs, Food and Public Distribution.

while Tripura spent ₹85.51 lakh on 5.98 lakh bags. The FCI's regional office in Sikkim said Injecto Po-lymers Pvt. Ltd. has been



Maitri Porecha NEW DELHI the Centre. Kedar Singh, Director, Madhva Pradesh Rural De velopment Department, explained that since the

count started. PVTGs have been found in 24 distric

been found in 24 district against the initial figure of 16 districts. Fifty thousand additional households have been identified by the State which are eligible for the scheme. Tripura also has pointed out similar problems. "The population is nev-er static. Especially since

pard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah. 16 nations There is currently a gap in many 'big cat' countries in availing resources, and in the optimal use of practic-es and processes. There is

minus guoon reader ship in tiger conservation has been recognised. The BCA, which will be head-quartered in India and to which India has already committed X50 crore [for five years], will lead initia-tives to disseminate good practices in conserving big cats," Environment Minis-ter Bhupendra Yadav said on Friday. Globally, the 'big cats' include the tiger, Jion, leo-pard, snov leopard, puma, ₹988.07 crore. "These missiles would be utilised to meet combat

Vikas Vasudeva

A day after the Congress's

A day after the Congress's central observers asserted that "all is well" within the party's Himachal Pradesh unit, it appears the crisis could be far from over with Cabinet Minister Vikra-maditya Singh on Friday rushing to New Delhi, seek-ing a dialogue with the par-ty "high command".

Mr. Vikramaditya's move

The political turmoil in

'Get act together'

PM questions silence of INDIA | Himachal remains on bloc leaders on Sandeshkhali

Modi says Opposition leaders have closed their eyes, mouth, and ears; accuses Trinamool of betraying the women of Sandeshkhali; he urges people to teach the party a lesson in LS election

Shiv Sahay Singh KOLKATA

4

rime Minister Na-rendra Modi on Fri-day targeted the Trinamool Congress go-vernment in West Bengal over the developments at Sandeshkhali, where a Trinamool leader and his sup porters have been accused sexually abusing wo men, attacking Enforce-ment Directorate officials, and grabbing land in the

Mr. Modi asked why the aders of the Indian Na-

leaders of the Indian Na-tional Developmental In-clusive Alliance (INDIA) were silent on the issue. The Trinamool is a mem-ber of the Opposition bloc. "All the big leaders of the INDIA alliance have closed their eyes, mouth, and ears on Sandeshkhali like the three monkeys of Gandhiji. They held meet-ings together at Patna, Ben-galuru, and Mumbai but galuru, and Mumbai but the leaders of the Left and the Congress sought no answers from the Chief Minister and the government [on Sandeshkhali]. They did not even spare a sight



Face to face: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee call ister Narendra Modi, in Kolkata on Friday, AN

for two months, Mr. Modi said: "There must have been someone who was trying to protect him. Will you forgive such a Trina-mool? We have to reply to every hurt with votes," Mr. Modi said. He said the West Bengal ruling party had become arrogant because it felt that it had the support of a par-ticular vote bank. "On this occasion, Muslim women and children will throw

frime minister Materiad mod, in for the women at San-deshkhali," Mr. Modi said at a public meeting at Arambagh in Hooghly dis-trict. He also accused Con-gress president Mallikarjum Kharge of allegedly saying that "such things happen in Bengal". "The whole country is sad and angry after seeing what Trinamool, which beats the drum of 'Maa, Mati, and Manush', has done to the sisters of San-deshkhali. They should be ashamed of what they have done at Sandesikhali," Mr. Modi said. and children will throw away the Trinamool," he said. He added the Trinamool had introduced a "new model of corruption Referring to Sheikh in West Bengal, which the party has institutionalised with the active protection of the administration".

> should be

Shahjahan, prime accused in the Sandeshkhali inci-dent who was on the run

Bengal CM meets Modi, terms it a 'courtesv call'

Shiv Sahay Singh

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Baneriee on Friday called on Prime Minis-ter Narendra Modi at Raj ter Narendra Modi at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata and said the meeting was less about politics and that they had engaged in a chat. The Prime Minister is on a two-day visit to the State. The leaders met amidst heightened political ten-sion in the State over the Sandeshkhali unrest. Speaking to mediapersons outside Raj Bhavan, the Chief Minister said. "It was

Mr. Vikramaditya's move came even as Pratibha Singh, the State Congress chief and his mother, indi-cated that the Congress needs to get ifs act together ahead of the Lok Sabha election. He also met the rebel Congress MLAs in Haryana on Monday. As per his official programme, he is slated to meet Union Minister for Road Tran-sport and Highways Nitin Gadkari on Saturday as part of his two-day visit to Delhi. Chief Minister said, "It was a courtesy call. Since I could not go to RCGC (Royal Calcutta Golf Club Delhi. Himachal Pradesh started when six Congress legisla-tors cross-voted in favour (Royal Calcutta Golf Club to receive the Prime Minis-ter), I came here." She also added that since election has not been announced, she can call on the Prime

the boil as Congress Minister visits Delhi

Speaker Kuldeep Singh thania

Pathania. After the cross-voting, Mr. Vikramaditya an-nounced – and then took back – his resignation, bringing the leadership tussle in the State Congress unit to the fore. On Thursday, the party asserted that differences had been resolved and the

had been resolved and the government would com-plete its tenure. However, a day after the assurances, a meeting of Mr. Vikramadi tya with some of the dis-qualified Congress MLAs in

Haryana's Panchkula at a private hotel on Friday was being keenly watched. The presence of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's publicity advisor Tarun Bhandari with Mr. Vikramaditya too raised eyebrows. Mr. Vikramadi-tya later went to Delhi, where he was expected to meet the party's central leadership. In Shimla, Ms. Singh acknowledged that at the

acknowledged that at the moment, the BJP is better placed than the Congress in terms of poll prepared-ness. She also expressed support for the six disqual-ified Congress MLAs, pointing out that they would have been hurt.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday expressed his concern over the "high suicide rate in Gujarat", and questioned the "defeaning" silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a

Centre, Gujarat govt. failed the

youth, says Congress president

INBRIDE

statement, Mr. Kharge said the data presented in the Gujarat Assembly showed that 25,000 people the Gigarat Assembly showed that Z_3000 people died by suicide in the past three years, with 500 of them being students. The Congress chief alleged that the BIP-ruled State and the Centre had failed to create new job opportunities for youths, and the data presents "grim picture of a populace grappling with despair".

Supreme Court rejects plea to 'digitally monitor' MPs, MLAs

The Supreme Court on Friday disagreed with a petitioner's view that Members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies should be "digitally monitored" to prevent instances of corruption and horse trading. Chief Justice of India D.Y. and norse trading. Chief Justice of India DX. Chandrachut said lawmakers were not "convicted felons" who needed watching 24X7 lest they may flee from justice. Surely, the petitioner did not want microchips on legislators to keep track of their every movement. "There is also something called 'privacy'. They too have families," Chief Justice Chandrachud told petitioner of Di Vandro. petitioner S.N. Kundra

Released after 5 years in jail, Kashmiri journalist held again

Kashmiri journalist Asif Sultan, who was released after more than five years of imprisonment earlier this week, has reportedly been re-arrested by Jammu and Kashmir Police in a separate case in Srinagar. The J&K police have neither denied nor confirmed the move to re-arrest him. A former assistant editor of the magazine Kashmir Narrator, Mr. Sultan had only reached home on Jahr Marking and Sharin and Sharing Federatoria Hone Value Jahr Jahr Sharing S days after the J&K High Court quashed his detention under Public Safety Act, which permits detention without trial for up to two years.

President's honours for two IAF fighter squadrons

The first Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) squadron of the Indian Air Force, No. 45 Flying Daggers', along with the No. 221 Squadron 'Valiants' which flew almost one-third of all offensive missions of the IAF during the 1999 Kargil conflict, are set to be awarded the President's Standard. The 11 Base Repair Depot (BRD) and 509 Signal Unit will be presented President's Colours by President Droupadi Murmu at Hindon Air Force station on March 8. After the war, the squadron was wound down in 2002

Don't make appeal on basis of caste, religion, EC tells parties Sreeparna Chakrabarty ferent castes or communities, religious and linguistic groups. attempted.

Modi said.

Ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha election, the Election Commission (EC) has directed political par has directed political par-ties, especially star cam-paigners, to maintain de corum while campaigning and refrain from making appeals on the basis of caste or communal politics or make false statements, which can mislead voters. In an advisory issued to all political parties on Fri-day, the EC cited previous examples of such indirect violations using known

violations using known methodologies to avoid strictures under the model code of conduct (MCC), and conveyed that "stern action would be taken against direct or indirect MCC violations".

The advisory comes days before the schedule for elections to the Lok

The Election Commission also

Ishita Mishra

The Delhi High Court has set aside an order issued

by the Central Information Commission (CIC) that di-

by the Celebratic Control and Control and

tion and management of the Ram Mandir, following

the orders of the Supreme Court. The trust, which has 15 members, has col-lected about ₹3,500 crore

in donations since its esta-

asked parties not to make false statements to mislead voters.

Sabha and four State As-semblies is expected. The MCC comes into effect with the announcement of the poll dates. The EC said in the advi-

sory that political parties, candidates and star cam-paigners should not make cised any appeal on the basis of caste or communal feel-

The possible sale of 31 MQ-9B high altitude long endurance armed Un-manned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from U.S. company (JAW) from U.S. company General Atomics to India progressed at to the next stage after a 30-day Con-gressional notification pe-riod concluded on Friday. The deal, pegged at an esti-mated \$3.99 billion, was announced in June last year during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's State visit to Washington DC. "The next step after the conclusion of Congression-al review is for the parties to agree upon and sign a

ment of India, according to the official. With general elections looming in India, it is possible that the next steps will be on hold until May, when the poll results are expected. The sale had run into

difficulties in January, in the U.S. Congress, before the formal notification pe-riod began over allegations to agree upon and sign a Letter of Offer and Accepthat Indian government agents were involved in a



ratist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a U.S. citizen, on American soil. The head of the power-ful Senate Foreign Rela-

tions Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, gave his ap-proval for the deal to progress after receiving assu-rances from the Joe rances from the Joe Biden-led administration that India would probe the alleged plot and cooperate with the U.S. in its own investigatio

Will invest ₹75,000 cr. in M.P., says Adani Group

Mehul Malpani

The Adani Group will in est about ₹75.000 crore in Madhya Pradesh, includ-ing ₹5,000 crore in build-ing the Mahakal Expressing the Mahakal Express-way between Ujjain and Bhopal, Pranav Adani, its Managing Director (Agro, Oil and Gas) and Director of Adani Enterprises, said on Friday. Mr. Adani made the announcement on the first day of a two-day inves-tors summit; "Invest Mad-hya Pradesh: Regional In-dustry Conclave 2024", in dustry Conclave 2024", in Ujjain in the presence of Madhya Pradesh Chief Mi-nister Mohan Yadav.

Mr. Adani said that in-vestment in the State would be made in various sectors, including roads, natural resources, cement, food processing, logistics and agri-logistics, defence manufacturing, thermal power, and renewable power, energy.

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sis aimed at misleading the voters. Criticism of other parties or their workers on the basis of unverified alle-gations or on distortions shall be avoided," the advi-sory further said.

'No personal attacks' It said that no aspect of the private life, not connected with the public activities, of the leaders or workers of other parties is to be criti-cized

Low-level personal at-tacks to insult the rivals shall not be made. It also warned the parties against giving advertisements mas-querading as news items in the media.

> NBDSA raps 3 news channels for violating Code of Ethics

volved four programmes broadcast by News18 India in November 2022 on the

Kamal Haasan keen on contesting on torch symbol: MNM The second matter in The Hindu Bureau

The suspense over which Parliamentary constituen-cy Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan will choose to con-Haasan will choose to con-test from continues, even as a number of options, in-cluding Coimbatore, have been mooted by party sources. Mr. Haasan, last year, had expressed his wish to contest from the Coimba-tore constituency.

while the DMK has re-portedly asked the Tamil Nadu Congress to accom-modate Mr. Haasan within Yet another programme broadcast by Aaj Tak on March 31, 2023, attracted a complaint alleging a viola tion of the Code of Ethics. their quota of seats and let their quota of seats and let him context on the Con-gress' 'Hand' symbol, MNM sources insist that Mr. Haasan would prefer to contest on the 'Battery Torch' symbol, as he did during the last Assembly election. The second-rung lead-ers of the MNM say that It was alleged that in the programme, the anchor failed to mention that a failed to mention that a mosque was burnt down in Nalanda, Bihar, that Mus-lim shops and houses around the mosque were also burnt down, and that the cops did not arrive for several hours.

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Kamal Haasar

they are not aware of the seat-sharing arrangement. Though it would be easy for Mr. Haasan to contes on the 'Hand' symbol and win, it would not benefit MNM in any way, party in-siders said, adding that he was unlikely to take that route

Political analysts, ho Political analysts, ho-wever, pointed out that it might be easier for the leader to contest on the 'Hand' symbol particularly to appeal to people in rural areas across a large Parlia-mentary constituency.

purposes. The judgment was delivered by the single-judge Bench of Justice Subramo-nium Prasad on February 28, which said that it is 28, which said that it is open to the petitioner to approach the appropriate authority under the In-come Tax Act Counsel re-presenting the government maintained that the infor-

Court directive: The CIC directed the CBI share the complete details of applications Trust for getting Income Tax exemptions/o CBDT i

secrated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. the applications for the above mentioned

Narendra Modi. Following a query under the Right to Information Act (RTI Act), the CIC di-rected the CBDT in Novem-ber 2022 to share the complete details of applications filed by the Ram Temple Trust for get-ting exemptions/ deduc-tions under Section 80G(2) (b) of the Income Tax Act for its donations. maintained that the infor-mation pertaining to an as-sessee cannot be granted under the RTI Act in view of Section 138(1)(b) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

In donations since its esta-blishment. The temple trust disclosed that it had received donations of up to ₹25 crore since January 22, when the temple was con-The RTI application was filed by Kailash Chandra Moondra. He had also sought a copy of the trust deed, which was filed with

ings of the electors. No ac-tivity, which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between diftance," a U.S. State Depart-ment official told The Hin-The procurement sions and timelines du. decision ere now with the Govern

Delhi HC sets aside CIC order on Ram Temple trust

The Hindu Bureau The News Broadcasting & Digital Standards Authori-ty (NBDSA) has directed

in Novembér 2022 on the issues of the Shradha Walker murder case and al-leged 'love jihad''. Taking cognisance, the NBDSA de-cided to admonish the broadcaster, particularly the anchors, and imposed a fine of 750,000. It also di-rected the broadcaster to get the video removed from all online platforms within seven days of the order.

order.

V (NBDSA) has directed three TV news channels to remove videos of certain programmes on commu-nal issues as they violated the Code of Ethics and oth-er guidelines. Penalties have also been imposed on two of them. With respect to a pro-gramme broadcast by *Times Now Navibharat* on May 31, 2023, the NBDSA had received a complaint alleging that it violated the Code of Ethics & Broad-

Code of Ethics & Broad-casting Standards and the casting Standards and the principles relating to im-partiality, objectivity, neu-trality, and accuracy. The NBDSA imposed a fine of 12 lakh on the broadcaster and also directed it to re-move the video from its website, YouTube, and its hyperlinks within seven days.

agents were myorce plot to kill Khalistani sepa

of the BJP in the Rajya Sab-ha elections on February 27. They were later disqual-ified from the Assembly by

U.S. drone sales to India progress to the next stage

Sriram Lakshman

INBRIDE



India to see warmer summer as El Nino conditions continue

India is likely to experience a warmer summer this year with El Nino conditions predicted to continue at least until May, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. More heatwave days than normal are predicted over northeast peninsular India – Telangana, over northeast peninsular India – Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and north interior Karnatka – and many parts of Maharashtra and Odisha, it said. The courty is likely to record above-normal rainfall in March. India is likely to see above-normal maximum and minimum temperatures in most parts of the country in the March to May period, JMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said. m

ED freezes ₹580.78-crore assets in betting app case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has frozen assets worth ₹580.78 crore in connection with the "Mahadev Online Book" app case, following searches at multiple locations. The total value of attached/frozen assets in the case now stands at 31,296.05 crore. The fresh round of searches were carried out in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Gurugram, Indore and Raipur. According to the agency, Hari Shankar Tibrewal from Kolkata has agency, Hari Shankar Tibrewal from Kolkata has partnered with the promoters of Mahadev Online Book. "Security holdings worth ₹580.78 crore in the name of the entities beneficially owned by Hari Shankar. Tibrewal have been frozen by the ED," said the agency.

Google removes matrimony, streaming apps over fee row

The company's long conflict with Indian developers over in-app payment fees enters new chapter with many apps booted out after the Supreme Court declined the developers' interim relief

ship.

ech major Google on Friday delisted certain matrimo-nial and dating apps, in-cluding Bharat Matrimony, Tech View and Ourch Truly Madly, and Quack Quack, and two streaming services, Balaji Telefilms's ALTT and the audio plat-form Kuku FM, after the torin kukur Pai, attee the Supreme Court declined to provide the companies be-hind these apps interim re-lief in their battle against the company's mobile app marketplace for the An-droid operating system. The development is like-ly to come as a shock to the firms concerned, which offer a rare segment of dig-ital services where Indian consumers are willing to spend money for enter-tainment and companion-ship. Supreme Court declined to

explore legal options. Kuku FM cofounder Vi-nod Kumar Meena said in a statement that Google was behaving like a 'monopoly,' and that the search giant was 'on [a] hunt to collect rent' from developers. OuackOuack founder

ment that the company would comply with Google's rules to get back on the marketplace. "Unfortunately, we will

ship. Bharat Matrimony says it has a market cap of over ₹2.300 crore. The app's founder Mu-rugavel Janakiraman was quoted by the news outlet TechCrunch as saying that have to comply with Goo-gle's current policies as there is no alternative or immediate remedy," Mr. this was a "dark day" for the Internet in India and that the company would Mittal told *The Hindu*. "This shows the control Google has over the app



economy in a growing country like India." In a statement, Google said that only a small num-ber of firms have to pay any fees over 15% on pay-ments users made in-app and that the companies that it was acting on had a

QuackQuack founder Ravi Mittal said in a statethat it was acting on had a long window of opportunity to comply with its rules. Google requires digital

services to pay a platform fee that could range from 11-30%, depending on what payment method is used, and the size of the used, and the size of the app's user base. Disney+ Hotstar and ex-am prep service Testbook, for whom the interim relief granted by the Supreme Corporate tax cuts bring in investments, jobs, says Sitharaman

Vikas Dhoot NEW DELHI

Court came later, and is still valid, have not yet been delisted. "Today, we have over 200,000 Indian develop-ers using Google Play who adhere to our policies

adhere to our policies ... however, for an extended

period of time, 10 compa-nies, including many well-established ones, have

established ones, have chosen to not pay for the immense value they re-ceive on Google Play by se-curing interim protections from the court," Google said in a statement.

from the court," Goode said an satement. "After giving these deve-opers more than three years to prepare, including three weeks after the Su-preme Court's order, we are taking necessary steps to ensure our policies are applied consistently across the ecosystem, as we do for any form of policy vio-lation globally," the compa-ny adde. Many of these develop-ers coalesced around a riv-al app store effort by the Valmart-owned payments company PhonePe last month, where Sameer Ni-gant the firm's CEO, boast-ed that no app would be re quired to pay platform fees and that the app market-place would find other ways of monetising itself.

The government's decision The government's decision to slash corporate tax rates in late 2019 was a well-con-sidered move to attract in-vestments that has made a lot of difference, and a ma-jor transition is under way in the industry.albour ralain the industry-labour rela tionship, Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Mi-nister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday. She was replying to a

query on the efficacy of corporate tax cuts and the query on the entracy of corporate tax cuts and the production linked incen-tive schemes, some of which may be fuelling cap-ital-intensive investments that create fewer jobs, dur-ing an interaction with stu-dents at the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Noting that India had a very high level of taxation for companies, the Minis-ter said tax rates were cut with a view to bring in more investments, which in turn would create jobs

in turn would create jobs and trigger a "virtuous cy-cle" in the economy. Many countries were "contem-plating" such tax structure changes to attract invest-ments at the time, she said, ments at the time, she said, stressing that greenfield as well as brownfield invest-ments are now happening. "Even now, I think that is the way to go forward

and ensure additional ca

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and ensure additional ca-pacities are coming in areas that are going to be job-creators. If there is a perception that it may not have resulted in as many jobs as was in the olden days of investments, it is al-so because... even as we took this decision, we were aware the industrial revoaware the industrial revo lution called 4.0 was setting in, Web 3.0 was com-ing in, which is now talked about as AI and GPT.'

'Upskilling must' "The matter of fact is that

"The matter of fact is that industry, particularly in manufacturing, is going through a huge transition, a reset. And when resets happen, the labour force is also catching up with skills required to meet with that reset. So there will be re-quirement of labour... that is why the government has ramped up skilling and up-skilling (for] people to get into industry, she said, Manti Labour to be at a dif-

wants labour to be at a dif ferent level now, as it has introduced robotics, and digitised the operations. "There is a transition and reset happening between industry and labour. If we are looking at only the old-fashioned [sectors] like cement and iron and steel.. no, there are newer indus tries coming," she said.

SC to hear petition by Uddhav camp on March 7

The Hindu Bureau

The Supreme Court will The Supreme Court will hear an appeal field by the Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasa-heb Thackeray (UBT) party challenging the decision of the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker to dismissi disqual-ification petitions against Chief Minister Eknah Shinde's camp while de-claring them the "real" Shiv Sena. Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on India D.Y. Chandrachud on Friday indicated that the appeal will be heard on March 7. Meanwhile, la-wyers for both sides sought an early hearing. On an earlier occasion,

On an earlier occasion, Mr. Salve informed the court about an identical petition filed by the UBT camp in the Bombay High Court. He had questioned how the UBT could agitate an identical cause in two courts at the same time.

25 26 27

8 Not a real way out for an argumentative guy (6)

12 One small piece of land, middle of sea (4)

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Across

Ahead of Ambani wedding bash, Jamnagar airport gets international tag for 10 days

Jagriti Chandra

daughter of Viren Mer-chant, CEO of Encore

Healthcare

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have pressed in resources to set up a Custom, Immi-gration and Quarantine (ClQ) facility at the airport. Jamnagar is a defence airport where commercial flights are allowed; the Air-ports Authority of India (AAI) has erected a passen-ger terminal building for the purpose. However, for the wedding, the Air Force has permitted access to its sensitive "technical" area as well. The Jamnagar airport has been declared an interna-tional airport for 10 days as global bigwigs such as Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Rihanna, Ivanka Trump and leaders from various countries descend on the Gujarat city for the three-day pre-wedding bash of Anant Ambani and Radhi-ka Merchant. ka Merchant. Anant Ambani is the son of Reliance Industries Ltd. CMD Mukesh Ambani and Radhika Merchant is the as well. "Up to three aircraft are

being accommodated in the technical area at a gi-ven time," said an airport official on the condition of

official on the condition of anonymity. The civilian area of the airport can accommodate six small aircraft such as Falcon-200s or three big ones such as the Airbus A320. On Friday, a total of 140 aircraft movements (arrival and departures) Healthcare. The airport was allowed to receive international flights from February 25 to March 5, said an airport of-ficial. The Union Health Mi-nistry, the Finance Minis-try, and the Home Ministry

(10)

17

18

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were expected, up from the usual six movements the airport witnesses, the official said.

official said. In preparation for the massive inflow of guests, the AAI has also expanded the size of its passenger building from 475 sq m to 900 sq m, allowing it to ac-commodate nearly 360 passengers during peak hours as compared to 180 earlier. "Expansion work was planned much earlier earlier. "Expansion work was planned much earlier but were expedited for the event," the official said.

The airport has also en-hanced manpower in "ev-ery vertical". Thirty-five housekeeping staff have been added to the existing strength of 16; the State go-vernment has also doubled the deployment of security personnel from 35 to 70; ground handling agencies have raised the strength of their staff from 65 to 125. The airport has also en-

Elephants in the eastern Himalayan floodplains bu-ry their calves in a 'legs upright' position, a new study has found. Through long-tern observation, the researchers also found that elephant herds tend to avoid the paths where the carcasese were buried and take parallel routes. "We aimed to under-stand the peri-mortem behaviour of the Asian ele-phants. The major findings reflect that the carcasses

legs for a distance before being buried in a 'legs upright' position," re-searchers said in the study published in the latest is sue of the Journal of Threa tened Taxa.

Strong bond: Elephants taking the carcass of an elephant calf for burial. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Indian Institute of Science to explore human spaces to fulfil their dietary and ecological requirements

Elephants take dead calves to be

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weighing 160 kg was three or four months old while The second seco

cause one or more mem-bers of a herd needed a better grip to hold and lay the calf delicately in the trench

"This strategic beha-viour also reflects the care viour also reflects the care and affection of the herd member(s) towards the de-ceased. The behaviour sug-gests that in a situation of space crunch, the herd member(s) prioritise the head for the burial before the feet," the study said.

reflect that the carcasses were carried by trunks and



- 21
- 23
- This is wants and longings basically sorted (4,4)
- 30 Stan's tree (6) A computer man's brief moment of masculinity (8)
- A computer man's brief moment of masculinity (8) Redo my chip arayed under the skin (10) Keen? Please turn over small weight to find a puzzle (10) English plundered our money (4) An Asian model mostly has one (4) I am good model for sorcerers (4)

- Oddly that also makes a design on skin (6) Prepare king for some kind of exercise (5) Hot season seasoning reportedly for full-bodied roll (10) Gout hit? Deal with determination! (5,2,3) 15
- Indian state, partly holy with almost every disorder (8) Strong old colour (4-4)
- State of love, partly joyful, leads to nothing (4)
 Appease, support and spoil without slightest of validity A California Company Plant (6) 22 25 Painful part of each year (4)

 - 26 Resting place of ex-Prime Minister, not the first (4)
 27 Secret agents' hidden backside entrance (4)

buried in untrodden paths: study Rahul Karmakar GUWAHATI

phants (Elephas maximus) and their African counter-parts (Loxodonta africana)

Education and Research in Pune studied five such cases in the northern Bengal landscape. The study area covered fragmented forests, tea es-tates, agricultural lands, and military establish-ments in the vicinity of the

ments in the vicinity of the Gorumara Wildlife Divi-sion and Buxa Tiger Re-serve. It explains the burial strategy of elephants in the irrigation drains of the tea

The message from Rama

Dasaratha asks Sumantra to recount all that happened af ter he drove the chariot taking Rama, Lakshmana and Sita from Avodhva to the forest

from Ayodhya to the forest. Sumantra conveys Rama's message to the royal family, said Navalpakkam Vasudevachariar in a discourse. "Rama wanted net convey His respects to His father. He wanted His mother Kausalya to know that He was safe. She is the wife of Dasaratha, an Agnihotri. Thus, she must see Agni as her son, and not roy over Rama's absence. She must not harbour roy over lama's absence. She of Dasaratha," says Sumantra. Rama's message to Bharata is that, as the future king, he must action accordance with stipulated rules. He must obey his father and treat all the royal mothers alike.

He must obey instance and team the second alke. As for Lakshmana, Sumantra says the prince was very angry. He had asked what wrong Rama had done to de-serve exile. Was it right to exile Rama, to please Kaikey? It was a decision taken without due thought. What the second taken without due thought. would be the reaction of people to Dasaratha's decision to banish Rama from the kingdom, Lakshmana had wondered.

dered. The whole world would be against Dasaratha's deci-sion, and having earned the displeasure of the whole world, could he continue to be king? Lakshmana had declared that he could no longer con-sider Dasaratha as his father. Rama was everything to him – borther, king, relative and father. Sita had had no words to utter. She had just shed tears, Sumantra says.

While elephant calf bu-rial is mentioned in African literature, it has hardly been documented in the Asian context. Parveen Kaswan, an Indian Forest Service officer posted in Alipurduar of West Bengal and Akashdeep Roy of the

Rampant environmen-tal changes and forest des-truction push Asian ele-

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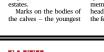


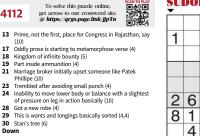
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leading to 'novel' elephant behaviours in shared While elephant calf bu-

FAITH





THE HINDU -Editorial



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Decoding the script

Findings from the genome sequencing must be shared widely

The Genome India Project, a project fund-ed and coordinated by the Department of Biotechnology, announced that it had fin-ished sequencing 10,000 Indian genomes. This means that the complete genomes – the DNA blueprint that constitutes and maintains human bodies – from 10,000 individuals were analysed Dueprint that constructes and maintains human bodies – from 10,000 individuals were analysed to create a 'reference' Indian human genome. In-dia first sequenced a human genome in 2006. In a way, the latest enterprise would be akin to the creation of the first ever detailed map of India – with all political units, key geographical and to-pographical features – as opposed to a world map prepared elsewhere, with India just one of several countries and devid of granular detail. Are 10,000 individuals representative of a coun-try of over a billion? Surely not. But for now, it is the best there is and forms a vital template, the basis on which many more insights can be prised. The most immediate application is in combating disease. In 2009, geneticists in India, spart of an international collaboration, disco-vered that an aberration in a protein , MtBPCG (cardiac myosin binding protein C), was correlat-ed with a high risk of heart failure. This genetic variant was present in approximately 4% of those

tai that injoism form of the second s er, the subsequent decades have tempered such expectations. For one, only a small fraction of disease is monogenic (determined by a single gene). Despite advances in knowledge of how rare, inherited genes caused debilitating disease, rare, inherited genes caused debilitating disease, little could be done as the necessary medicines, if discovered, were usually too expensive for those in need. In other words, genome sequencing only opened up new realms of complexity. While Ge-nome India should go beyond the 10,000 mark, it must also be truly democratic. The findings ought not be locked up in the ivory towers of aca-demia and should involve imaginative collabora-tions with scientists, students, technology com-panies, ethicists and social scientists to push forward India's understanding of itself.

Vulnerable to criticism

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ED's low credibility casts a doubt on its intent behind summoning TN Collectors

Interto Definito Suffittioning IN CONECOPS The instructure of the law against money ing questions about the possible violation of federal principles. One such question has ari-sen in Tamil Nadu, where the Enforcement Direc-torate (ED) is trying to find out whether illegal sand mining in the State is due to corruption and if the "proceeds" are being laundered. The Pre-vention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) allow the ED to probe the money laundering aspect of crimes registered by the police in various States. the Lob probe mixing hannering aspect to crimes registered by the police in various States. Allegations of rampant lilegal sand minng, either by extraction in excess of permitted limits or without any permission, are quite common in Ta-mil Nadu. In ruling that District Collectors are obliged to respond to summonse issued by the ED, the Supreme Court of India has underscored Tamil Nadu's duty to cooperate with investiga-tions under central laws. However, this may not necessarily mean that the ED's attempt to assess the likely loss to the exchequer as a result of un-checked mining is within its jurisdiction. A final determination may be required on this. The top court has stayed the operation of a Madras High Court order, which had earlier stayed the sum-monses to the Collectors. The State government monses to the Collectors. The State government and the District Collectors concerned had filed writ petitions in the High Court against the "usur-pation" of the State's powers by the central agen-cy and the validity of the summonses.

pation of the state spowers by the central agen-cy and the validity of the summonses. The Court has now described these petitions as thoroughly misconceived and that the High Court's order was due to "utter misconception of law". It has ited Section 50 of PMLA on the ED's power to summon any person to give evidence or produce any record necessary for the investiga-tion. It has noted that the probe is based on first information reports registered in Tamil Nadu, and some of the sections in those cases were scheduled offences under the PMLA. However, it does not take into account the High Court's rea-soning, based on the Court's verificit upholding the PMLA in Vigay Madenial Choudhary is Union of Indiai GO221, that the summonses indicated that the "proceeds of crime" have not been iden-tified at all, and that the probe was nothing more than a "fishing expedition" to find out whether any scheduled offence has been committed. The High Court had cited the 2022 judgment on the any scheduled offence has been committed. The High Court had cited the 2022 Judgment on the point that the ED cannot pursue cases on a no-tional basis, on the assumption that an offence has been committed. While asking officials to cooperate with an investigation is unobjectiona-ble in itself, is cannot be forgotten that the ED's low credibility and obvious lack of independence make its actions vulnerable to the criticism of be-ing biased against States ruled by the political ad-versaries of those in power at the Centre.

Change and continuity in India's Palestine policy

istorically, India has been a firm

storically, India has been a fm supporter of the Palestine cause. And wen when India's relationship with Israel flourished in the past three decades, New Delhi has maintained a careful balance between its new partnership and historical Commitment towards Palestine. In recent years, there have been questions on whether India is abandoming this balance and tilting towards the Jewish state in a changing West Asidestep the Palestine question for better bilateral ties with Israel. Immediately after the October 7 Hamas attack

ties with Israel. Immediately after the October 7 Hamas attack in Israel, in which at least 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on X, said he was "deeply shocked by the news of [the] terrorist attack". He said, "Use aread in exclude juvilia them of the idificant "We stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult

Mr. Modi, who became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel in 2017, has a good personal chemistry with Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Supporters of Mr. Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Hardly conceal their admiration towards Israel's aggressive security model. On October 26, barely hardly conceal their admiration towards Israel's aggressive security the Hamas attack, India abstained from a vote at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that called for an "immediate, durable and sustainable humanitarian truce" in Gaza. India explained its stand by saying that there was no explicit condemnation of the October 7 "terror attack in the resolution". All these factors suggested that India's historical policy towards Palestine was undergoing a paradigm shift. Mr. Modi, who became the first Indian Prime

Evolving approach India's Palestine policy has evolved over the years. When the UN General Assembly voted on a resolution to partition Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state and an international city (Jerusalem) in November 1947, India, along with (Jerusalem) in November 1947, India, along with Pakistan and the Arab bloc, voted gainst it. Prime Minister Jawaharali Nehru had compared the settler Zionists in historical Palestine to the Muslim League of undivided India. His position was that India, having gone through the horrors of Parition, should not support the parition of Palestine. But when the state of Israel was declared in May 1948, India swithy adopted a pragmatic line: in 1950, it recognised Israel, but stopped short of establishing full diplomatic relations. Throughout the Cold War, India, an advocate of Third World autonomy, was one of the most vocal supporters of the Palestine cause. After it established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1952, bilateral lies between New

with Israel in 1992, bilateral ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv began to deepen and broader (today, Israel is one of India's major defence and technology partners). But India publicly



maintained its support for "a negotiated solution,

maintained its support for "a negotiated solution, resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with IEss Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side at paeca with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quarter Road map and relevant UNSC Resolutions" – this means that India supported the creation of a Palestime state with East Jerusalem as its capital and based on the 1967 borders. This position has evolved further after Mr. Modi became Prime Minister. In February 2018, when he visited Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, he called for dialogue to find a permanent solution to the crisis, but stopped short of saying anything on the status of Jerusalem or borders. It does not mean that India supports Israel's claim over the whole of Jerusalem (New Delhi voted against the U.S. decision to recognise Jerusalem against the U.S. decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital), but it will not talk about the as indices capitally, but it with not take about the contentious issues such as the capital and border any more, while remaining a partner of Israel and a supporter of the two-state solution. Realpolitik displaces the moral content of India's Palestine policy.

poincy. After October 7 A close analysis of India's voting record at the UN, post-October 7, and the statements made by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) suggests that this position of balancing has not changed. It is neither a strong moral critic, like Brazil or South Africa, of the way Israel is conducting the war, nor a mute spectator or enabler of Israel, like the United States or the United Kingdom. A few days after Mr. Modi's tweet declaring solidarity with Israel over the 'terror attack', the MEA stated that India backed "a sovereign, independent viable state of Palestine". After its first absention, there were at least four votes at

first abstention, there were at least four votes at the UNGA on Israel.

the UKGA on Israel. On November 12, 2023, India voted in favour of a resolution that condemned Israeli settlements "in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan". Two weeks later, New Delhi voted in favour of another resolution that expressed "deep concern" over Israel's continuing occupation of Syria's Golan Heights. On December 12, India supported a resolution that called for "an immediate humanitarian cassefire". And on December 19, It voted for the Palestinian right to self-determination. self-determination. The voting record speaks for itself. One cannot

have a two-state solution if Israeli settlements continue in Palestinian territories. And the only path towards a solution is diplomacy, not war, as there is no balance of power between Israel, the mightiest military in West Asia, and the Palestinian militants. So, in essence, if one supports the two state-solution, there should be a

death sentences to life imprisonment. The acquiitals of death row prisoners by the Supreme Court deserve particular attention. Despite comprising a smaller proportion of death cases at the Court previous years, these decisions underscore systemic failures by the police, prosecution, and trial courts. Acquitals have been outcomes of fabricated evidence, manipulated first information reports, the possibility of tampered forensic evidence and dubious recoveries of incriminating evidence by the police. What made the year 2023 particularly striking is the dominance of acquitats in the Court's death penalty decisions in the year.

call for an immediate end to violence, support dialogue, condemn settlements and, in principle, back Palestinian right to self determination. This is what India has done, unlike the U.S., which claims to be supporting the two-state solution while voting against all resolutions at the UN and refusing to back the ceasefire call.

India's interests The support for the Palestine cause, even if limited, is rooted in tangible national interests. Israel's ongoing offensive in Gaza, which has killed over 30,000 people, wounded some 70,000 and displaced nearly 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, is one of the gravest humaniterine treaddies of the 21st contrus. Jer humanitaria tragedies of the 21st century. Israel, despite this rogue behaviour, manages to avoid the wrath of the international laws and system mainly because of the unconditional support it enjoys from the U.S. But America's support for Israel and Tel Aviv's disregard for Palestinian lives and international laws have created strong

Israel and Tel Awiv's disregard for Palestinian lives and international laws have created strong reactions in the Global South. South Africa took Israel to the International Court of Justice, while Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva accuses Israel of commiting "genocide" in Gaza. China has repeatedly called for a ceasefire, while Russia is hosting different Palestinian factions, India, which aspires to be a leader of the Global South, cannot ignore these voices and sentiments. That is why External Afains Minister S, Jaishankar said at the Munich Security Conference last month that Israel "should be and should have been minfdlu of the civilian casualties in Gaza", which is India's sharpest criticism of the Israel wart ill now. The October 7 attack and Israel's retaliatory war have also turned the strategic clock in the region back. Before October 7, India was gearing up to work in the post-Abraham Accords strategic reality through its cooperation with the Arabs, sraefis and Americans. But further Arab-Israel reconciliation is now on hold. The U.S.'s reputation stands as tarnished as that of Israel. If Saudi-Israel normalisation is now taking place, the India-Middle Fast-Enrone Fornomic Corritor reputation stands as tarnished as that of Israel. If Saudi-Israel normalisation is no taking place, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) will have to wait. If the crisis persists and Houthis continue to target vessels in the Red Sea, it would create lasting economic pains for India. A prolonged war in Gaza would also enhance risks of a wider conflict in the region, involving Iran, Israel and America, who are all India's partners. An immediate end to the war, restoration of order and stability in West Asia and restoration of order and stability in West Asia and a permanent fix to the Palestine question are as much in India's interests as anybody else's in West Asia. This should be the guiding core of India's Act West policy.

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India's burgeoning death penalty crisis

the 561 prisoners on death row at the end of 2023, India's death row population has continued to rise to reach its highest-ever numbers since 2004. In an unprecedented trend, the Supreme Court of India acquitted nearly 55% of the death row prisoners idquired nearly 55% of the death row prisoners. (six prisoners) in the cases it heard in 2023. This development must be understood alongside the Court initiative (in September 2022) to convene a Constitution Bench to reform death penalty Constitution Bench to reform death penalty sentencing, However, given the continued evidence of the broken state of sentencing in India's courts, the potential of this Bench to truly turn things around appears uncertain. Instead, the high rate of acquittals with a skyrocketing death row population must compel the Court to consider whether India's death penalty reform can ever be limited to the question of sentencing.

More commutations and acquittals Data from Project 39A's 2023 annual statistics on the death penalty show that the Court's attempts to reform sentencing through lis directions in *Manoj* w *The State Of Madhya Pradesh* (May 2022) have failed to trickle down to trial courts for the second year in a row. In 2023, trial courts for hashence of information mertaining to the accused absence of information pertaining to the accused that was mandated in Manoj.

that was mandated in *Manoj*. Additionally, the High Courts continued their reluctance in confirming death sentences in 2023. While the Supreme Court did not confirm the death sentence in any of the 10 cases it decided, only one death sentence was confirmed across High Courts. This follows the findings from the Death Penalty India Report (2016) that ultimately, 4.9% of the death sentences imposed by trial courts between 2000-15 were confirmed at the appellate level. Our the years, a majority of the death cases before the years, a majority of the Court upholding convictions, but commuting the

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Drive' for one-party rule Since the formation of the government by the BJP in 2014, the party seems to have launched a full-fledged drive to 'organise' defections especially from Congress governments. There seems to be both coercive tactics and the carrot and stick policy. The aim of the BJP leadership seems to be to eliminate the Opposition, come what may, and establish a

one-party regime. One has



India's historical

policy towards Palestine has

been evolving.

but a permanent fix

to the Palestine

question should not be lost

sight of

is with Project 39A, National Law University, Delhi

Snehal Dhote

s with Project 39A, itional Law iiversity, Delhi

Death penalty

sentencing reform initiated

by the Supreme Court of India

has failed to percolate to trial courts

striking is the dominance of acquittals in the Court's death penalty decisions in the year. The Court has confined itself to case-specific reprimands in acquittal decisions, without acknowledging systemic problems within which the death penalty is being administered. When it comes to sentencing, the Court has been more willing to recognise systemic concerns plaguing the death penalty. The decision of the Court in September 2022 to send crucial issues surrounding death penalty sentencing to a Constitution bench reflects that acknowledgement. However, the growing acknowledgement. However, the growing number of acquittals by the Supreme Court in death penalty cases creates an urgency to recognise the very high chances of error in our criminal system. Repeated instances of acquittals from death row must force us to reconsider the risk we are taking in a system such as ours.

State of the prisoner Death row prisoners live in constant distress due to an ever-looming fear of execution. They are subjected to constant violence, ridicule and humiliation within prisons. Prison policies segregating them from work, education and leisure remove the little means available for them to cope under such dehumanising circumstances. The death row experience comes with life-long

psychological ramifications, which continue well after a prisoner has been acquitted or commuted. Vet, the death row population continues to increase every year due to the escaggerated and unjustifiable use of the death penalty by the trial courts. Data from Project 39As report, revealing a 5% decrease in High Court case disposal rate, exacerbates an already deep crisis. A majority of death row prisoners are needlessly subjected to the horrors of death row before their acquittal or commutation. Others may have been less fortunate. In September 2002, a person under the sentence of death in Verwada jail died by suicide after spending six years on death row. His case had been pending confirmation in the Bombay High Court since 2019. It should not be acceptable to us as a society that we are increasingly subjecting individuals to a dehumanising punishment using processes that are far from reliable. In light of such a crisis, the Supreme Court has much to reconsider. The Court's convening of a Constitution Bench, laudable as it may be, may not only be ineffective but also off the mark in tackling the death penalty crisis. Death penalty sentencing reform from the Supreme Court has persistently fielded to percloade to trial courts, pointing to the futility of this exercise. More importantly, Project 39AS 2023 report shows a

pointing to the futility of this exercise. More importantly, Project 39A's 2023 report shows a dissonance between the narrow sentencing question that the Court prioritises over the actual cope of the crisis that runs across the criminal process in death cases – from the police to prisons. In effect, the Supreme Court is perhaps undertaking an exercise that does too little, too

The writers authored the Death Penalty in India: Annual Statistics Report 2023'. The views expressed are personal. Those in distress or having suicidal tendencies could seek help and counselling

sted interests

Tharcius S. Fernando, Chennai

Study on obesity rates

what is known. Work

The Lancet study (Inside pages, March 1) confirms

pressure, a lack of time and an advertising of 'wrong foods' are what make fast

foods enticing. A main reason for the popularity of western junk food is that celebrities endorse these

products. Policymakers

should give incentives to healthy products. Veena Shenoy, Thane, Maharashtra

The course of life It is ironic that Santhan, a convict in the Rajiv Gandhi case, breathed his last in a hospital named after the very leader whose assassination he was associated with. Life is

A IN-X

strange. P.G. Menon, Chennai

CM CM

Chandigarh The Rajya Sabha elections saw the spectacle of legislators brazenly giving vent to their dissidence by

the Rajya Sabha elections in

Himachal Pradesh besides the election of Mayor in Chandigarh Municipal

Corporation as examples

The Opposition parties

should understand that

S.K. Khosla.

there is an existential fight to save democracy.

structure of the parties in the Opposition bloc. It is wrong to blame the Bharatiya Janata Party for 'engineering and exploiting' the internal strife in the Opposition bloc. Instead, these parties have to shift these parties have to shift gears to gain the confidence of their cadres and face emerging challenges. **Ravi Mathur,** Noida, Uttar Pradesh

protest' that led to the killing of 13 people. The fight has been a long one with constant threats from

:::

Health and industry The verdict against the reopening of the Vedanta

voting in favour of the BJP's candidates, signifying the decline in the internal structure of the parties in Sterlite copper unit in Thoothukudi is a great victory for the people, social activists (like Professor Fatima Babu) and political leaders who were involved in this struggle for over two decades. One cannot forget the 'gunning down of a protest' that led to the

State of the prisoner

– THE HINDU – **GROUND ZERO**



India's parched +IT capital

Households in Bengaluru, dependent on water supply from the Cauvery river or water tankers, are preparing for the current water crisis to worsen as the city stares at a long, hot summer: K.C. Deepika and K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj report on the worries of the people at a time of drought across the State

> harfunnisa, 70, a resident of Varthur in south-eastern Bengaluru, has been struggling for the last one month to ar-range for water for her family's daily needs. As the prices of water tankers have shot up exponentially over the last one month, a few houses in the neighbourhood, all one-room tene-ments, have now decided to order one water traker and share the costs A 4,000-litre tanker was about ₹500-₹600 a month tanker and share the costs. "A 4,000-litre tanker was about ₹500-₹600 a

> ago: now it claimer and snate toxis. "A 4,000-litre tranker was about \$500-\$600 a month ago; now it costs 1,000. Over and above this, we need to buy drinking water cans. Our wa-ter expenses grew to over \$4,000 in February. And this is just the beginning of summer. The wa-ter tanker operators have been warning us that the costs may double soon," says Sanina Taj, 35, another resident of the area. Households in Bengaluru, dependent on wa-ter supply from the Cauvery river or water tank-ers, are preparing for the situation to worsen as the city stares at a severe summer. Ganga P, a senior citizen who lives in an in-dependent house in east Bengaluru, says she washes clothes less often, preferring instead to hang them out to dry in the hot sun if they have costs ₹1,000 Over and above this, we need to buy drinking water cans SAMINA TAJ

hang them out to dry in the hot sun if they have been worn only for a few hours. She also handwashes clothes as far as possible, to save water. "I have stopped using water to clean the veranda of my house. I do not mop the floor daily to save water so I don't have to buy a tanker," she says. Whitefield and Varthur, which house the Infor

the sof user flave to buy a talket, site says. Whitefield and Varhur, which house the Infor-mation Technology corridor in eastern Bengalu-ru, are some of the worst-affected areas by the drinking water crisis. The Bruhat Bengaluru Ma-hanagara Palike (BBMP), the crity's civic body, has directed officials to dig borewells in 58 areas which are refailing under the crisis. Of them, I6 are in Mahadevapura, 25 in R.R. Nagar, five in Bornmanahalli and three each in the Yelahanka and Dasarahalli zones. No one has been spared; water has become a rare commodity even for those who live in posh apartments and can afford to buy it easily. Unlike the older parts of the city where, despite the drinking water needs over irrigation and assured supply til the next mousoon, these areas are not yet serviced by piped water supply from the

supply till the next monsoon, these areas are not yet serviced by piped water supply from the Cauvery river. On account of unplanned growth over the last two decades, these regions have been stretched beyond their capacity. Basic in-frastructure such as drinking water and under-ground drainage are absent, so they rely on bore-wells and water tankers. Karnataka saw a few consecutive years of sur-plus rain until 2023 when the monsoon failed. The underground water table levels are depleted,

ggravating the water crisis. The borewells of the BBMP are the source of water ATMs, or easy ac-cess points to vend safe water. As they have also dried up, the civic body has put up posts at several water ATMs stating that one person can take only one pot of water a day.

Down to a trickle

Down to a trickle In these areas, water is the most commercialised and politicised commodity. Even before these neighbourhoods joined the city's civic limits in 2007, the local panchayats had dug borewells and laid pipelines to supply water, these are now overseen by the BBMP. But many of these bore-wells have gone dry or the force of water is down to a trickle, disrupting service in many areas. "The water man (who is in charge of releasing water in specific areas) acts like a king. We need to go and beg at his house for water. We pay the water board, But he doesn't give us water unless we pay him," says Radha S., 45. She adds that the local MLA and former councilior also target blocks that have not voted for them. In such a scenario, water tankers have beccome ubiquitous. In the absence of any regulatory mechanism,

In the absence of any regulatory mechanism, the prices of water tankers have been erratic. Tankers usually come in three capacities – 4,000 litres, 6,000 litres, and 12,000 litres. The prices of these have shot up to ₹1,000, ₹1,500 and ₹2,000, respectively. For the first time, the price has crossed the ₹2,000-mark in the city.

The cost of water tankers has shot up to such extent that even residents of a



nen and children collect potable drinking water from a public tap at Indahalli off Mysuru road, in Bengaluru. The water is supplied by th galore Water Supply and Sewerage Board. K. MURALI KUMAR Navandahalli off My

crore to redrill some of these borewells and dig new ones in the outer zones. But as the aquifer le vels have depleted, this may be too little too late.

The changing face of the city

The changing face of the city While the IT capital reels under a water crisis not seen in recent times, experts say this was only waiting to happen. Rashmi Kulranjan and Shash-ank Palur, hydrologista at WELL Labs under the Urban Water Programme, point out that though there are reports of water shortages in other ci-ties due to the variability of rainfall from the southwest monsoon last year, cities such as Delli and Kolkata are not as vulnerable due to their proximity to major river or coast. So, it relies on an expensive and unreliable source of water that is located 90 km away and 350 metres below the city's devation. Half ins supply is still provided by groundwater sources. And this fluctuates signifi-cantly according to the season," says Shashank. Bengaluru was not always dependent on net works of ippelines or borewells pumping water

Bengauru was not anways dependent on net-works of pipelines or borewells pumping water from afar or from below the grounds says Rashmi. "Most of the city's water bodies, sways Rashmi. "Most of the city's water bodies, sways Rashmi. Structed mainly to serve irrigation and livestock purposes. The undulating terrain of the city al-lowed for man-made cascading lake systems to be built; these played a critical role in managing the availability and surplus of water. Despite cen-turies of effort that went into building the re-gion's water resilience, lakes eventually began to lose their importance with the introduction of piped water supply's the says. Shashank says with rapid urbanisation, lakes have been directly encroached on or are drying out. "This has not only resulted in a more parched city, but also aggravated the risk of flooding. The lakes and storm water drains have also become a dumping ground for treated and untreated seavage from the buildings around them. This affects the possibility of using them to capture rainwater or storm water," he says. The loss of the city's blue-green infrastructure and capture rainwater or harvesting and capture methods, he adds. The highly pollu-tarie delladual take, one of them goint out, Benga-luru is situated between two river basins. To its west are Vrushabhavathy and Arkavathy, tribu-taries of the Cauvery, and on its east is the Ponni-varer bodies plankin. But vrushabhavathy, and only are basching in the city, has become pol-uted due to awage an offluent discharge. TV. Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecolog-cal Sciences, lindia in Stitute of Science, says Bengaluru receives annual rainfall of 700-850 works of pipelines or borewells pumping water from afar or from below the ground, says Rashmi.

ical Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, says Bengaluru receives annual rainfall of 700-850 millimetres, which amounts to 15 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of rainwater. The city requires 18 TMC of water, which means that 70% of the wa ter required comes from rainwater.

"We need to make rainwater harvesting man-"We need to make rainwater harvesting man-datory, rejuvenate lakes on priority so that we can store rainwater, ensure complete treatment of domestic sewage, apply the 'polluter pays' principle to industries discharging untreated in-dustrial effluents as per the Water Act of 1974, create mini forests of 12 hectares with native spe-cies in each ward, and re-establish inter-connec-tivity among lakes by exicting all encroachments of storm water drains," he says.

Price cap for water tankers Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar recently said that 25% of the city's water needs are met by water tankers. The civic administration has made registration of all water tankers in the city, an es-timated 3,500, mandatory by March 7. It has an-timated 3,500, mandatory by March 7. It has an-

en complaining that sourcing water is becoming increasingly hard and their monthly mainte-nance costs are going up. Many of them have started rationing water to flats. They use recycled

water for gardening and have stopped filling up their swimming pools. Recently, an internal note

by an apartment on Kanakapura Road, south of Bengaluru, went viral. It notified its members

Bengaluru, went viral. It notified its members that water would be supplied only after 11.30 a.m. after the morning peak hours, to conserve water. Prasad, a resident of an apartment community in Whitefield, says their borewells have dried up, forcing them to rely on water tankers. "A few days ago, the tankers that used to supply water stopped taking our calls. They suggested we con-tact other operators. When we did that, those op-erators quoted far higher pucks. When ad no op-tion but to buy water at the new rates," he says.

registration of all water faithers in the city, an es-timated 3,500, mandatory by March 7. It has an-nounced that it will cap the tanker prices after a meeting with stakeholders in the next few days. But water tanker dealers dispute the 'tanker mafa' tag, used by citizens and even political par-ties. They argue that as borewells have gone dry, water tankers are now going at least 40 kilo-metres away from the city to fetch water. Praveen Reddy, a water tanker businessman in Marathahalli, an eastern suburb, says on average, a water tanker's journey to the source and to the customer has gone up to 50 km from less than 30 m a year ago. 'If we were taking half an hour to fill a 12,000 litre tanker from a borewell earlier, now it takes over three hours as the water has de-pleted. The prices that landowners are charging for digging borewells have also shot up. We are working under tremendous pressure and are un-able to meet the rising demand,' he says. He nar-tates the story of how the residents of an apart

rates the story of how the residents of an apart-ment recently waylaid a tanker demanding that it

Chief Civic Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath has

announced that invoking the Disaster Manage

ment Act, 2005, the administration will commar deer 200 water tankers over the next few days to supply free water to 58 dry patches identified by e administration. Of the 10,955 borewells drilled by the civic addried up. In 3,700 others, the water levels have dropped. The civic body has now released ₹131

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unload the water to them at any cost

were taking half an hour to fill a 12,000 litre tanker from a borewell earlier, now it takes over three hours as the water lvel has depleted. The prices that landowners are charging for digging borewells have also shot up.

PRAVEEN REDDY

Rashmi says the Cauvery currently supplies 1,460 million litres per day (MLD). An additional 775 MLD will be added to the supply when the lat-est stage of infrastructure is completed. "However, water levels in the river fluctuate seasonally. The reservoir capacity in the Cauvery basin has decreased to 40%, even before the onset of summer. The Bengalaru water board spends huge amounts as electricity charges to pump the water into the city. Additionally, the feasibility re-port for the construction of the Mekadatu reser-voir, aimed at aumenting water supply to the city. voir, aimed at augmenting water supply to the city, reveals that the project entails the submergence of 4,996 hectares of wildlife, forest, and revenue land," she says. Instead of expending huge resources to source

Instead of expending huge resources to source water from afar, other options must be consi-dered, including those within the city, Shashank says. "The city produces 1,941 million litres of waste water every day. This is likely to go up as the population increases. Treating and reusing it could significantly cut down on freshwater de-mand and reduce the city's vulnerability to water scarcity. Bengaluru, notably, is unique for its num-ber of on-site sewage treatment plants at apar-ment buildings and commercial establishments, but there is a need for better standards and me-chanisms to treat and reuse this water more effec-tively. Bengaluru could also benefit from adopting strategies employed by other water-scarce cities like Chemai, which have proactively implement ed indirect potable reuse by harnessing surface water bodies," he says. Replenishing groundwater is another crucial

step to improve the city's water security, says Rashmi, adding that to address the seasonal fluc-Rashmi, adding that to address the seasonal fluc-tuations in groundwater levels, utilising open spaces such as fallow land and green areas to re-charge shallow aquifers with rainwater during the monsoon season could prove beneficial. Finally, environment literacy should be en-hanced, Ramachandra adds. "Conservation, waste minimisation, and nature-based solutions should be part of our daily routine," he says.



IADHYA PRADESH

– THE HINDU –



wift action: A building belonging to Pyare Miyan, a 68-year-old man accused of raping minor girls and running a sex racket, being demolished by the district administration in Bhopal on July 14, 2020. He was convicted in the case and sentenced to life imprison ment in 2022, A M. FARLIOL

Fast-tracked bulldozer justice

The heavy-duty vehicle's sharp teeth have become a symbol of control and dominance, and are allegedly being used as a political instrument in Madhya Pradesh; Mehul Malpani speaks to victims, who say the administration and police do not follow due legal procedures before the earth movers arrive at their doorstep

> n the early hours of December 13, 2022 n the early hours of December 13, 2022, when Rahul Langri, a 42-year-old money-lender in Madhya Pradesh, was in jail in connection with an alleged case of aber-ment to suicide, buildozers arrived at two houses his family members lived in, and horoke down about 20 feet of their front portions. The proper-ties were owned by Langri's mother, Vimla Gur-jar, 65, and wife, Radha, 38. The Ujjan Municipal Corporation (UMC) said they had been built with-out government clearance. They served notices to my family on the night of December 12, and

out government clearance. "They had served notices to my family on the night of December 12, and arrived just a few hours later. My mother, wife, and three children kept crying in front of the officials, but nobody arrived just a few hours later. My mother, wife, and three

hours later. My mother, wite, and three children kept crying in front of the officials, but nobody listened to them," says Langri, adding that the authorities came with several police personnel, forcing the neighbours into silence. Buildozers have been the symbol of hasty 'jus-tice' in several BJP-ruled States in north India, with the administration and security forces swooping down to demolish a person's home, days or sometimes hours after liney are accused of a crime. The wrath of the buildozer in M. P. has been largely faced by the socially and economi-cally vulnerable. In August 2022, new sebsite Newslaundry had published a report saying that 323 properties had been demolished in the State since March 2020, of which 223 belonged to Mus-lims; 92 in April 2022 alone; after Ram Navani. On February 12, 2024, the Madhya Pradesh High Court came down heavily on the UMC over the denolition of properties owned by Langri's family, and ordered the administration to pay ti lakt each to the owners as compensation. children kept crying in front of the officials but nobody listened to them RAHUL LANGRI

lakh each to the owners as compensation "My elderly mother and wife did the rounds of

lakh each to the owners as compensation. "My elderly mother and wife did the rounds of the court and government offices when I was be-hind bars," says Langri, adding that he gets emo-tional just thinking about it. In his observations, justice Vivek Kusia of the Indore Bench of the High Court noted that it had become "fashiona-ble" for local administrations to demolish houses "without complying with the principle of natural justice" and then publiciting them in the press. The High Court also pulled up civic officials, in-cluding the Municipal Commissioner and the building Officer, flagging the violation of norms. The court added that previous notices for "ille-gal construction" had been sent in the name of Parvez Khan in October 2023, and not to the owners of the properties. "Had the Building Of ficer gone to the spot, he would have been in formed about the name of the petitioner and the owners," the court asido. Disciplinary ac-tion against the government employees was ad-to farvez Khan, "the court asido. Disciplinary ac-tion against the government enployees was ad-ton agains

Bulldozers turn saffron

Just 2 km from Langri's house is 52-year-old Ash-raf Hussain's Indian Soda Shop. Above the ground floor, a green curtain shrouds the two de-molished floors of his ancestral home. Most of it was bulldozed in July 2023, days after his sons –

Adnan Mansoori, 18, and a minor – were among

Adnan Mansoori, 18, and a minor – were among three arrested in the Ujain Mahakal procession spitting case. The alleged incident took place on July I7 when the trio, standing on the terrace of a building, was accused of spitting at Mahakal Sa-wari, a Hindu religious procession. Hazy videos, purportedly showing the boys spitting on the procession, went virial on the in-ternet. Hussain asys the videos spread in the area, and some Hindutva outfits created an uproar. "Within an twas truggling to deal with the shock of police station visits, the authorities issued a notice "saying that the house was old, in a poor condition, and was a safety threat". An

a poor condition, and was a safety threat". An hour later, the bulldozers arrived at the family's a poor batter, the buildozers arrived at the family's door, a heavy police force accompanying them. "My two young sons had been arrested. I was running around to get them out, and suddenly they came to demoils my house. I had no clue what to do and whom to approach at that time," Hussain asys with tears in his eyes. His wife had not eaten for days since the arrests. Hindutva outfits played drums as the rubble came tum-bling down, he remembers. Sultan, a neighbour who ran a paan shop, tried to reason with the officials about docu-ments and legalities. A buildozer, Hussain re-calls, turned towards his small shop and tore it down. "This scared other neighbours too, and the fear of being seen as close to us still lingers in

the fear of being seen as close to us still lingers in most minds in the locality," he says. Ashish Pathak, who assumed office as the Commissioner of UMC in December 2023, denies Commissioner of UMC in December 2023, denies that the demolitons had anything to do with a person being accused in a criminal case. "It could just be a coincidence," he says. "A property or its portions are only razed if they were built without permission or more than what was per-mitted or illegally on encroached land." Pathak says the civic body enves notices to the owner to break the illegal structure themselves. While Sultan has since gone to work in Indore, his brother, who runs the paan shop now, says the two neighbours have not been on talking



A house in Dimani, Morena district, that was demolished days ahead of the Assembly poll in November 2023 after its residents were named in a murder case; (right) the razed home of Ashraf Hussain, whose sons were accused of spitting on a Hindu procession in Uijain. AM. FARUQU

terms since the incident. He says he has filed a petition against the demolition of the shop in the High Court.

Politics at play

Politics at play There is still palpable tension in the neighbour-hood, with people asking *The Hindu's* team ques-tions in hushed voices about its motive behind speaking with Hussain or taking pictures of the demolished structure. Farhan Gori, a local inde-pendent journalist and another neighbour of Hussain, says, "The whole incident was created to benefit the ruling party. At the time, the BJP was believed to be losing the upcoming Assembly election (in November 2023). All the surveys election [in November 2023]. All the surveys were against them. Incidents like these were used to breathe some air into their prospects." Neither the government nor the police are in-

terested in the case now, but local BIP leaders re

terested in the case now, but local BJP leaders re-ferred to the incident during the election cam-pagning and thumped their chests, says Gori. While the two minor boys in the spitting case secured bail two months after being arrested, Hussain's elder son, Mansoori, was granted bail by the High Court only on December 15. The or-der came after the complainant, Sawan Lot, and the prime witness, Ajay Khatri, said they were made to sign blank papers at the Kha-stion. In their state-tion. In their state-tion. In their state-

ments, Lot and Khatri said they



We were just used in a political game before the [Assembly] election a political game before the (Assembly) election Astrar FUSAN Mome buildozed when son in jail the duo, along with many others in the crowd,

was asked by the police to come to the local pol-ice station.

ice station. Now, Hussain's family of five (including their youngest soon) live with his brother. They don't in-tend to fight for their rights. "We can't afford to mess with the government. Just want to help my father at the shop, so we can meet our daily needs," says a subdued Mansoori. Hussain smiles sadly and adds, "We were just used in a political game before the election."

Muslim population in M.P. Senior journalist, author, and political observer Rasheed Kidwai says demolitons have become a way of political messaging. "You resort to such actions against the members of one community so that the majority community feels politically pumped and gratified," he says. The minority Muslim community has long felt alienated and Muslim community has long felt alienated and disempowered due to the lack of Statewide re-presentation. Comprising just 6.57% of the State's population, as per the 2011 Census, the commun-ity is not a formidable political force, except in districts like Bhopal and Burhanpur. In the 16th Assembly, the community is only represented by two MLAs – Atif Aqueel and Arif Masood, both from the Congress, from seats in Bhopal.



While in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minis-ter Yogi Adityanath is called 'Bulldozer Babe by his supporters, the first Statewide usage of the machine to demolish properties in M.P. can be traced to the 15-month Congress government of former CM Kamal Nath. Soon after coming to power in 2018, Nath had launched a campaign called 'Shuddh Ke Liye Yuddh (War for purity) against the sand and land mafia, those running dairy adulteration rackets, and others engaged in crime. Several properties were demolished, es-pecially in the Gwalior-Chambal region. In March 2020, the Congress government was toppled and the BJP's Shivraj Singh Choulhan re-turned to the CM's chair. In his earlier stint, Chouhan was known for his moderate image. "Af-While in BIP-ruled Littar Pradesh Chief Minis

Chouhan was known for his moderate image. "At ter 2020, Chouhan was compelled to resort to the practice [using bulldozers] for two main reasons. practice (using buildozers) for two main reasons. One, he wanted to follow Additynanth, like most BJP CMs. Two, his own Home Minister, Narottam Mishra, had become very proactive with demoli-tions," Kidwai explains. In an internal handbook published just weeks before the Assembly elec-tion, the Chouhan-led government claimed that it had freed around 23,000 acres, worth about R15,000 crore, from the land mafia.

Rubble hears In April 2022, over 50 properties of people ac-cused of rioting, mostly from the Muslim com-munity, during a Ram Navami procession, were demolished in Khargone district. Mishra had gi-ven the slogan: "Jis ghar se pathar aaye hain, us ghar ko hi patharon ka dher banaenge (We will turn the houses from where the stones were pel-el into a heag of rubble," In June 2023, five months before the election, portions of Canesa Jamuma Hisher. Secondary.

portions of Ganga Jamuna Higher Secondary School in Damoh district were razed, with the lo School in Damoh district were razed, with the lo-cal municipal body terming the construction "l-legal". The school had been facing allegations of forcing non-Muslim students to wear highs headscarves). There were also reports of the rec-ital of Urdu poet Muhammad Iqbal's over-a-cen-tury-old poem, *I tab peat that idua ban ke taman-na meri* (A prayer on my lips becomes my desirey, about the hope of the soul. Iqbal had propagated the idea of Pakistan. In July 2023, just a day after a viral video showed Pravesh Shukla, an alleged local BJP lead-er, urinating on a tribal man, his properties were demolished in fort of several media cameras.

demolished in front of several media cameras. The BJP also distanced itself from Shukla. As Kid-

demolished in front of several media cameras. The BP also distanced itself from Shuka. As Kid-wai points out, attrocities against tribals bring "too much bad press to the BP". Independent journalist and activist Kashif Kak-says, "During Kamal Nath's tenure, local courts used to be vocal about demolitions in the State, says, "During Kamal Nath's tenure, local courts citals in case of a violation. Now, everyone is si-lent." He adds that many such cases on the out-skirts of the State don't make it to the news. Advocate Asahar Warsi, a lawyer practising in the M.P. High Court who has taken up the cases of about 20 people whose homes were razed in the mass demolition drive following clashes dur-ing Ram Navami processions in 2022, says the ad-ministration takes no time in declaring as "illegal" a structure existing for years and razes it without following any procedure". "Just see the Pradham Mantri Awas Yojana," he says. Warsi points out that the courts do take these cases seriously, "but the respondents in such cas-se, usually evernment bodies, do not reely in

Warsi points out that the courts do take these cases seriously, "but the respondents in such cas-es, usually government bodies, do not reply in time or give a proper response". This forces may petitioners to give up on their cases, he adds. Following the BJP's victory, Mohan Yadav, the newly elected CM, spoke of providing meat sell-ers with a designated space rather than having them in main markets in his first Cabinet meeting on December 13, 2023. Over the next few days, buildozers ran through several meat shops in ci ties like indore and his hometown of Uijian. The CM han or issued orders for demolitors.

NDHRA PRADESH

THE HINDU -



ent inviting printers from outside Andhra Pradesh to ta up textbook printing work. K.V.S. G

Textbook printers caught in the tender tangle

For the first time in 25 years, the Andhra Pradesh government has invited tenders from across the country to print textbooks of State-run schools; Nellore Sravani assesses the impact of this unprecedented move on the +60-odd establishments who rely on the government's annual order

procure

Proprietor of printing pres

thas been nearly three years since Krishna Ro's printing press at Ajith Singh Nagari in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, saw any ac-tivity. Se tup in a rented space, the unit was once a source of employment for 40 semi-skilde and skilde workers, most from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. With mounting expenses and no income, he do shut it down for two years, in 2022 and 2023. After clearing all his debts gradually over three years, Krishna Rao, whose main business was printing and supplying textbooks to the And-nar Prades government, was looking forward to opening his unit again in February. But his hopes were dashed last month. On Fe-

the mills have to spend ₹1.5 crore individually...

If the government does not supply the paper, we have no option but to close our

hra Pradesh government, was looking forward to opening his unit again in February. But his hopes were dashed last month. On Fe-bruary 2, the State government issued a notifica-tion inviking tenders from across the country to print the textbooks for students in State-run schools. Printers would also need to procure paper on their own. Earlier, the A.P. government would supply paper to establishments like Krish-na Rao's to print textbooks. This is the first time a 25 years that such a tender has been put out. In all, 60 printers, 50,000 employees, and more than 2 lakh people indirectly connected with the trade in the State will be affected by the tender floated by the Department of Andhra Pra-desh Government Textbook Press (APCTBP), the printers say. After the deadline to bid for printing of 3.60 corre textbooks, audued at 3190.31 crore came to a close on February 16, three printers, won from Utar Pradesh and one from Maharash-tra, have reportedly been awarded the work, the viriters extp. shops. DHYAN CHAND, tra, have reportedly been awarded the work, the printers say

Shuttered units, unpaid bills

Shuttered units, unpaid bills Krishna Rao and his peers, engaged mainly in textbook printing in A.P., start the bulk of their work in mid-January, after they receive paper from the government. The hetcif run ends before the start of the academic year in June. For some, what they earn at this time sustains them and their families for the rest of the year, even though the profit margin is only 5-10%, they claim. Some others, who can afford it, occasion-ally take up other printing work, such as pam-pliets, posters, and welding cards. Printing of textbooks and that of cards is done on different machines.

machines. Usually in February, the presses in Vijayawa da-Guntur, a region historically associated with printing, come alive. Workers are hired on a con-tractual basis from other States, all of whom work towards achieving the target and deadline set by the government. All the textbooks and workbooks prescribed

An une response and workbooks prescribed for students from Class I to X in government schools across the State are printed here and then transported to the Collectorates of all 26 dis-tricts. They are then distributed to children in gotricts. They are then distributed to children in go-vernment schools free of cost under the Centre's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme. This time round, many units, including Krish-na Rao's, remain shuttered even in the fourth week of February. One reason is the delay by the

If we are to , paper from ourselves, w

State government in paying their bills for the last two years, amounting to 356 core. The other is due to the uncertainty over their livelihoods caused by the tender. "There are two main points in the tender," says Dhyan Chand, proprietor of another print-ing press in Vigawada, which is also on the verge of being shut down. "Until last year, each of us required about 140 tonnes of paper and printed 5-6 lakh books. If we are to procure paper from the mills ourselves, we have to spend 1800 crore and 13.5 crore indiv-dually. Where uill we get this money from? With turnovers not crossing even 350 lakh a year, how an we arrange for paper ourselves? If the go-vernment does not supply the paper, we have no pointon but to close our shops," he adds. For printing the requisite number of text-books, around 18,000 tonnes of paper are pro-cured by the State government from mills every weit. Eatlier, a private mill in Bhimavaran, along with Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited (TNPL), was supplying the paper to the govern-ment. After the former shut down four five years ago, the bulk is being supplied by the TNPL. A cocording to a letter sent by the TNPL to the judicial preview committee, the government wes them nearly 2000 crore. The tender 'with paper has been floated in a bid to circumvent payment of the letter, written in response to the

While TNPL officials refused to comment on the issue, the letter, written in response to the tender put up by the APGTBP, said the dues needed to be cleared before any more paper was

supplied. "Against the previous year's supply of 16,514 tonnes of paper and 1,326 tonnes of board, the APCTBP has to settle a total outstanding of 199.68 crore to TNPL. We have not received pay-ment for a single bill against the previous year's supplies starting from January 2023," the letter says, adding that the TNPL was informed that the reason for the delay of payment by A.P. was due to "lack of funds". In the letter, the TNPL goes on to say that if the APGTBP still proceeds with the

reason for the delay of payment by A.P. was due to "lack of flunds". In the letter, the TNPL goes on to say that if the APCTBP still proceeds with the tender, the company would have to take legal re-course for collection of dues. Asked above uthis, APCTBP Press Director Ra-hindranath Reddy said the Tamil Nadu govern-ment owed some amount to the State in lieu of the Krishna river water sharing. "We had asked hem to see if the amount can be adjusted. Dis-cussions are on. Our main priority is supplying extbooks on time for the 2024-25 academic year," the official said. However, printers feel if the government watts timely distribution of books, inviting out-ders is the ast thing it should do. "How can they ensure timely delivery, when the printer has his supply outside here, the department offi-cals conduct regu-cals conduct regu-



government, they have agreed to give us 67% of the work... But we will

all the machinery and workforce, how can the go-vernment give the work to someone else," asks Chandrasekhar Rao, a member of the Andhra Pradesh Web Offset Printers' Association. Besides, 45 of the 60 printers in the State have small-scale units, with no more than two ma-chines. All are part of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) classification of the Central government (micro being those with no more than an annual turnover of ₹5 crore, small with he on more than ₹50 crore. and medium being no more than ₹50 crore, and medium being those with no more than ₹250 crore annual turnover). The most affected are those solely depen-dent on the textbook printing work and those who had only one or two printing machines

Balancing act

Balancing act At first, the department had promised local prin-tiers that they would be given 25% of the total work this academic year (2024-25). After repeat-ed pleas, the State government said only 33% of this year's work would be given to the 'outsiders', while the rest would come to local printers. "After multiple discussions with the govern-ment, they have agreed to give us 67% of the work. While this is better than not getting any work at all, we want the government to rever to the old system of supplying paper to us. We will still lose \color flakh worth of work because of the participation of outsiders," rues Chandrasekhar Rao. But, the discussions did not yield much on

But, the discussions did not yield much on

But, the discussions did not yield much on their request for supply of paper from the go-vernment. If 67% of work goes to them, each of them may need around 120 tomes of paper, which would cost them 1.25 crore. Printers say it takes three to four months of continuous work, with around 150 machines, to print around 4 crore books every year. "The same cannot be done by two or three units. If the government wants quality in textbooks and time-ly delivery, it is only better that the old system continues, as the three may all use paper of diffe-rent quality." Chandrasekhar Rao explains.

Livelihoods at stake Krishna Rao says he had set up the unit in 2019 af Krishna Rao says he had set up the unit in 2019 af-ter working for years in supervisor and manage-rial roles in the printing industry. The following year, the pandemic broke our. As if that was not enough, the State government did not clear bills for the expenses he had incurred in two years. The expenses included wages to the labourers, water charges, electricity bills, repair work, and more. While income per machine is anywhere between ¥40 and ₹50 lakh, the expenses come to around ₹35 lakh.

around ₹35 lakh

between 400 and colo lash, the expenses colore to around 735 lakh. Forty unskilled, semi-skilled and highly skilled labourers are employed at a unit to run one print-ing machine, to bind books, stack and pile them, to load and unload them from the truck, among other jobs. They are paid anywhere between 400 and 71,000 per day. When Krishna Rao shut down his unit, Nagara-ju, who used to work as the machine operator there, was forced to hunt for a similar job at other units within the city. 'I entered the printing bus-ness in 1992. I know no other work and have no other skill. It is not just us who will be affected by the new tender, but the families dependent on us – the sweepers, the woman selling chai to us dur-ing the February-june season and her family, the truck drivers who transport the books to other ing the February-June season and her family, the truck drivers who transport the books to other districts. They all will be equally hit if work does not come to printers in the State," Nagaraju says. He is yet to receive three months' salary, dose to 12.1 kldh, from his new employer. "In the good old days, my employer came to work by car, which he later had to sell. Now he comes on a two-wheeler. This is proof of the grim situation we are in," he shares. (Names of all printers changed on request)



cials conduct regu lar checks on our After multiple units between January and June to monitor the discussions with the work," points out Dhyan Chand.

A printer re-ceives around 150 drowrk because of the participation of outsiders'. HANDRASEKIAR RAD, Member of Andhra Pradesh Weithow Offset Printer 'Association' contest of Andhra Pradesh Weithow Offset Printer 'Association' prints around 6 lakh books in four prints around 50 lakh hore as per today's rate, the cost of primting one page is 7 paise.

"Two years ago, the government emphasised distributing books with high-quality pages. Most

of us spent our savings on upgrading the ma-chines. It cost us ₹10-₹15 lakh. Now when we have

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THE HINDU — ERALA



Despite not receiving stipend, foreign medical graduates pursuing internship at General Hospital, Ernakulam, play a key role in the health care services being offered by the institution. H. VIBHU

Courage inder fire

Foreign medical graduates who are Indian citizens are fighting on many fronts: for an easier licentiate exam that will qualify them as doctors, for a quicker turnaround time to get their provisional and permanent registration certificates, and a stipend during their internship; G. Krishnakumar tracks their travails in Kerala, even as some Indian medical professionals allege that the students are just not good enough

ahesh. K (name changed to protect identity) continues to be haunted by the night of February 24, 2022. The thunderous noise and the sound of shattering glass continues to ring in his ears to this day. The next morning, he learnt that Uk-raine was under attack by Russian forces. At 21, Wumar had experienced an acrial hombardment FMGE is an arbitrary examination purposefully raine was under attack by Kussian torces. At 2, Kumar had experienced an aerial bombardment, something most people don't in a lifetime. He was evacuated in a week, going back in January last year to finish the sixyear MBBS programme at Odessa National Medical University. devised and designed to hassle us as there is no

prescribed syllabus for the exam SANJAY MUKUNDAN Joint Secretary AFGP - Kerala

last year to finish the sixyear MBBs programme at Odessa National Medical University. "Bombs were raining literally and even the neighbourhood was not visible in the resultant dust and smoke. I almost stared at death in the eyes. When I eventually made it back, my parents were relieved to see me in one piece," he recalls. Sitting now in the safety of his home at Thrik-kakara in Ernakulam district, Kerala, the 23-year-old remains tense, though. This time, the worry is over his future career as a doctor. Mahesh could not clear the Foreign Medical Sciences. "I fell agonisingly short just by two marks in my first attempt," says Mahesh, who took the exam in January, adding that he will now have to wait another five months for his next chance

"There is no option for revaluation. Besides, the exam costs about 77,000 for every appea-rance. The only benefit is that there are no negathe marks," he rues. "But clearing the exam is just the beginning of a long road ahead filled with hurdles before I can secure the permanent regis-tration to practise as a doctor in India," he says

tration to practise as a doctor in India," he says glumly. Mahesh was one among an estimated 3,400 students from Kerala who were pursuing medi-cine and engineering programmes in Ukrainian universities at the time of the Russian invasion two years ago, according to estimates by the State government.

two years ago, according to estimates by the state government. A licentiate exam, FMGE, is conducted for In-dians and Overseas Citizenso of India earning primary medical qualifications from foreign countries and desirous of practising medicine in the country. Clearing it is a prerequisite to regis-ter with the National Medical Commission (NMC) or any fistor medical goungli A compared broad or any State medical council. A computer-based test consisting of 300 objective-type multiple-choice questions, candidates need to score a mi-Though not against the screening test, aspirants such as Mahesh are upset about the lack of answ-er keys and sample question papers for the exam.

As per the guidelines for registration of foreign medical graduates by the NMC, State medical councils can grant provisional registration for a

12-month internship after they clear the FMGE and other conditions stipulated by the council, including submission of documents related to their qualifying examinations

Navigating obstacles Besides Ukraine, medical aspirants from Kerala have been fanning out to places such as Russia Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Moldova, Taji kistan, Armenia, Philippines, Bangladesh, and Malaysia to study. Costs there, over private med-

Astain, Athenia, "Antimphile's, Bangaduesh, and Mahysia to study. Costs there, over private med-ical colleges in India, are the primary considera-tion in choosing these destinations. The many hurdles strewn along their wards' academic and career paths have left parents stressed about their children's future. "Our chil-dren are paying a big price for opting for a med-ical programme abroad. Not all could score marks in the NEET (National Eligibility cum En-trance Test) that would make them eligible for admission considering the limited number of seats for undergraduate medical programmes in government colleges," says Slivi Sunil of the All-Kernal Utraine Medical Students and Parents As-sociation, a collective formed to address the pro-blems faced by over 3,000 aspirants following the confusion that emerged after the Ukraine Wat.

She claims parents will have to incur around ₹1 crore to complete the MBBS programme in a private medical college in Kerala or in other States, whereas the total expenses, including tuition fee, for an undergraduate medical pro-

gramme in a country such as Ukraine come to about ₹60 lakh

gramme in a country such as Ukrame come to about 860 lakh. An analysis of the pass percentage in the FMGE shows that only a small section of the stu-dents has been able to clear it. As per the results compiled by the Association of Foreign Graduat-ed Physicians (AFGP) - Kerala, in 2021, 12.3.9% of the students who appeared passed; in 2022, it is went up to 30.8%, and slipped to 10.2% in June 2023, and improved to 20.5% in December. Sanjay Mukundan, Joint Secretary of the AFGP - Kerala, says FMGE was introduced in 2002. "It is an arbitrary examination purposefully devised and designed to hassle us as there is no pre-scribed syllabus for the exam. Questions are set at par with postgraduate standards for assessing undergraduate mekai graduates for affect and the onductpaper or answer key is published after conduct-ing the exam," he says adding that exam results get delayed regularly without any specific reasons.

Dr. Mukundan explains that once students pass the exam, they are issued the pass certificate from the NMC in New Delhi. Foreign medical graduates have to then apply for provisional re-gistration. "This usually takes 8-10 months in Kerala," he says.

A hard day's night

A hard day's night Paul Antony, a native of Manjali, near Nedumbas-sery, in Ernakulam who completed the MBBS programme in the Philippines and doing his in-ternship at General Hospital, Ernakulam, shares a long list of grievances faced by the foreign med-ical graduates who work as house surgeons in go-vernment hospitals in the State.

vermient noplates in the state. "There are around 120 foreign medical grad-uates pursuing their internship at General Hospi-tal, Ernakulam. Unlike the Indian medical grad-uates, we are not paid a stipend despite clear instructions from the NMC. Around 1,000 foreign medical graduates are at present pursuing intern-ships in various district general hospitals and medical colleges in the State. None of us has re-ceived a stipend yet, while the Indian medical graduates doing their internship receive about 225,000 monthly. Why are we being treated as second class citizens even after qualifying the equivalency examination?" he asks, amidst his arduous 12-how 1 duyt in the casualty ward. Foreign medical graduates cite a circular is-sued by the NMC to all the State medical councils and Directorates of Medical Education on March 4, 2022. It directs that stipend and other facilities "There are around 120 foreign medical grad

as fixed by the appropriate authority applicable to the institution/university or the State be provided to foreign medical graduates on par with Indian medical graduates. The council had also clarified that the medical

colleges shall not collect any amount/fee from fo-

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reign medical graduates for the internshin

reign medical graduates for the internship. A senior official at the Department of Health says no decision has been taken on whether to provide stipend to foreign medical graduates un-dergoing internship in government hospitals. Taking a much-needed break from his hectic duty at General Hospital, Alapuzha, Sandeep T.M., who completed his MBBS programme from State Medical University in Tajkistan, says: "After completing our internship, there is a further de-lay in getting permanent registration. On an aver-age, foreign medical graduates hose around one year of their career to bureaucrafic delays. The majority of foreign medical graduates have taken majority of foreign medical graduates have taken bank loans to complete their study abroad and the hurdles being faced after clearing the FMGE add to our woes," he says.

Arguments, this way and that

In March 2022, at the peak of the evacuation of the stranded students from Ukraine, the Union government had stated that 90% of the Indiar

government had stated that 90% of the Indian medical students who graduate from foreign un-iversities are being found unable to clear the qualifying exam to practise medicine in India. "The standard of medical education abroad, except U.S. and U.K., is no match to the quality standards in our country. The lack of adequate clinical and patient exposure is a major draw-back. Students from our country, who enrol for medical programmes abroad, also face the pro-blem of language hurdles to converse with the pa-tients there;" says senior neurologist P.A. Fazal Ghafoor, president of the Muslim Educational Society.

Society. He also cites curriculum shortcomings in other countries and the differences in diseases being reported there and in India as another impediment for foreign medical graduates. "The standard of an exam like FMGE cannot

The standard of an examine PMGE cannot be diluted on the ground that it is tough to clear. The Indian medical education has a robust standard and the equivalency exam will have to test the knowledge of the aspirants in various areas, including clinical-case scenarios," says Dr.

including clinical-case scenarios," says Dr. Ghafoor. B. Ekbal, a public health expert and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kerala, refers to the gaps in the hands-on training for foreign medical graduates as a key factor for the falling pass percentage levels in the PMGE. "Clinical ex-perience is crucial. For Indian medical graduates, the bidb number of oratients in soverment hos. the high number of patients in government hos-pitals is a major advantage, as it provides them with necessary clinical exposure. I doubt foreign medical graduates are getting a similar exposure in their institutes," he says. Dr. Mukundan says the first year of medical de-

gree in foreign countries is devoted to basic gen

gree in foreign countries is devoted to basic gen-eral science subjects and languages. "They teach the language so that we can com-municate well with the people of the place. The first, second, and third years are non-clinical sub-jects, while the last three years of study are fo-cused on clinical subjects. Nearly 52-56 subjects have to be learnt in a total of 12 semesters," he save

have to be learnt in a total of 12 semesters," he says. Foreign medical graduates admit to the diffe-rence in standards of education, curriculum, and methods followed in the countries they opt for, but oppose the sweeping generalisation of all fo-reign medical graduates lacking merit. They also question the double standards of those who voice support for a stringent FMCE but oppose the National Exit Test (NexT) pro-posed by the NMC as the common final exam for all medical graduates. "Is it not a contradiction that one test for the entire country will not be feasible due to the lack of uniform standards of medical education across institutions in the

teasible due to the lack of unitorm standards of medical education across institutions in the country?" asks Gopika Suresh, pursuing intern-ship at General Hospital, Ernakulam. Caught in this policy and academic mess, Ma-hesh feels he is in the middle of a war of a diffe-rent kind; one that will decide his future. That is a battle that he can hardly afford to lose.

AINY



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THE HINDU -World

COPENHAGEN

Auction wraps up for Danish cartoon on Prophet Mohammed



Bidding closes on Friday in the online auction of the original edition of a Danish cartoon by Kurt Westergaard depicting the Prophet Mohammed that provoked riots in Muslim countries. Published in September 2005 by the conservative Danish daily Jyllands-Posten the cartoon shows the prophet with a bomb-shaped turban. AFP

GENEVA

Myanmar is now a 'never-ending' nightmare, says UN rights chief



Three years of military rule in Myanmar have inflicted unbearable cruelty, leaving people trapped in an unending nightmare as the conflict spreads, the UN human rights chief said on Friday. The junta s crushing all forms of dissent with total impunity, Volker Turk told the UN Human Rights Council, asking it to salvage the situation. AFP

Call for probe grows as Gaza

Israel's attack on a crowd of Palestinians killed 112 and injured more than 750; China, France, Italy

and Germany slam the strike; U.S. looking into 'two competing versions' of the incident, says Biden

'massacre' sparks outrage

COLOMBO Maldives parliamentary elections rescheduled for April 21



The Maldives's parliamentary elections has been rescheduled for April 21, after President Mohamed Muizzu ratified a Bill that allowed for the postponement of the polls. The elections were originally set for March 17 this year, but the Opposition sought a deferment citing Rama an - from March 10, 2024 to April 9, 2024, THE HINDU

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan parliament elects Speaker as Imran Khan's supporters protest

11



Pakistan's new parliament elected PML-N's Sardar Ayaz Sadiq as Speaker on Friday, despite protests from lawmakers loyal to jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan three weeks after an election they claim was brazenly rigged. The 336-seat National Assembly ened on Thursday for the first time since the polls. AFI

Pope Francis labels gender ideology 'dangerous'

Agence France-Presse VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis launched a fresh critique on Friday of gender ideology, saying it was "the worst danger" which "erases differences".

"It is very important that there is this meeting, this meeting between men and women, because to-day the worst danger is

day the 'worst danger is gender ideology' the 87-year-old told a meeting with participants of an in-ternational conference on marriage and faith. "I asked for studies into this ugly ideology of our time, which erases diffe-rences and makes everyth-ing the same." Brasing dif-ferences is erasing humanity," the pontiff added.

Associated Press DHAKA

At least 46 killed in

mall fire in Dhaka

Agence France-Presse GAZA STRIP

orld leaders on Friday called for an investi-gation and a ceasefire nearly five months into the Gaza war, a day after dozens of desperate Palestinians were killed rushing an aid

convoy. Israeli troops opened fire as Palestinian civilians scrambled for food aid dur-ing a chaotic incident on Thursday. An Israeli source acknowledged troops had opened fire on the crowd, believing it "posed a threat". Gaza's Health Ministry called it a "massacre" and said 112 people were killed



nising wait: People sit next to the body of a Palestinian killed in Israeli bombardment on Deir al-Balah on Friday. AFP

and more than 750 others za to 30,228 wounded. The fatalities helped push the total number of Palestinian war dead in Ga-

"The Israeli Army must fully investigate how the mass panic and shooting could have happened,"

Escape from Sudan

Independent probe Her French counterpart Stephane Sejourne said "there will have to be an in-"there will have to be an in-dependent probe to deter-nine what happened", and Italian Foreign Mini-ter Antonio Tajani urgedis-rael "to protect the people in Gaza and to rigorously ascertain facts and responsibilities". "China is shocked by this incident and strongly condems it," Foreign Mi-nistry spokeswoman Mao Nigraid. U.S. President Joe Biden

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said.

Ning said. U.S. President Joe Biden said Washington was checking "two competing versions" of the incident.

Alexei Navalny laid to rest after his death in prison

Associated Press

Under a heavy police pre-sence, thousands of people sence, thousands of people bade farewell on Friday to Alexei Navalny at his fune-al in Moscow after his still-unexplained death two weeks ago in an Arctic pe-nal colony. The service followed a battle with authorities over the release of the body of President Vladimir Putin's Generat ordic life ormore

President Vladimir Putin's fiercest critic. His suppor-ters said several churches in Moscow refused to hold the funeral. Navalny's team even-tually got permission from the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God Soothe My Sorrows.

My Sorrows.

As his coffin was re-moved from the hearse and taken inside the church, the crowd waiting outside broke into respect with presidential hopefuls



Overflowing support: Mourners react as the hearse carrying the coffin of Alexei Navalny leaves for a cemetery in Moscow. AFP

ful applause and then chanted: "Navalny! Naval-ny!" Some also shouted, "You were not afraid, neither are we!" and later "No to war!" Western diplomate in Boris Nadezhdin and Yeka boils ivadezhuin and Yeka-terina Duntsova. Both wanted to run against Mr. Putin in the upcoming elections and opposed his war in Ukraine; neither was allowed on the ballot. Navalny's father was al

Western diplomats, in-cluding U.S. Ambassador Lynn Tracy, were among those who attended, along so present, but it was not clear who else in his family attended.

Left-wing firebrand wins U.K. byelection

Agence France-Presse ROCHDALE

eft-wing firebrand George Galloway was elected to the U.K. parliament on Friday after tapping into an-ger over the Israel-Hamas war in a chaotic by-election marred by anti-Semitism allegations.

Mr. Galloway, 69, first became an MP in 1987 and will return to the House of Commons for the first time since 2015 after winning since 2015 after winning the seat of Rochdale by 6,000 votes. The turbulent vote saw the main opposi-tion Labour party with-draw its candidate, Azhar Ali, after he touted a con-spiracy theory that Israel had allowed Hamas to car-ry out its deadly attack on October 7.



George Galloway

Mr. Galloway, accused of stoking community ten-sions, focussed on the Ga-

sions, focussed on the Ga-za war during his cam-paign in Rochdale, which has a 30% Muslim population. "Keir Starmer, this is for Gaza," Mr. Galloway, lead-er of the fringe Workers Party of Great Britain, said in his victory speech, refer-ring to Labour's leader.

Iranians vote in parliament election as conservatives try to tighten their grip

Agence France-Presse TEHRAN

More than a dozen fire-

More than a dozen hre-fighting units were deployed. Health Minister Saman-ta Lal Sen said the toll could rise as at least a do-zen critically injured peo-ple were being treated in

Iranians voted on Friday in elections for parliament and a key clerical body, amid fears of a low turnout and with conservatives ex-pected to tighten their grip on power

Supreme leader Ayatol-lah Ali Khamenei, who has called for a strong turnout, was the first to cast his bal-lot, at a polling station in central Tehran, state televi-ciene more the

sion reported. The elections are the first in Iran since widespread protests erupted af-ter the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, following her arrest for an alleged breach of the country's strict dress code for

women. Since the last elections, Iran has also been badly af-



fected by international sanctions that have led to

elections.

year-old from the south-western province of Kluz-estan. "The problem with the elections is that people are not happy with this sys-tem because of the politi-cal and economic situa-tion," he said. Another voter, Moradia-ni from southern Tehran, said she would heed Kha-menei's call to vote. "The leader said that source of the law led to an economic crisis. More than 61 million peo-ople out of Iran's 85-mil-lion population are eligible to vote for members of par-liament as well as the cde-rics of the Assembly of Ex-perts, the body in charge of selecting Iran's supreme leader. A low turnout is ex-pected, however, after a state TV poll found more than half of respondents were indifferent about the elections.

"The leader said that participating in the elec-tions is an obligation," she said, "just as it is obligatory for us to pray."

Candidates vetted Iran's last parliamentary elections in 2020 had a voelections in 2020 had a vo-ter turnout of 42.57% – the lowest since the 1979 Is-lamic Revolution. Hadi Tahan Nazif, spo-kesman for the Guardian Council which vets candi-dates, voiced optimism

elections. "Suppose that I vote: what would it change?" said a 21-year-old from western Kurdistan pro-vince who only gave her name as Hanna, out of fear of reprisals. "They (the elected officials) do not res-net their normises." pect their promises." Her comments were echoed by Hashem, a 32-



Fate of future: Iranian women fill out their ballots before casting

about Friday's turnout, saying it was "even better" than four years ago. Mr. Khamenei had on Friday appealed for people to vote, saying "onlookers from all over observe the affairs of our country; make (trans) friends hap-py and illwishers

disappointed". The supreme leader had previously warned that Iran's "enemies want to see if the people are present", adding that otherwise "they will threaten your se-curity in one way or another". Those watching, he

disappointed".

said included the U.S.

said, included the U.S., "most of the Europeans, evil Zionists, and big com-panies". Iran considers the U.S., its Western allies and Israel "enemies" of the state and accuses them of seeking to intervene in its internal affairs. On the eve of the elec-tions, the U.S. said they would be unfair. "I have no expectation that I ran's elections will be free and fair, and I suspect that a great number of Iranians have no expectation that those elections will be free and fair," U.S. State Depart-ment spokesman Matthew ment spokesman Matthew Miller told reporters in

Miller told reporters in Washington. Candidates for parlia-ment are vetted by the Guardian Council, whose members are either ap-pointed or approved by the supreme leader.

They have approved a total of 15,200 candidates, total of 15,200 candidates, out of nearly 49,000 appli-cants, to run for seats in the 290-member

the 290-member parliament. Conservatives and ultra-conservatives, who hold 232 out 290 seats in the 2020 parliament after re-formist and moderate can-didates were disqualified from rumping are expect.

from running, are expect-ed by analysts to dominate once again. A coalition of parties called the Reform Front said it would not take part in "meaningless

in "meaningless elections". Former Iranian Presi-dent, the reformist Mo-hammad Khatami, was qu-oted in February by the conservative Javan daily as saying that Iran was "very far from free and competi-tive elections".

Conservatives are also expected to maintain a firm grip on the Assembly of Experts, an 88 member body exclusively made up of male Islamic scholars. A total of 144 candidates are running but many hopefuls were disgualified, including former moderate President Hassan Rouhani. Meanwhile, the Israel-Hamas wat has sent ten-

Conservatives are also

Hamas war has sent ten-Hamas war has sent ten-sions in the region soaring, with pro-Tehran groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen all involved in clashes with either Israel or its Western allies.

The elections also take The elections also take place amid crippling inter-national sanctions and mounting economic hard-ship in Iran, where infla-tion has hovered around 50% and the rial has sharp-ly declined against the dollar.

AINY



e families arriving at a centre for refugees in Renk. AF

A six-storey shopping mall that caught fire in the Ban-gladeshi capital had no fire exits, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on Fri-day, as the death toll climbed to at least 46 and two state-run hospitals. rescuers searched for more victims. The fire started late on Thursday in a restaurant on the first floor of the Green Cozy Cottage Shop-ping Mall in downtown Dhaka.

speaking at an unreated event in Dhaka, "We always request our architects, at least when they design homes or buildings, (to) keep a small open balcony, a fire exit or ventilation. But architects ... will not design that pro-perly and also the owners do not want to leave an inch of space," she said.

<u>The six-storey</u> shopping mall had no fire exits, says Bangladesh PM

Ms. Hasina expressed her shock at the loss of lives and said that it was a result of negligence.. "What could be more pain-ful than this?" she said,

speaking at an unrelated event in Dhaka.



A girl who has fled from the war in Sudan gets off a truck loaded with Sudar



eir vote in Tehran on Friday, A

:::



Site of a rain-induced landslip in Davao de Oro province on Mindanao island in the southern Philippines on Feb. 7. AFP

'Deadly' Philippines rain not caused by nature alone: study

Agence France-Presse MANILA

12

Faulty warning systems, poverty and deforesta-tion of mountains in the southern Philippines turned recent unseasonably heavy rain into dead-ly disasters, scientists said in a report on Friday. More than 100 people were killed in landslips and floods in January and February on the coun-try's second-largest island of Mindanao as the northeast monsoon and a low pressure trough brought downours.

northeast monsoon and a low pressure trough brought downpours. A study by the World Weather Attribution group found the unsually heavy rain in eastern Mindanao was not "particularly extreme". But with people living in landslip-prone areas and shortcomings in weather alers, the rain became "dewastating", "We can't just blame the rain for the severe impacts" said Richard Ybanez, chief science research specialist at the University of the Philippine"s Resilience Institute. "A range of hu-man factors is what turned these downpours into deadly disasters". deadly disasters "

In the deadliest incident more than 90 people

In the deadliest incident, more than 90 people were killed when the side of an onuntain collapsed and smashed into a gold mining village on Febru-ary 6, burying buses and houses. "Compared to the pre-industrial climate, the heaviest five-day periods of rainfall now drop around 50% more rainfall on Mindanao island in the December to February period," said Mariam Zachariah of the Grantham Institute at Imperial College London. The scientists found that a high-erlban-average rate of noverty in the mountaier-than-average rate of poverty in the mountai-nous region had left people vulnerable to the im-pacts of heavier rainfall, while "intensified deforestation" had increased the risk of landslips.



With the fight to oust the party chair turning bitter and personal, turmoil in Michigan Republican Party raises concerns among some Republicans that support for Donald Trump's re-election bid could suffer in a battleground State that President Joe Biden won by 2.8 percentage points in 2020

Reuters MOUNT PLEASANT

threat of dueling party conventions to choose a presidential nominee this we kend. Accusations of adul and tery, corruption and incompetence. A barrage of social media attacks and a police investigation. The Michigan Republican Party is in turmoil, raising fears

sin turmoil, raising fears among some Republicans that support for former President Donald Trump's re-election bid could suffer in a battleground State that Democratic President Joe Biden won by 2.8 percen-tage points in 2020. The fight to oust Kristina Karamo, elected as Repu-blican party chair in Michi-gan last year, has become increasingly bitter and per-sonal, leaving deep divi-sions in the local party, acsions in the local party, ac-cording to some party members At the centre of that bat-

tle is Bree Moeggenberg. The 44-year-old member of the Republican State

of the Republican State committee helped organ-ise a January 6 vote by some committee members to remove Ms. Karamo. Ms. Moeggenberg and others blame Ms. Karamo – a ftery grassroots activist who backs Mr. Trump's false claims of election fraud – for stifling dissent within the party, a lack of transparency in decision turday to choose a presi-dential nominee and award delegates to the par-ty's national convention in July. Ms. Karamo retains a loyal following among a contingent of the party's roughly 2,000 precinct de-legates and its 107-person State committee, but a court ruling this week aftransparency in decision making, and driving away court ruling this week affirming her removal as chair has put her conven-tion and future with the wealthy donors. The Republican Nation-



Michigan, on February 17. REUTERS

party in doubt.

Party 'fractured' "We are so very fractured," said Kelly Sackett, one of two persons from the rival factions claiming to be the party chair in Kalamazoo County, where a battle for control has been playing out in courtrooms and polout in courtrooms and pol-ice reports. 'I don't sei it all coming back together.'' A judge in Kent Tuesday is sued a preliminary injunc-tion saying that Ms. Kara-mo was properly removed and preventing her from representing herself as chair of the party in Michigan. On Thursday, a three-judge panel of the Michi-gan Court of Appeals de-nied Ms. Karamo's request to suspend Tuesday's nul-

to suspend Tuesday's rul-ing while it weighs her on-

Silencing evil

al Committee ruled in Fe

bruary that Ms. Karamo's removal was legitimate and recognised Pete Hoekstra, Ambassador to the Netherlands during Mr.

Trump's presidency, as the new chair. Mr. Trump has

thrown his support behind

ed the vote and the rival factions have announced dueling conventions on Sa-turday to choose a presi-dontial nominace and

r. Hoekstra. Ms. Karamo has contest-

Mr. Hoekstra.

going appeal. Despite the rulings, Ms. Karamo has yet to call off Saturday's planned con-vention in Detroit. Mr. Hoekstra has convened a meating the serve due in a Telegram messaging cha-troom with a series of anomeeting the same day in Grand Rapids, confident his delegates will be recog-nised at the national connymous posts repeating the adultery allegations, some uploaded days be-fore the crucial party vote. A number of the three nised at the national con-vention in July. The ten-sions in Michigan are driven as much by perso-nal animus as my ideology. Ms. Karamo and her sup-porters describe "esta-blishment" Republicans – those aligned with busi-ness interests and tradi-tional donors – as corrupt, and tend to be very conser-vative in their policy be-liefs. A number of the three doaen party members in Michigan who spoke to *Reuters* expressed concern that the acrimony risked leaving Republican acti-vists disillusioned and less likely to volunteer or vote. Among the disencharted are many grass-roots do-nors Ms. Karamo courted with promises of breaking the party's reliance on the moneyed elite. Daniel Harrington, 62,

ramo

member

liefs. The members backing Mr. Hoekstra are also con-servative but said that they Daniel Harrington, 62, who wrote two \$1,776 checks last year in support are willing to work with wealthy donors. They acof Ms. Karamo, says he

won't be donating to the party or helping it get out the vote in November if she is ousted. cuse Ms. Karamo of incompetence. Among Republican acti-vists, the fighting has be-come personal. Several Ka-

"Upset with Trump," "We are upset with Trump, absolutely," said Mr. Har-rington, who voted for the former President in 2016 ramo supporters and anonymous online trolls have, without evidence, ac-cused Ms. Moeggenberg of having an affair with a married man, Andy Sebolt, another State committee and 2020 but was angry at how he abandoned Ms. Ka-Monitor of the second s ramo, "I'd like to send a

and the constant of the con-vention is going to be to not elect Trump." A conservative, Mr. Har-rington said he would probably still vote for Mr. Trump in November, if gi-ven the choice of him and Democratic President Joe Biden. Mr. Trump won Mi-chigan's primary convinc-ingly on Tuesday, securing I2 of 16 delegates up for grabs. The remaining 39 of Michigan's 55 delegates are due to be allocated on S3due to be allocated on Sa-turday. The impact of the turmoil within the party has already hit campaign coffers. Donations into a state-level account came to just under \$20,000 from the start of Ms. Karamo's tenure to the end of 2023, tenure to the end of 2023, down sharply from \$6,90,000 during the same period four years ear-lier, according to a review of filings. Contributions to the State party's federal ac-count also suffered, with reported fundraising total-ing about \$90,0000 last

ing about \$9,00,000 last year, down from about \$1.5 million four years earlier in 2019.

'Finland took final step into the West by joining NATO'

Associated Press HELSINKI

Alexander Stubb was sworn in on Friday as Fin-land's new President and said the Nordic country has taken "the final step into the Western community of values" by becoming a NATO member.

NATO member. The 55-year-old former Prime Minister replaced President Sauli Ninistö, who held the job for two sixyear terms. Mr. Stubb, a conserva-tive, was elected head of state in a narrow February I run off victory against in-dependent candidate and former Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto of a left-leaning party.

leaning party. The President of Fin-land, a nation of 5.6 million people, holds executive power in formulating foreign and security policy together with the govern-ment. The President also commands the military

Finland joined NATO in April 2023 following Rus-sia's 2022 attack on Uksia's 2022 attack on Uk-raine. It has the military al-liance's longest land border with Russia – 1,340 km – and is one of the most active European pro-viders of military and civ-lian aid to Ukraine. Mr. Stubb said in a speech that "as a result of allying ourselves militarily and joining NATO we have taken the final step into the Western community of va-

Western community of va-lues" to which Finland has belonged "in spirit throughout its indepenthroughout its indepen-dence." "We will see re-gionalisation of power as well as unholy alliances," Mr. Stubb said. "In other words, a kind of an à la carte world, where allies are cherry-picked. We must remain alert."



South Korean President

Yoon Suk Yeol for the people of North Ko-rea," he said at a ceremony marking the anniversary of Korea's 1919 uprising against Japanese colonial rule. "We must come to-gether on a path that leads ultimately to unification" of the Korean peninsula, he said, stressing that the

he said, stressing that the international community "must pool its strength in a reunification with Washington for creating an



Fresh start: Hindu youth lift up an ogoh-ogoh effigy, symbolising the evil spirit, during the Kasanga Festival held to welco day of silence for self-reflection marking the Balinese Hindu new year. in Denpasar. Indonesia on Friday. REUTERS

Tower of London gets new ravenmaster, keeping the 'prophecy' alive

Associated Press

Agence France-Presse

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol called on Friday for the international

community to back "unifi-cation efforts" after Pyon-

gyang earlier this year de-clared Seoul its "principal

clared Seoul its "principal enemy". Tes between the two Koreas have been in a deep freeze as Pyongang accel-erates its weapons deve-lopment programmes and Seoul ramps up military cooperation with Washing-ton and Tokyo. Mr. Yoon, who has com-sistently taken a firm stance against nuclear-armed North Korea, has rarely discussed the topic of unification since assum-

of unification since assum

"Our unification efforts

must become a source of hope and a beacon of light

ing office in 2022

If an ancient prophecy is right, Michael "Barney" Chandler has just got the most important job in

England. The 56-year-old former Royal Marine is the new ra-venmaster at the Tower of London, responsible for looking after the feathered looking after the feathered protectors of the 1,000-year-old fortress. Accord-ing to legend, if the ravens leave the lith-century tow-er beside the River Thames, its White Tower Thames, its White Tower of England will fall. In the 17th century, King Charles II was told of the prophecy and decreed that there must always be six ra-

responsible manne

s at the tower 'Serious responsibility' "We take that responsibili-ty very seriously," Mr. Chandler said. "And now

Chandler said. "And now that I'm ravenmaster, there's that extra responsi-bility on my shoulders." As for the prophecy, he said "we don't know if it's true or not, because we have never let the number drop below six – and it's not going to happen while I'm here." Mr. Chandler, who offi-



care: Barney Chandler, newly appointed ra one of the ravens at The Tower of London on Thursday. Af

cially takes up the post on Friday, is one of the tower's famous Yeoman Warders, part of a corps founded in the 15th century. Also

known as Beefeaters, the warders are all military vet-erans who dress in distinc-tive black and scarlet Tu-dor-style uniforms and

perform a hybrid role: pro-viding security, leading tours of the tower, and per-forming ceremonial duties. He heads a team of four other Beefeaters looking after the tower's seven raafter the tower's seven ra-vens – the six decreed by Charles II and a spare. The official title of ravenmaster is only 50 years

"They are carrion birds," said Mr. Chandler. old, though the role is far older, and Mr. Chandler is "They will eat almost anything." The birds' feaththe sixth holder of the post. He is in charge of the health and welfare of the health and wehate of the birds, who usually roam freely around the tower grounds by day and sleep in cages at night. Duties include main-

anything." The birds' feath-ers are trimmed to prevent them from flying away, although they occasionally escape. Mr. Chandler, who served in Afghanistan and around the world during 24 years in the Royal Ma-:::

taining the birds' enclo-sures, arranging veterinary checkups and keeping them fed on their pre-ferred diet of raw meat supplemented by the occa-sional treat of a bard

sional treat of a hard-boiled egg or a hard-tack biscuit soaked in blood.

which is also the interest-ing part of the job." "They are always trying to catch us out," he said fondly. "They know what we are up to."

rines, has been on bird handling courses and had other formal training for his role. But he says "all the courses in the world doesn't replace actually being amongst the birds and knowing their habits." "You never know what they are going to do." Mr

"You never know what they are going to do," Mr. Chandler said. "They are all totally different, perso-nality-wise. Some will play ball, but others won't. It's just the unpredictability, which is also the interest-

past". Last month, the North Korean leader Kim Jong-un powerful sister Kim Yo Jong said her country would be open to improv-ing ties with Tokyo, even hinting at a possible future invitation to Pyongyang for Janan's leader.

Japan's leader. Her comments came af-ter Mr. Kim said in Decem-ber that he would no lon-for seek reconstitution ger seek reconciliation and the South, blaming Seoul and

Mr. Yoon emphasised better ties with Tokyo were helping to counter the "uncontrollable crisis"

calls for unification efforts after Pyongyang threats North's ever-increasing

military threats. "The security cooperation between the two countries against North Korea's nuclear and missile

threats has been streng-thened further," he said, adding that the countries were "working together to overcome the painful

FIU imposes ₹5.49 cr. fine on

Paytm bank for PMLA lapses

INBRIDE



RBI appoints S. Ravindran as TMB's part-time chairman

The Reserve Bank has appointed Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd.'s independent director S. Ravindran as part-time chairman of the bank from February 29 till August 2, 2026. Currently, Mr. Ravindran is an independent director on the boards of NSE, LTIDPL Invit Services, Shriram Finance and Bandhan AMC, the lender said in a regulatory filing. The non-executive part-time chairman post in TMB fell vacant after the exit of S. Annamalai on February 2, 2020.

NMDC iron ore output, sales race past 40 million tonnes

State-owned NMDC reported 40.24 million tonne iron ore production and 40.48 MT sales for the 11 months ended February. These are the best ever cumulative volumes for the 11-month period and an almost 13% and a more than 21% increase, resence the vore the vore coolers period. Indice respectively, over the year-earlier period, India's largest iron ore producer said on Friday. Output and sales in the corresponding period of FY23 were 35.62 MT and 33.42 MT, respectively. February sales rose almost 6% to 3.99 MT (3.78 MT) and was a record for the month.

Dr. Reddy's, its unit named in antitrust complaint in the U.S.

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories and a step down subsidiary have been named defendants in an antitrust complaint related to cancer drug Revlimid in the U.S. The complaint, before U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, asserts claims under federal antitrust law, alleging Dr. Reddy's, with Colemp Corn alleging Dr. Reddy's, with Celgene Corp., Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., Natco Pharma and Teva Pharmaceuticals USA, improperly restrained competition, the Hyderabad-based firm said.

The payments bank arm was found to be in breach of KYC, anti-money laundering and terrorism financing norms, letting some entities route their illegal activities' proceeds through its accounts n Fridav about the orde on Friday about the order issued on March I. "Further, the money generated from these ille-gal operations, i.e. pro-ceeds of crime were routed and channelled through hank accounts maintained

In breach: The FIU said it found substantial proof of money generated from illegal activity being routed th

from law enforcement number of illegal acts, in-cluding organising and fa-cilitating online gambling", the FIU said in a statement agencies about a few enti-ties and their network of businesses engaging in "a

Paytm decides to cut

ties with beleaguered

Sources monitoring

done now was 'too little and too late'

the development said whatever was being

dence and governance. "One 97 Communica-tions Ltd.'s Board ap-proved the termination of agreements and amend-ment of SHA on March 1," the company added. Sources monitoring the

Sources monitoring the

At WTO meet,

development said whatev-er was being done now was

'too little and too late'.

banking arm PPBL

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

As part of a process to cut dependencies, One 97 Communications Ltd.

Communications Ltd. (Paytm) and Paytm Pay-ments Bank Ltd. (PPBL), mutually agreed to end va-rious inter-company agree-ments, Paytm said in a fil-ing to the stock exchanges.

'Boost governance' Further, the shareholders

of PPBL had agreed to sim-plify the Shareholders Agreement (SHA) to en-

hance PPBL's indepen

LIC pays Govt.

against Paytm were sub against Paytm were sub-stantiated," the FIU said. "The penalty pertains to issues within a business segment that was disconti-nued two years ago," a PPBL spokesperson said. ough PPBL, REUTERS

€\$2,000 notes worth about ₹8,470 cr. still in circulation'

bank accounts maintained

by these entities with" PPBL, it said. "Based on

the voluminous material available... the charges

The Hindu Bureau

More than 9 months since the Reserve Bank of India announced the withdrawal of the ₹2,000 banknotes,

of the ₹2,000 banknotes, about ₹8,470 crore worth ₹2,000 banknotes were still in circulation as on Fe-bruary 29, as per the RBI. "The total value of ₹2,000 banknotes in circu-lation, which was ₹3.56 lakh crore on May 19,2023 has declined to ₹8,470 crore on February .29. crore on February 29, 2024," the RBI said. "Thus, 97.62% of the ₹2,000 bankment said. About 8% of firms which raised price referred to the need to pa notes has been returned." on higher costs to clients.

MARKETS India's manufacturing

PMI inched up

to 56.9 in February

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

MARKET WATCH -1.72 -0.02 -0.55 -0.19

13

The Hindu Bureau	NIFIT SU		
NEW DELHI			CHANGE
NEW DELHI	Adani Enter		
	Adani Ports. Apollo Hosp		
India's manufacturing sec-	Asian Paints		
tor continued its recovery	Axis Bank		
in February from an 18-	Bajaj Auto	8040.05	130.70
	Bajaj Finserv		
month low in December,	Bajaj Finance		
with production levels and	Bharti Airtel		
sales rising at the fastest	BPCL Britannia Ind		
pace in five months, as per	Cipla		
the seasonally-adjusted	Coal India		
	Divis Lab		
HSBC India Manufacturing	Dr Reddys Lab		
Purchasing Managers' In-	Eicher Motors		
dex (PMI).	Grasim Ind HCL Tech		
A reading of over 50 on	HDFC Bank		
	HDFC Life		
the PMI, which rose from	Hero MotoCorp	4507.10	80.60
56.5 in January to 56.9 last	Hindalco		
month, indicates an expan-	Hind Unilever		
sion in activity. New export	ICICI Bank IndusInd Bank		
orders grew at the highest	Indusing Bank		
	ITC		
pace in 21 months, but em-	JSW Steel	836.20	35.10
ployment levels changed	Kotak Bank		
little as firms felt existing	L&T		
staff strengths were	LTIMindtree Ltd. M&M		
	Manuti Suzuki		
enough to cope with the	NestleIndia		
workload.	NTPC	343.50	7.90
"The upturn in manu-	ONGC	270.55	5.95
facturing output was the	PowerGrid Corp	287.70	4.85
strongest seen for five	Reliance Ind SBI Life		
	SBI Life State Bank		
months and led by the cap-	Sun Pharma		
ital goods category [Ho-	TataConsumerPro-		
wever] capacity pressures	duct		
at goods producers in India	Tata Motors		
	Tata Steel		
remained mild [and] the	TCS. Tech Mahindra		

at goods producers in I remained mild [and] uptick was softer than that registered in January," a statement noted.

statement noted. Output price increases slowed down to their joint-weakers since March 2023, while input cost rose only fractionally at the weakest rate since July 2020. "Qualitative evidence highlighted higher prices for iron, paper and plastics parallel to reductions for cotton and steel," the state-ment said. About 8% of

e	CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
s	US Dollar	82.70	83.02
s	Euro	89.31	
2S	British Pound	104.37	104.78
)r	Japanese Yen (100)	54.98	55.20
ρ.	Chinese Yuan	11.49	11.53
	Swiss Franc	93.33	93.70
of	Singapore Dollar	61.40	61.65
	Canadian Dollar	60.90	61.13
2S	Malaysian Ringitt	17.42	17.50
SS	Australian Dollar		

Adanis plan

₹75.000-cr.

investment

in MP

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct n

⁺ CG Power to set up Guiarat chip unit for ₹7.600 crore

<u>The Hindu Bureau</u> CHENNAI

CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd. (CG) said it would invest ₹7,600 crore over five years in a joint venture with Japan's Renesas Electronics and Thai-land's Stars Microelectronics to build and operate an outsourced semiconductor

as to build and operate an outsourced semiconductor assembly and test (OSAT) facility in India. The unit would come up at Sanard in Gujarat. The capacity would be ramped up to 15 million units per day, CG Power said. CG would hold 92.3% stake in the JV followed by Renesas (6.8%) and Stars Microelectronics (0.3%). The project would be fi-nanced via subsidies, equi-ty and bank borrowings.

Aroon Deep

In the past week, three un-dersea cables connecting India to global telecom net-works – Asia-Africa-Eu-rope-I, Europe India Gate-way, and Tata Global Network – have been dam-ord or a proceible arout of

aged as a possible result of targeted attacks, forcing te-

lecom operators such as Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio

and Tata Communications to reroute traffic to other cable systems. The damage to the cable systems in the Red Sea as a result of the ongoing con-flict in the region exposes the grave vulnerabilities of India's Internet and over-

SM 👘

and Tata Communicatio

Leading automakers Maru-ti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors on Friday reported robust sales for February as demand for sports utility vehicles con-tinued to remain strong. Mahindra & Mahindra. ger vehicle sales grew 9% to 1,60,271 units in Febru-Tovota Kirloskar Motor

Press Trust of India

Automakers register

and Honda Cars also wit-nessed higher vehicle dis-patches to dealers last month. February turned out to

 b (60,27) units in February against 1,47,467 units in the month a year earlier.
 Sales of utility vehicles roce 52% to 61,234 units last month compared to 33,550 units in February 2023.
 However, dispatches of clined to 14,782 units against 21,875 units in February 2023. Similarly, sales of compact cars also February turned out to be the third-best month for sales for the industry ever. The highest-ever pas-senger vehicle wholesales in a month was reported in January this year with dis-patch of 3,94,500 units. Maruti Surabi India said Maruti Suzuki India said sales of compact cars also declined by 10%. its total domestic passen-

propriate



The Hindu Bureau

he Financial Intelli-gence Unit-India has fined Paytm

Payments Bank Ltd. (PPBL) ₹5.49 crore for violations of

the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, after find

ing substantial proof of money generated from ille-

gal activity being routed

through accounts held by entities with the bank.

ed a review of PPBL's oper-ations after receiving "specific information"

Sensex, Nifty

surge almost

2% on 'better'

GDP data

The Hindu Bureau

Key benchmark stock in-dices surged almost 2% higher on better-thanex-pected third-quarter (Q3) gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth data. The National Statistical Office (NSO) had on Thurs-day revised upwards In-dia's FY24 growth estimate to 7.6% from 7.3% project-ed in January. The S&P BSE Sensex surged 1.72%, or 1,245.05 points, to an all-

1,245.05 points, to an all-time high of 73,745.34 backed by gains in metal

and banking stocks.

The FIU-IND had initiat

the Centre.

a cheque for ₹2441,44,91,124 to Finance extra time on Friday

"It would be very bad for India" if there were further damage to subsea cable systems landing in India, remarked Sunil Ta-gare, a former telecom in-dustry executive. Mr. Tagare, who shared on social media the news of the damage said the recy

on social media the news of the damage, said the reg-ulations put India among the 'unfriendliest jurisdic-tions in the world' to build undersea cable systems. The difficulties, he told

development into the WTO as a plurilateral pact and

as a plurilateral pact and extend e-com tax morato-rium. But, so far, it has held its ground." Going by the draft float-ed on agriculture floated and the members reaction to it, there is an attempt to equalise all deadlines, in-cluding for domestic sup-port and market access, though there is a mandate flowing from the Nairobi Ministerial Conference for developing-country issues.

safeguard measures (SSM). "The EU and the U.S., it seems, want no deadlines at all. For India, it is vital to get a deadline for PSH, SSM, and cotton, But Brazi

SSM, and cotton. But Brazil seems to be pushing for deadlines on domestic support and market access as well," said the source. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

SEBI's concerns mount with small, mid-cap fund flows

Suresh P. Iyengar

Inflows into small-cap funds have surged by a whopping 92% in the first 10 months of this fiscal to ₹37,360 crore against ₹22,103 crore logged in the whole of FY23, raising con cerns at SEBI about froth in

cerns at SEBI about froth in the market. Apart from this, most small- and mid-cap mutual fund schemes have en-hanced cash holdings as they could not find an in-vestment opportunity at the right valuation. Following the Securities and Exchange Board of In-dia's diktat, the Associa-tion of Mutual Funds in In-dia (AMFI) has asked MFs to make more disclosures on the schemes and put in as of December-end com

as of December-end com-pared to 428 in December 2022, as per the Fisdom Research report. In comparison, five mid-cap stocks were added tak-ing the portfolio to 140 in the same period, it added. Abhjit Bhave, MD and CEO of Equirus Wealth, said, "While SEBI's atten-tion underscores the need tion underscores the need for vigilance, it is important to recognise the ap-peal of the segments often lies in potential for growth and diversification.

AUMs surge The overall AUM of small-cap funds climbed by 89% to ₹2.48-lakh crore in Janu-

enable investors make more informed decisions, there may be limited imnetter may be minuted im pact on aggregate flows. A few investors may rotate investments based on new the disclosures."

:::

Small-cap funds expand While the inflows and re-turns have increased multi-fold, the number of new small-cap stocks added to the portfolio of small-cap funds was up by 78 to 506



lies in potential for growth and diversification. "Investors should ap-proach with caution, en-suring alignment with their risk tolerance and invest-ment objectives." Prashant Narvekar, Head Gales), Smart Invest, a leading MF distributor, said, "Though inflows into-small- and mid-caps may taper a bit, investors will continue to chase the funds for high returns and not shy away till there is a sharp fall in stock prices. "The fewer stock addi-tions to the portfolio re-flect the concentrated in-vestment strategies and the regulator's concern for froth, he added. Large mutual fund

crore and \$600 crore to ex-pand its presence in food processing, logistics, agri-logistics, and defence ma-nufacturing. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Janaki Krishnan MUMBAI

and indirect employment to about 15,000 people. Announcing the invest-ments at a Regional Indus-try Conclave in Uijain, Madhya Pradesh, Pranav Adani, Director, Adani En-terprises, said, "I see infi-nite possibilities for infinite growth - especially in ener-gy and infrastructure - and the Adani Group is excited about investing in M.P." So far, the group has in-vested about 718,000 crore in the State, creating

in the State, creating 11,000 jobs, but now it intends to ramp itup. The group will be invest-ing close to ₹30,000 crore

to ramp up power genera-tion capacity at its Mahan Energen plant in Singrauli, from the current 1,200 MW to 4 400 MW It will also in

to 4,400 MW. It will also in-vest about 28,000 crore to set up 3,410 MW pumped storage projects. In the road sector, ₹5,000 crore will be util-ised to build the Mahakaal Expressivay connecting Uj-jain to Bhopal via Indore. A sum of ₹5,000 crore will be invested in 4-mil-lion-tonne a year clinker

lion-tonne a year clinker unit in Chorgadi and two cement grinding units in Dewas and Bhopal with 8

mtpa capacity in total. In the natural resources sector, the group would in-vest more than ₹4,000 crore and ₹600 crore to ex-

actions". Two network experts said there would be minimal, if any, impact from the cable damage, as traffic could be rerouted to alternative systems. Choke point

While the disruptions high-light a choke point in sub-sea connections between Europe and Asia, they are of particular concern to Inseas telecom connectivity systems if infrastructure

India's crucial telecom vulnerability

of particular concern to In-dia because of the relative-ly few connections India has to such cables, and stiff regulatory limits on grow-ing India's submarine ca-ble industry for private firms that are not full-fledged telecom operators. systems if infrastructure passing through the region is further mpacted. While Bharti and Jio de-clined to comment, Tata said in a statement it was "keeping a close watch on the situation and [had] in-itiated immediate and ap-

The Hindu Bureau The Life Insurance Corpo-ration of India on Friday paid an interim dividend of more than ₹2,441 crore to

LIC Chairperson Sidd-hartha Mohanty presented

82441,44,91,724 to Finance Minister Nirmala Sithara-man, the State-owned in-surer said in a release. Ms. Sitharaman also vir-tually inaugurated the LIC International Business Centre at GIFT City, Gand-hinagar. The opening of the facility is a strategic move aligned with LIC's commitment to providing world-class insurance and financial services on a glo-

financial services on a glo-bal scale, the insurer said. Undersea cable disruptions expose

remedial

members still bicker over farm sops

Amiti Sen NEW DELHI WTO members struggled to narrow differences in

crucial areas such as agri-culture, fisheries and the ecommerce moratorium at the on-going 13th Ministe-rial Conference (MC13) in Abu Dhabi which went into

extra time on Friday. But India stayed firm in its attempt to protect the li-velihoods of farmers and fishermen and kept issues without a mandate, such as investment facilitation, for-mally out, sources said. "India is fighting at-tempts from various quar-ters to make it dilute its de-mands in the negotiations for both agriculture and fisheries subsidies," a

fisheries subsidies," a source told *businessline*. " It is also under pressure to allow the inclusion of investment facilitation fo

developing-country issues, including public stock-holding (PSH)and special

The difficulties, he told The Hindu, would hamper the ability of Indian Inter-net providers and telecom operators to rely on adeq-uate redundant back-ups, a worrying prospect if more cables in the Red Sea were to get damaged.

on the schemes and put in place in 21 days a policy to protect investor interest

to 72.48-lakh crore in Janu-ary agaisnt 71.31-lakh crore registered in the same month last year, while that of mid-cap funds rose 58% to 72.30-lakh crore against 71.83-lakh crore, according to the AMFI data. Nirav Karkera, Head of Research at Fisdom, said, "While the SEBI move will enable investors make

froth," he added. Large mutual fund houses have been proac-tively restricting inflows to protect investor interests. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

THE HINDU Sport

DOMINATION Australia takes charge after

14

New Zealand collapses



Australia dismissed New Zealand for 179 to take control of the first Test on Friday's second day after Cameron Green had scored 174 not out in a final-wicket stand to drive the visitor to 383 all out. The scores: Australia 383 (Green 174 not out, M. Henry 5-70) & 13/2 in 8 overs vs New Zealand 179 in 43.1 overs (Phillips 71, Lyon 4/43).

SPECIAL WIN Ireland downs Afghanistan to

claim maiden Test victory



Ireland won its first Test match on Friday when it defeated Afghanistan by six wickets in Abu Dhabi, ending a streak of sever ses. It reached its target of 111 in the final session of day three The scores: Afghanistan 155 & 218 (Shahidi 55) lost to Ireland 263 & ers (Balbirnie 58 n.o.). 111/4 in 31.3 ov

PRODICY Bashir is the new Ashwin, hails former England captain Vaughan



Michael Vaughan feels England has discovered a world-class superstar in off-spinner Shoaib Bashir, who has the skills to emulate the success of R. Ashwin. He impressed with a match haul of eight wickets in Ranchi. "Celebrating another world-class superstar that d, Bashir. He's the new Ashwin," said Vaughan

MUCH-NEEDED STEP Kapil backs BCCI's decision to protect First-Class events



'A few players will suffer, but let it be," said Kapil Dev on Friday as he backed the BCCI's decision to terminate central contracts for lac of commitment to domestic cricket, calling it a much-needed step to protect First-Class events like the Ranji Trophy. He said the decision to assert importance of domestic cricket was long overdue

Puneri Paltan reigns supreme

against Haryana Steelers,

Well-earned win: Paltan's title triumph made up for its heartbreaking loss in last season's fina

do-or-die moments.

clinches its first crown

Ecclestone and Harris sizzle as Warriorz brush off Giants

The former spins a web around the Gujarat batters with a three-wicket haul before the Australian's unbeaten 60 takes the Uttar Pradesh side home with six wickets and 26 balls to spare

WPL SEASON 2

Mayank Chaudhary BENGALURU

Spin it to win it' was the mantra for the UP Warriorz, led by Sophie Ecclestone (4-0-20-3), before Grace Harris' unbeaten fifty (60, 33b, 9x4, 2x6) powered it to a six-wicket win over Gujarat Giants in the Womer's Pre-mier League game at the mier League game at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium

here on Friday. Chasing 143, Harris ad-ded valuable runs with Chamari Athapaththu and Deepti Sharma, taking the Warriorz to the finish line with 26 balls to spare for its second consecutive win.

to a brisk start.

But, as the openers looked to change gears, Ec-clestone dismissed Moo-

second consecutive with the Earlier, spinners capital-ised on a turning track to help the Warriorz restrict the Giantis to 142 for five af-ter choosing to bowl. Laura Wolvaardt used Anjali Sarvan's pace and exploited the short off-side boundary, hitting her for three back to-back fours. Skipper Beth Mooney, who had two poor perfor-mances with the bat, showed the right intent at the start. She stepped out to Rajeshwari Gayakwad to Rajeshwari Gayakwad and smashed a straight She then welcomed Ec-

clestone with a boundary. executing a flawless re-verse lap, as Giants got off

The Hindu Bureau BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Na-

Odisha Chief Minister Na-veen Patnaik released a coffee table book titled 'FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023' brought out by Sportstar, the sports magazine of The Hindu Group, here on Friday. Sportstar, meticulously

Sportstar meticulously captured every on-field and off-field moment of the 15th chapter of the FIH Od-isha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023, showcasing the grand celebration of the

sport in Odisha. The cap-tivating coffee table book

has preserved the memo-ries of the World Cup for

The State had success

The State had success-fully organised the Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 at two venues – Bhubanes-war and Rourkela. In a message, Mr. Pat-naik said, "having played host to top officials and players from 16 nations, chom-

global artists, sports cham-pions and hockey lovers

from across the world, it was indeed a bigger, more

SM C

ternity



mid-off. Harris and Ecclestone Harris and Ecclestone bowled in tandem, chok-ing the batters and stop-ping the boundary hits. Alyssa Healy's ploy to operate with the off-spin-ners paid off, as the Giants

ney, who was caught by Harris at mid-off. Ecclestone picked up one more wicket, remov-ing Wolvaardt in similar fashion. This time, it was could only manage 29 in six overs after scoring 33 in Athapaththu who caught the South African at the first four. Harleen Deol had anoth-

Odisha CM Patnaik releases Sportstar's

er underwhelming outing, scoring 18 off 24 before holing out to Anjali off Rajesh-wari's bowling. Ashleigh Gardner (30, 17b, 4x4, 1x6) provided the impetus, her 52-run association with Phoebe Litch field powering Giants close to the 150-mark but it was

GUJARAT GIANTS Laura Wolvaardt c Athapaththu b Ecclestone 28 (26b, 4x4), Beth Mooney c Harris b Ecclestone 16 (16b, 2x4), Harleen Deol c Anjali b Rajeshwari 18 (24b, 1x4), Phoebe Rajeshwari 18 (24b, 124), Phoebu Litchfield run out 35 (26b, 4%), Litchfield run out 35 (26b, 4%), Lixôl, Ashleigh Gardner c Athapaththu b Ecclestone 30 (17b, 4%, 1x6), D. Hemalatha (nr out) 2 (4b), Kathryn Bryce (not out) 5 (7b); Extras (b.4, lb.4): 8; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 142

FALL OF WICKETS

FALL OF WICKETS 1-40 (Mooney, 5.2 overs), 2-61 (Wolvaardt, 9.3), 3-83 (Harleen, 12.6), 4-135 (Gardner, 18.1), 5-135 (Litchfield, 18.3). UP WARRIORZ BOWLING Athapaththu 4-0-19-0, Anjali 1-0-13-0, Rajeshwari 4-0-33-1, Harris 3-0-21-0, Ecclestone 4-0-20-3 Deexti 4-0-28.0

Saikat Chakraborty HYDERABAD

Harris 3-0-21-0, Ecclestone 4-0-20-3, Deepti 4-0-28-0. UP WARRIORZ Alyssa Healy b Bryce 33 (21b, 7x4), Kiran Navgire c Hemalatha b Tanuja 12 (3b, 2x4), Chamatha Athapaththu c Wolvaardt b Tanuja 17 (11b, 4x4), Grace Harl (not out) 60 (*33b*, *9x4*, *2x6*), Shweta Sehrawat b Meghna 2 (*7b*), Deepti Sharma (not out) 17 (*14b*, *3x4*); Extras (lb-1, w-1): 2; Total (for four wkts. in 15.4 Friday.

overs): 143. FALL OF WICKETS FALL OF WICKETS 1-42 (Kiran, 4.3), 2-50 (Healy, 5.2), 3-86 (Athapaththu, 8.5), 4-90 (Shweta, 10.4). GIANTS BOWLING Meghna 4-1-39-1, Bryce 2-0-19-1, Gardner 3-0-30-0, Tanuja 3-0-23-2, Mannat 1-0-14-0, Sneh 2-4.0-1270

do-or-die moments. The first half was a close contest, with Paltan main-taining a narrow lead. A crucial four-point raid by Mohite near halftime webod. Unrene to the Puneri Paltan emerged vic-torious in the Pro Kabaddi pushed Haryana to the brink of an all-out, but sub

League Season 10 final, de-feating Haryana Steelers 28-25 in a nail-biting en-counter here at the Gachi-bowli Indoor Stadium on stitute raider Vishal Tate kept the Steelers in the game with a crucial touch Point. The second half conti-nued to be a tense affair. Paltan eventually pulled and the final two minutes. Strong defensive play by right cormer Gaurav Khatri, who secured four tackle points, helped Paltan slow down the game and secure a historic victory. On the other hand, it point. The low-scoring en-counter, which ended with

PKL

Paltan winning its maiden title, was built as a defensive battle between the strongest backlines of the

> On the other hand, it was a disappointing night for Haryana, which struggled defensively – only ma-naging six tackle points

throughout the match. throughout the match. It was tough for coach. Manpreet Singh, whose luck in finals as a coach re-mains poor. He lost two consecutive finals with Gujarat Gants (previously) Gujarat Fortune Giants) be-fore this gutting loss with the Steelers. Palan cantain Aslam In-

Paltan captain Aslam In andar was named the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the season for 142 raid points and 23 tackle points. The side's vice-captain Mohammadreza Chi yaneh was adjdged the sea-son's best defender, but fell son's best delender, but fell short of a record-equalling 100 tackle points by one solitary point, while Da-bang Delhi's Ashu Malik bagged the best raider ho-nour for his haul of 276 raid points.

The result: Puneri Paltan 28 bt Haryana Steelers 25.

Treesa and Gavatri exit in the quarterfinals

GERMAN OPEN

Fourth-seeded Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand crashed out of the German Open Super 300 badmino-ting to Li Yi Jing and Luo Xu Min in the women's dou-bles quarterfinals in Mul-heim an der Ruhr on Fri-day. The Chinese duo, seeded sixth, prevailed ov-er the Indians 21-16, 21-4 in 41 minutes. Fourth-seeded Treesa Jolly

Treesa and Gayatri had defeated the Czech pair of Sona Horinkova and Katerina Zuzakov 21-10, 21-11 in a round of 16 match on Thursday. However, it was curtains for India in both women's and men's singles events.

Other results (round of 16): Men: Nhat Nguyen (Irl) bt Sathish Kumar Karunakaran 2-18, 24-22. Women: Mia Blichfeldt (Den) bt Aakarshi Kashyap 21-13, 21-14.

coffee table book on Hockey World Cup

Odisha CM Patnaik releasing the book in the presence of Ayon

exciting, engaging and un-forgettable Hockey World Cup. It was absolutely delightful to see the people of India and Odisha becom-

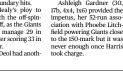
ing part of what was a hockey festival like no other." "The two state-of-the-art venues – the iconic Kalart venues – the iconic Kal-inga Hockey Stadium, in Bhubaneswar as well as the brand-new Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourke-la – stand testimony to Od-



Sengupta, Editor of Sportstar and Sridhar Aranala, Vice President of The Hindu group, in Bhubaneswar on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

isha's strong commitment and love towards hockey," he remarked. Odisha CM hoped the success of this World Cup

would inspire the younger generation towards hockey generation towards hockey and revive the glory days of Indian hockey. The 252-page coffee ta-ble book has vividly cap-tured sporting actions, cul-tural extravaganza and spectators' excitements. Outstanding photographs



and rich printing produc-

tion has made the coffee ta-ble lively. "The right to host back-to-back FIH World Cups stands as a testament to Odisha's long-standing support for hockey and its Support for hockey and its commitment to promote sports at every level. Under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Pat-naik, the State has wit-nessed a sporting revolu-tion," said Ayon Sengupta, Editor of Sportstar. "Sportstar and The Hin-du feel privileged to be part of this endeavour to spread the story of the State's love for hockey through this book. The book not only provides a visual treat, but also an in-sight into the works that

sight into the works that made the miracle happen," made the miracle nappen," said Mr. Sengupta. Odisha's Sports and Youth Services Depart-ment Secretary R. Vineel Krishna and Sridhar Ara-

nala, Vice President, SDT Rao, General Manager, of *The Hindu* Group were present at the release of present at the r coffee table book.

However, it was Puneri Paltan's raider Pankaj Mo-2.4-0-17-0. 2.++--1/-U. **Toss:** UP Warriorz. UP Warriorz won by six wickets with 26 balls to spare. **Saturday's match:** RCB vs. MI, 7.30 p.m. hite who emerged the hero on the night, scoring a crucial nine points and lead-ing his team's offensive charge, particularly in key

Boyer gets the better of

fourth seed Syrcina

Tristan Boyer knocked out the fourth seed Dalibor Svrcina 7-6(2), 7-6(1) in the quarterfinals of the Dafa News \$82,000 Delhi Open Challenger tennis at the DLTA Complex on Friday. The 22-year-old Boyer, ranked 242 in the world, al-lowed his Czech opponent to fight back, as the two ex-changed eight breaks of serve in the match. Howev-er, the American handled the tie-breaks with authori-

In the semifinals, Boyer will play Geoffrey Blanca-neaux of France. The Frenchman unleashed his

Frenchman unleashed his energetic game after a hes-itant start to beat qualifier Philip Sekulic of Australia 7-6(3), 6-2. The Aussie had not dropped a set in four matches including two in the qualifying event. More-

be between Yuta Shimizu of Japan and Coleman Wong of Korea.

Untroubled: Boyer handled the tie-breaks with authority, thanks to his strong serve, to pull through in straight sets. KAMESH SRINIVASAN

over, Sekulic had not

to break Sekulic's resis-tance and pulled through with ease after winning the

first set. The other semifinal will

The results Singles: Quarterfinals: Yuta

Singles: Quarterfinals: Vita Shimizu (Jpn) bt Enrico Dalla Valle (Ita) 7-5, 7-5; Coleman Wong (I+kg) bt Tristan Schoolkate (Aus) 7-6(10), 6-3; Tristan Boyer (USA) bt Dalibos Yoxina (Cze) 7-6(2), 7-6(1); Geoffrey Blancaneaux (Fra) bt Philip Sekulic (Aus) 7-6(3), 6-2.

Doubles: Semifinals: Jakob Schnaitter & Mark Wallner (Ger Schnaitter & Mark Wallner (Ger) bt Ray Ho (Tpe) & Calum Puttergill (Aus) 3-6, 7-6(6), [10-5];

Piotr Matuszewski (Pol) & Matthew Romios (Aus) bt Constantin Kouzmine & Maxime Janvier (Fra) 7-6(4), 6-1.

Press Trust of India MÜLHEIM AN DER RUH



DELHI OPEN Kamesh Srinivasan NEW DELHI

Tristan Bover knocked out

the tie-breaks with authority, thanks to his strong serve, to pull through in straight sets.

dropped more than six games in any of those matches. Blancaneaux, who had outplayed second seed Adam Walton for the loss of three games in the second round, found a way

Bull runs, a Mercedes farewell tour, driver churn: F1 storylines to keep an eye on

Racing fans will have to wait until next year to savour the tasty prospect of Lewis Hamilton turning out for Ferrari, but that doesn't mean 2024 is merely the lull before the storm

> Time will tell if they

[the other teams] are fast enough

I'm very fortunate at Mercedes, I've been able to be myself. And that will be no different at Ferrari... I'm 100% a Mercedes driver now, and I don't want this distracting me from doing a job LEWIS HAMILTON

XV

S. Dipak Ragay

the start of this decade, Formula Ome was on the precipice of a big crisis with the onset of the global pandemic in 2020. That year, the season shut down days before the first race in Melbourne af-ter a few members of the McLaren team tested positive for the COVID-19 virs. t the start of this decade. Formula One

or not. I also don't know if we are fast enough In general it's better cover the sport. In 2021, when things returned to normalcy, F1 not to think

had a season for the ages where the title was con-troversially decided on the last lap of the last race in favour of Max Verstappen. Since that seaabout it MAX VERSTAPPEN son, which further boosted the sport's popular-ty, Red Bull and Verstappen have only grown in strength. A cruise to the drivers and construc-tors' titles in 2022 became an obliteration of the field in 2023. Red Bull won all but one race las

heid in 2023. Red Bull won all but one race last year, Verstappen claiming 19 of the 22. And so, the 2024 season finds F1 at a cross-roads again. It may not be facing an existential threat but it's certainly nursing some headaches. Ahead of the 75th year of the F1 World Cham-pionship, The Hindu explores the storylines set to play out over the next 10 months.

Can anybody tame the Bull?

The big question on everyone's mind is, who can The use question force your's similar use, who can stop – or even challenge – the Verstappen-Red Bull juggernaut? In sport, nothing good ever comes from predictability. When an audience feels that the result is a foregone conclusion, is there any incentive to tune in? While it is essential to acknowledge, appre-

ciate and even celebrate such feats of excelle extended periods of dominance eventually turn off the neutral and casual fans

Even for Red Bull and Verstappen, their

The field and reason rates. Even for Red Bull and Verstappen, their achievements will have more lustre if they are made to work for it rather than just disappearing into the distance once the five red lights go out. So, a lot rides on Mercedes, Ferrari, and McLaren finding the means to help both them-selves and the sport by taking the fight to Red Bull. But it will be challenging as they have to first douse fires in their own backyards. Moreover, Red Bull hasn't stood still. Thanks to its significant pace advantage in 2023, the team didn't need to update the car and was able to focus its resources on 2024. This season's car is a fairly drastic evolution of its predecessor. Despite the potential to trip up, it looked quick right out of the box in testing. If it has uncorked new potential, it could be another long, dreary year for the rulas. vear for the rivals.

How the challengers measure up

How the challengers measure up. It has been a chastening experience for Mer-cedes over the last two years after winning al-most everything from 2014 to 2021. The car the team produced for the new regulations in 2022 looked visually different from the rest of the grid, but was neither fast nor driver friendly, winning just one race. The team retained the concept last year but made no headway and was forced to discard it, there were also changes within the team after its technical director, Mike Elliott, resigned and his predecessor, James Allison, returned to a dayto-day role. The evidence from pre-season testing was reasonably promising, especially the feedback

reasonably promising, especially the feedback from the drivers. However, the headline times suggest it is probably third-fastest behind Red Bull and Ferrari, perhaps not enough for Lewis Hamilton to work with in his farewell Mercedes

Ferrari had a far more encouraging testing ex-perience, and the drivers expressed happiness



ORACI

about the car's handling. The drivability was so-mething both Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz had complained about last year. However, Ferra-ri has in the past won a few pre-season testing championships before coming a cropper when the serious business got underway. In 2022, the Scuderia had a race-winning car

In 2022, the Scuderia had a race-winning car that was in the tile hunt for half a season before things went down a spiral. It took until the se-cond half of 2023 for Ferrari to get things back on track when it showed decent form in the final few races. This season is also a test of team boss Fred Vasseur's leadership. The Italian marque needs to be regularly sniping at Red Bulls heels this year to set the stage for a tile assault from 2025 when Hamilton arrives at Maranello.

Open seats, closed doors and the domino effect

The driver market was expected to be buzzing this year, with a lot of contracts running out in 2024. However, that balloon was pricked at the start of the year with three big announcements. Leclerc and Lando Norris decided to extend their stay at Ferrari and McLaren. But the big bombshell, the Hamilton-Ferrari deal, dropped a few days later.

Though the principal actors are off the table, a handful will drive for their futures this year. The two drivers on top of that list are Sainz and Ser-nio Perez. gio Perez

gio Perez. Sainz, who will make way for Hamilton at Fer-rari next year, has to show that he is still a top player in the paddock. He was the only non-Red Buil driver to win a race last year and has done well against Leclerc. The Spaniard will, no doubt, attract the attention of any team that wants a seriously fast driver with a great work thic. Where Sainz goes next could well decide the career trajectories of many others. On the other hand, it is a make-or-break year

On the other hand, it is a make-or-break year for Perez. Occupying the fastest car on the grid, the Mexican has underperformed Verstappen, which is putting it mildly. Red Bull hasn't needed Perez's help in the constructors' battle or in taking points off Verstappen's rivals in the last two years. But this will change if there is a threat from another team. It is the last chance for the six-time Grand Prix winner to step up and show what he can do.

The ever-changing sprint conundrum

The ever-changing sprint conundrum The sprint format was introduced in 2021 at se-lect events to liven up the proceedings on all three days of a weekend. The venues are chosen based on the circuit's overtaking potential, and there will be six events this year. It has undergone two format changes already. For this year, the format remains the same, but the flow of the events has changed. Sprint quali-fying will now be held on Friday evening and the point race on Saturday morning followed by

sprint race on Saturday moring, followed by qualifying for the main Grand Prix. Last year, sprint qualifying and the sprint race were held on Saturday, making the middle day of the weekend a bit pointless. This is the latest attempt to make the sprint appealing, but the jury is still out on whether it adds to the spectacle.

vindra Jadeja bath Jayasuriya

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STACKING UP



Italian Serie A Standing

Team 1 Real 2 Giron 3 Barc 4 Atlet 5 Athle

6 Real 7 Real 8 Las F

9 Vale 10 Geta 11 Osa 12 Alav 13 Villa

14 Ray 15 Sevi 16 Real

LaLiga Standings											
1	GP	w	D	ι	GF	GA	GD	PTS			
Madrid	26	20	5	1	54	16	38	65			
na	26	18	5	3	57	32	25	59			
elona	26	17	6	3	56	34	22	57			
ico Madrid	26	16	4	6	52	28	24	52			
etic Bilbao	26	14	7	5	46	26	20	49			
Betis	26	10	12	4	31	26	5	42			
Sociedad	26	10	10	6	35	26	9	40			
Palmas	26	10	6	10	26	26	0	36			
ncia	25	10	6	9	29	29	0	36			
fe .	26	8	10	8	33	38	-5	34			
iuna	26	9	6	11	30	37	-7	33			
es	26	7	8	11	25	32	•7	29			
rreal	26	7	8	11	38	48	-10	29			
Vallecano	26	5	10	11	22	36	-14	25			
lla	26	5	9	12	30	38	-8	24			
Mallorca	26	4	12	10	23	34	-11	24			
a Vigo	26	4	9	13	29	39	-10	21			
z	26	2	12	12	17	37	-20	18			
iada	25	2	8	15	27	49	•22	14			
eria	26	0	9	17	25	54	•29	9			

18	Cadiz	26	2	12	12	17	37	•20
19	Granada	25	2	8	15	27	49	•22
20	Almeria	26	0	9	17	25	54	·29

nan Bundesliga Standing # Team GP W D L GF GA GD PTS

1	Leverkusen	23	19	-4	0	59	16	43	6
2	Bayem	23	17	2	4	63	26	37	5
3	Stuttgart	23	15	2	6	52	29	23	4
4	Dortmund	23	11	8	4	46	30	16	4
5	RB Leipzig	23	12	4	7	49	30	19	4
6	Eint. Frankfurt	23	8	10	5	36	30	6	3
7	Hoffenheim	23	8	6	9	41	43	-2	31
8	Werder Bremen	23	8	6	9	32	35	-3	31
9	SC Freiburg	23	8	5	10	30	42	·12	2!
10	Heidenheim	23	7	7	9	33	40	•7	21
11	FC Augsburg	23	6	8	9	33	41	-8	21
12	M'gladbach	23	6	7	10	41	45	-4	2!
13	Wolfsburg	23	6	7	10	28	36	-8	2
14	Union Berlin	23	7	4	12	23	37	-14	2
15	Bochum	23	5	10	8	28	46	-18	2!
16	Cologne	23	3	8	12	16	37	•21	1
17	Mainz	23	2	9	12	18	37	-19	15
18	Darmstadt	23	2	7	14	24	52	•28	1



8	Player	Rating	Career best		Player
1	Kane Williamson	893	919	1	Jasprit Bumrah
2	Steve Smith	818	947	2	R. Ashwin
3	Joe Root	799	923	3	Kagiso Rabada
4	Daryl Mitchell	780	804	4	Pat Cummins
5	Babar Azam	768	882	5	Josh Hazlewoo
6	Usman Khawaja	765	847	6	Ravindra Jadeja
7	Dimuth Karunaratne	750	783	7	Prabath Jayasu
8	Marnus Labuschagne	746	937	8	Nathan Lyon
9	Virat Kohli	744	937	9	Kyle Jamieson
10	Harry Brook	743	773	10	James Anderso

ODI Bowling

/er	Rating	Career best	#	Player	Rating	Career best
ar Azam	824	898	1	Keshav Maharaj	716	741
ıbman Gill	801	847	2	Josh Hazlewood	688	727
rt Kohli	768	909	3	Adam Zampa	686	695
iit Sharma	746	882	4	Mohammed Siraj	678	736
yl Mitchell	728	750	5	Jasprit Bumrah	665	838
ry Tector	723	729	6	Mohammad Nabi	653	657
vid Warner	723	869	7	Shaheen Afridi	650	688
vid Malan	707	730	8	Rashid Khan	647	647
sie van der Dusser	701	796	9	Kuldeep Yadav	645	760
nrich Klaasen	697	757	10	Trent Boult	643	775

ODI Battin

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T20 Batting

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Player	Rating	Career best		P
Suryakumar Yadav	861	910	1	A
Philip Salt	802	802	2	W
Mohammad Rizwan	800	875	3	Ν
Babar Azam	764	896	4	A
Aiden Markram	755	796	5	A
Yashasvi Jaiswal	714	739	6	R
Rilee Rossouw	689	724	7	J
Finn Allen	686	723	7	T
Jos Buttler	680	687	9	F
Reeza Hendricks	660	674	10	Ν

T20 Bowling Rating Career best **layer** dil Rashid

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- THE HINDU Weekend Sport

Has Dusan Vlahovic finally found his feet at Juventus?

The 24-year-old's reputation as one of Europe's hottest attacking talents had begun to erode after a big-money move to Turin. But a goal-rich start to 2024 has altered the mood among the Bianconeri. Can he sustain this form and join the ranks of the truly elite?

<u>Reuters</u> Agence France-Presse

Agence transcertesse When the second solal against Frosinone the box by wrong-footing his method by wrong-footing his the second by wrong-footing his the second by the second the second by the second method in Yurin – from much of 2002 and 2003, who that hit marks a single second wrong-footing live second wrong-footing li

Price-tag pressure

Price-tag pressure But Vlahovic struggled to reproduce the sort of form that saw him score 38 goals in 58 games across one and a half seasons before Juventus signed him. There was a growing feeling at the Turin-based club that the output was not living up to the price tag. By the 2023 summer win-dow, the Italian powerhouse was courting wealthy clubs, hoping to recoup its investment. Juventus even reportedly offered him to cash-splashing Chelsea in the hope of securing Momelu Lukaku. But with no club willing to part with the kind of money Juventus wanted, Nla-hovic stayed put. And now many Juventus fans hovic stayed put. And now many Juventus fans are thanking their lucky stars. The brace against Frosinone took Vlahovic's

Serie A tally this season to 15, second only to In-ter Milan's Lautaro Martinez. Even more im-Serie A tally this season to 15, second only to In fer Milari's Lautaro Martinez. Even more in pressively, they made Vlahovic the leading scor-prin Europe's top five leagues in 2024, this nine. . Maddinot to deciding matches – he also as-magning tronsmome – Vlahovic is looking like a quentiz goals this season, no one among Serie Xo top 10 scorers has a higher proportion. . . Mathovic is also setting the tone one the app-quentiz goals this season, no one among Serie Xo top 10 scorers has a higher proportion. . . Mathovic is also setting the tone for the sap-forters of a club struggling to keep pace in a the forters of a club struggling to keep pace in a the forters of a club struggling to keep pace in a the signing tronsmone by placing his hand under his bacads high and soldier on. . Mat has changed for Vlahovic? "I honestly cally well, it's simple. I work susual, I take care on body. I sleep well, I eat well and I train well, the difference with the past season is than

did finally paid off. I'm physically well, it's simple. I work as usual, I take care of my

well, I eat well and I

15 Vlahovic is second

on the list of the top scorers in Serie A this season. Nine of his 15 goals have come in 2024

37%

Lhonesth

don't know what happened. I think all the

hard work I

train well

DUSAN VLAHOVIC

No other Serie A striker among the top 10 scorers has contributed as high a proportion of the team' e goals as Vlahovid

I'm fine and I don't have pro-blems. Nonetheless, I am not happy ... the team results matter more than my goals. We have not been up to our usual standards." Former Italy coach Ce-sare Prandelli believes Vla-howic's desire to prove himself and the trust he has begun to feel in Turin have contributed to the tur-

body. I sleep have contributed to the tur-naround. "He has more selfesteem and is convinced about his role inside Juventus," Prandelli told *Tuttosport*. "Against

PICTURE THIS



Frosinone, he lit erally dragged Ju-ventus. He can become a leader and the reference point for personality, technique and goals. He has a fire goals. He has a fire inside and really cares about the con-sideration he feels from his teammates and the environment. If he feels trust, he gives his best."

triot "can become one of the best in the world". "Dusan is – and has al-ways been – a great striker, he just need-ed to find his best form," Kovacevic told *Gazzetta dello Sport*. "His talent has never been in question. We are talking about a young but complete centre forward. He has been going through a spectacular state of form since January and 1 hope that this is only the start. I remain convinced that Dusan can be-eme one of the best incht world. Just like UR one of the best in the world... just like [Er-

Best in the world? And Vlahovic's best is truly elite. Former Juventus striker Darko Kovacevic thinks his compa-triot "can become one of the best in he world" "Juven is – and has al

come one of the best in the world... just like [Er-ling] Haaland." Vlahovic is an exceptional ball-striker – with a jackhammer of a left foot that can get the ball to curve and dip, he is a goal threat at free-kicks. His left foot also makes him dangerous from range as well as from inside the box, where he often finds space to receive pro-oreseive nasese

gressive passes. Unlike many other left-footers, the 24-year-old isn't one-footed. He is a more-than-competent finisher off his right when defenders shepherd him onto his 'weaker' foot - he is capable of both striking across his body and opening up his hips and side-footing



Saturday, March 2, 2024

Against Frosinone, he literally dragged Juventus. He has a fire inside ... If he feels trust, he gives his best. He can become the reference point for personality, technique and goals

CESARE PRANDELLI

the ball.

The 3-1 win over Lazio earlier this season showcased the variety of finishing Vlahovic pos-sesses. He opened the scoring by sweeping home a cross with a technically supreme firstion when he chested down a long ball, opened up space in front of two defenders with a touch

bin when he checked down a ong and, benef up space in front of two defenders with a touch and fired home from the edge of the box. At 63", Vhhovic has enough of an aerial pre-sence. He can outjump most defenders and score off towering headers. He is also brave enough to attempt diving headers, his poach-er's instinct often getting him to balls other strikers may have given up chasing. At Juventus, Vlahovic doesn't always get to show of his all-round game. He does not parti-cipate in the build-up as often as Lautaro does at Inter, for instance, but the Serb has the skill and touch to roll his defenders under contact. This makes him a good bouncing board for passes to release runners from deep, afact of his game release runners from deep, a facet of his game that makes him an ideal option for both onestriker setups and the two-striker system he al most always plays in at Juventus.

What the future holds

Name of the second seco But for all of Vlahovic's undeniable qualities, he

GAME THEORY

Gone in 60 metres: the fastest hurdlers and sprinters Devynne Charlton came within 0.01 seconds of equalling her world indoor 60m hurdles record in Madrid last week. The Bahamian athlete is set to threaten her mark again at this weekend's World Athletics Indoor Championships in Glagoros. But Ta Jones, who shares both the world record and the second-best time, is out with an injury and worlt face of against Charlton. It's a good opportunity then to take a look at the top times in the women's 60m hurdles as well as those in the 60m flat sprint:

60 METRES	HURDLES: BEST TIMES	(WOMEN)		
Mark (sec)	Competitor	Venue	Date	
7.67	Devynne Charlton	New York	11 Feb 2024	
7.67	Tia Jones	Albuquerque	16 Feb 2024	
7.68	Susanna Kallur	Karlsruhe	10 Feb 2008	A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A
7.68	Tia Jones	Albuquerque	16 Feb 2024	
7.68	Devynne Charlton	Madrid	23 Feb 2024	
7.69	Lyudmila Narozhilenko	Chelyabinsk	04 Feb 1990	
7.70	Lyudmila Narozhilenko	Madrid	11 Feb 1993	
7.70	Sharika Nelvis	Albuquerque	18 Feb 2018	A State
7.70	Kendra Harrison	Birmingham	03 Mar 2018	
7.71	Lyudmila Narozhilenko	Chelyabinsk	04 Feb 1990	
60 METRES	BEST TIMES (WOMEN)			
Mark (sec)	Competitor	Venue	Date	DEVYNNE CH
6.92	Irina Privalova	Madrid	11 Feb 1993	DEVTINE CH
6.92	Irina Privalova	Madrid	09 Feb 1995	
6.93	Irina Privalova	Lievin	13 Feb 1994	
6.94	Irina Privalova	Lievin	19 Feb 1995	
6.94	Aleia Hobbs	Albuquerque	18 Feb 2023	
6.94	Julien Alfred	Albuquerque	11 Mar 2023	PipelA
6.95	Gail Devers	Toronto	12 Mar 1993	2966
6.95	Irina Privalova	Wien	06 Feb 1994	
6.95	Irina Privalova	Moskva	14 Feb 1995	
6.95	Marion Jones	Maebashi	07 Mar 1998	And the second s
6.96	Merlene Ottey	Madrid	14 Feb 1992	The second s
6.96	Irina Privalova	Madrid	11 Feb 1993	Maximum W
6.96	Katerina Thanou	Maebashi	07 Mar 1999	Annual Contract and
6.96	Mujinga Kambundji	Beograd	18 Mar 2022	
6.96	Julien Alfred	Albuquerque	10 Mar 2023	
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XVI

can be traced to the sands of Rio de Janeiro, so Brazil's dominance isn't a surprise. A game of beach football spans 36 minutes, with teams

FIFA partnered with BSWW

took over the running of the tournament in 2005 and rebranded it as an official FIFA event. Beach football's roots

consisting of five players (including a goalkeeper) each. The field is considerably smaller than a regular football pitch and great care is taken to clear the sand of pebbles, seashells and other objects that can cause injuries. Seychelles is set to host the 2025 edition of the tournament.

consisting of five players

AINY

Sand tussle Brazil prevailed over Italy in a keenly contested final to win a record sixth title at the 2024 FEGATOR SIXTN title at the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Dubai last Sunday. With the 6-4 victory, the Brazilians added to the crowns won in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009,

predecessors.

in the third-place playoff. The Beach Soccer World Cup, first staged in 2005, was preceded by the Beach Soccer World Championships, which was conducted under the supervision of Beach Soccer Worldwide (BSWW) and its

and 2017. Iran defeated Belarus

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