

Everything you should know about Telangana Formula E Race issue

Hyderabad: In the wake of corruption cases filed by the ACB and money laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate, BRS working president KT Rama Rao refuted allegations of corruption in the Formula E race case. He called them baseless and politically driven. In a counter filed in the High Court, he stated that all decisions were lawful and aimed at bolstering Hyderabad's global image. He contended that he cannot be held responsible for procedural lapses, if any. He went on to charge the Congress government with partisan motives in leveling unsubstantiated claims. What are the allegations against former Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao in the Formula E-Race case?— The Congress government has accused KT Rama Rao of corruption amounting to Rs 600 crore in organising the Formula E-Race in Hyderabad, claiming a violation of the election code of conduct and procedural lapses which caused financial burden on the State exchequer. The ACB filed a case against Rama Rao, the then Special Chief Secretary K Arvind Kumar and other officials. How has KTR responded to these accusations?

— Rama Rao has categorically denied all allegations, calling them baseless and politically motivated. He stated that the decision to host the Formula E Race was lawful and aimed at enhancing Hyderabad's global prestige. He emphasised that there was no conspiracy or corruption involved in the decision-making process.

What legal action has KTR taken on ACB case against him?— Rama Rao has filed a quash petition in the High Court rejecting the government's claims. He questioned the basis of the allegations, particularly why no case was filed against the Formula E-Race organization if corruption had occurred. What does KTR say about the Rs 54 crore expenditure?

— Rama Rao explained that the Rs 54 crore payment was made transparently through Indian Overseas Bank, adhering to HMDA's guidelines. He clarified that the Rs 8 crore mentioned by the government was tax-related and HMDA can reclaim as the event was not held. What evidence supports KTR's claims?— Rama Rao cited a Nielsen report stating that the Formula E-Race generated 700 crores in economic benefits for the state. He also pointed out that no notice was issued by the Election Commission, undermining claims of a code violation. How does KTR view the accusations?— Rama Rao dismissed the allegations as partisan attempts to malign his reputation, asserting that the actual loss to the event stemmed from poor decisions by Revanth Reddy's government. On charges of violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)?— The State government has no role in deciding any violation of the MCC. If there are any, the Election Commission of India (ECI) would have already issued notices. Why is the government keen to involve itself in the matter which out of its jurisdiction, unless there is a

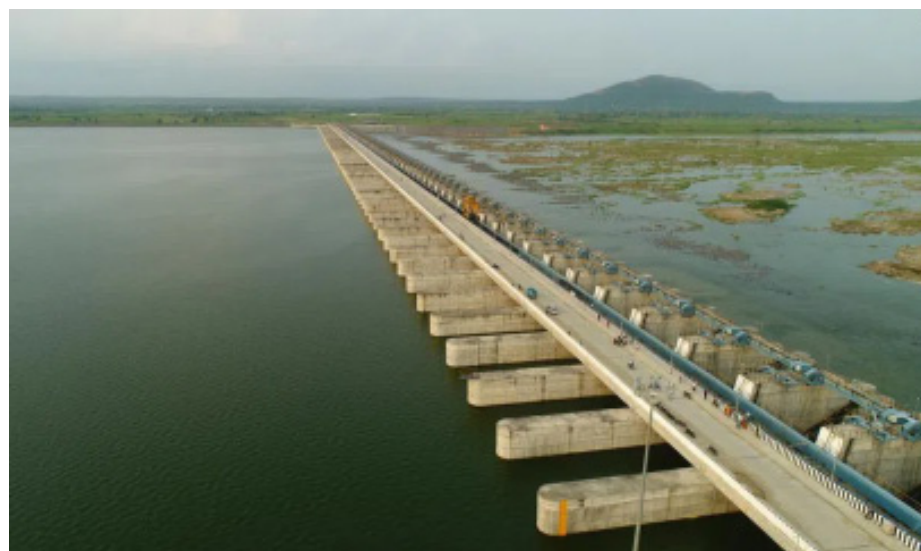
political motive? Since the Model code of conduct came in to the force on October 9, 2023, the petitioner become functus officio. The petitioner is no way concerned with the alleged irregularities if any. As per the fresh agreement, there is a financial commitment of about Rs 600 crore for next three years. No prior permissions from the Finance department were obtained before entering into the new agreement.— The contention that there is a financial commitment of Rs 600 Crores along with additional recurring expenditure for next three years is not correct, the figures were inflated without any substance. In fact by not making the balance payment to the FEO, the state has lost substantial revenue. On corruption charges— All payments were made through Indian Overseas Bank of HMDA. If there was any corruption, why no case has been filed against Formula E race organisers. The government failed to provide any concrete evidence of wrongful personal gain, except for making baseless



allegations. If there is any loss due to Formula E race, it is only because of Chief Min-

ister A Revanth Reddy's senseless decisions and ill-conceived actions.

How Congress politics wasted precious 2700 TMCs of water, leaving farmers in Telangana dry



Hyderabad: From June 1 to December 31, 2024, both the Godavari River and its tributary, Pranahita, had a combined water yield of 2700 TMCs at the Medigadda Barrage, a crucial component of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project. Despite these abundant inflows, the State failed to utilize even a trickle of it, leaving a major segment of its command area without irrigation support.

Pranahita's contribution Nearly 75 percent of the water flows released from the barrage by lifting all its 85 crest gates as recommended by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) were contributed exclusively by Pranahita, while the remaining inflows were received from the upper Godavari,

which had a considerable water yield this year, unlike the preceding two years.

The failure to utilize Godavari water was the result of the Congress government's decision to keep nearly 35 pumping units of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) idle. These units, intended to manage the project's outflows at the Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla barrages, were left unused by the State authorities and are reportedly rusting. The BRS government had constructed the three barrages of Medigadda, Annaram, and Sundilla in a fast-track mode. However, structural issues in two pillars were used by the Congress government as a pretext to halt operations. Under pressure from farmers in the ayacut of

nine reservoirs integrated with the KLIP, the State government was forced to operate a couple of pumping units at Sripada Yellampalli reservoir, providing partial supply to districts including Medak, Sangareddy and Karimnagar. From June 1 to December 31, 2024, the cumulative inflows into Sripada Yellampalli were around 355 TMCs. However, only 10 to 15 percent of this water could be utilized. The fate of the Rabi crop in a major part of the ayacut is threatened, with looming threats for the tail-end ayacut in the SRSP Stage II.

Vinod Kumar calls for filling vacant judgeships in Telangana High Court

Hyderabad: Former BRS MP B Vinod Kumar has urged the Chief Justice of Telangana to take immediate steps and fill all vacant judges' posts. He stated that the justice could be served effectively only when the High Court operates at full capacity. Speaking at Telangana Bhavan on Thursday, Vinod Kumar stated that while the sanctioned strength of Telangana High Court judges stood at 42, the number of judges never exceeded 23. He pointed out the absence of judges from Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities, stressing that their inclusion was crucial for delivering justice to Dalit and tribal communities.

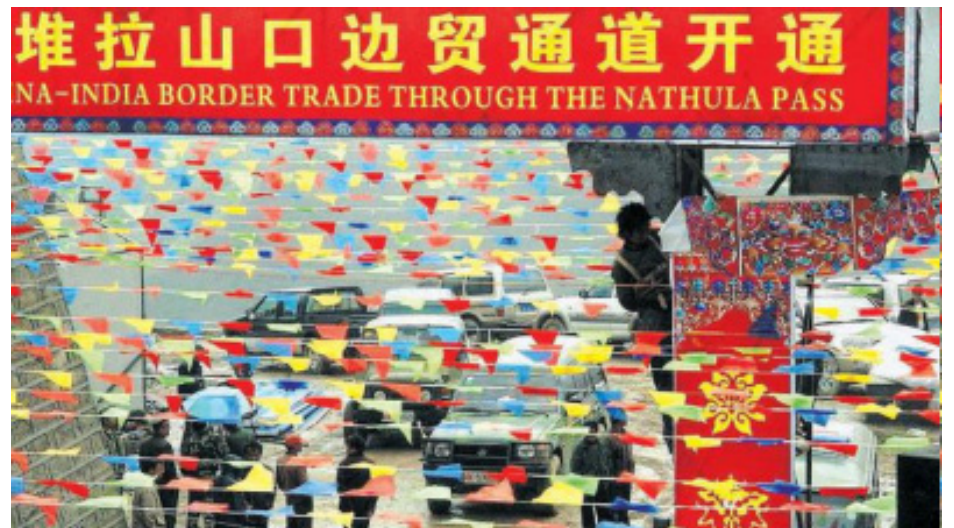
China Plus One, Impact: India Minus One?

Governments the world over engage in self-protection overtly or covertly. Defence is the best-known form of securing a nation. Next priority is the economy, and in some countries not so secular - religion and culture get equal emphasis. Economic protection could include restrictions on trade, tariffs, imports and exports. Our government at the Centre, and the Leadership which is now in its third term, made a tectonic shift in the policy terrain, specifically in the manufacturing vertical, by keenly observing and swiftly reacting to the apprehensions many countries had about a nation well-endowed with natural resources, production facilities and human resources.

Always a closed-door entity, the Red Dragon had the advantage of avoiding scrutiny of manufacturing methods, safety protocols or environmental safeguards. Add to this a socialist bent of mind, wherein manufacturing enterprises that thrived were state-owned, and detractions such as labour unrest, community uprising or public protests could be swiftly quelled, and you had an ecosystem that ensured high-volume industrial output. The watching world had to come up with an alternative. The status quo of relying on this country for outsourcing or imports could lead to over-reliance on one supply source and provide the exporter greater opportunity to strengthen its stranglehold. Hence, a diversification strategy was formulated in 2013 and anointed 'China Plus One.' At its core, C+1 encourages companies to minimise their dependency on China for supply chain and manufacturing. The genesis was rising labour costs in China, escalation of trade tensions, and the import bottleneck

faced during COVID-19 disruption. India, with its political stability, infrastructure, ease of communicating in English, and state-of-the-art connectivity, began emerging as a "Plus One" destination within a short time. Key decisions taken by the Indian Government accelerated the switch for outsourcing or relocation of manufacturing (we were already a preferred partner for IT-related services). The 'Make In India' initiative launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 proved to be well-timed with the world's search for a viable outsourcing nation. A cascade of reforms, such as reduction in corporate taxes, introduction of production-linked incentive schemes, upgrading of airports and investment in superfast trains and multi-lane expressways made us even more investor-friendly and visitor-friendly. All this sounds good... delve deeper and you discover some of it is too good to be true. While other nations were decreasing their dependence on China, we have not, and in some sectors, we just could not. Let's take figures for 2023, as recorded in the United Nations COMTRADE Database:

Our country, Apna Desh, imported from China, goods worth almost USD 122 Billion last year. Minerals, metals and ore concentrates, categories in which we pride ourselves as having requisite inland resources, feature prominently in the list of imports. Look closely at the published figures and you will find a total payout of USD 4.58 Billion dollars towards the import of Iron & Steel, Zinc, Tin, Nickel, Aluminium and Copper. The last in the list, Copper, is classified as a critical mineral. Its historical usage in domestic utensils and appliances owing to its high level of con-



ductivity is well known. In recent years, Copper has been positioned as the catalyst of green energy, being the key input material in electric vehicles, windmills and solar panels. Here is the irony. Until 2018, India was a net exporter of copper. The sudden change of status as an importer is best described by Mayur Karmarkar, Managing Director, International Copper Association, India. In an interview with The Hindu Business Line earlier this year, Karmarkar revealed that domestic copper production is struggling to keep pace with rising demand. In his words: "Over 50 percent of India's smelting capacity has shut down, leading to a transition from being a net exporter until May 2018, to a reliance on imports in recent years. The closure of the Sterlite copper smelter in Tuticorin significantly impacted this shift." Much has

been speculated and written about the reasons for closure of Sterlite Copper. Some say it is the work of anti-India forces that wanted to end the Nation's regional dominance in copper production. Did these elements fuel the rumours about pollution by the smelter, did they mislead the public and fund the protests? While the truth may never be known, the on-ground reality is the loss of livelihood for over one lakh professionals directly or indirectly associated with Sterlite Copper - as employees, daily wage labourers, contractors or operators of downstream units. A question we must ask ourselves: At a geopolitical level, has the shut-down of a unit contributing a significant share of India's copper requirement turned the scales on our China Plus One strategy, at least in the critical minerals sector?

What 2024 meant for India's higher education system

India, with its rich history of academic excellence, now stands at a crossroads, poised to transform its higher education system into a global powerhouse. However, if we look at the status of higher education in the country, India is still far from these ambitious goals. As of May 2024, India's gross enrolment ratio in higher education was 28.4%, with over 4.3 crore students enrolled in almost 1200 institutions. However, this is far below the current global average of 36.7%. According to the Ministry of Education, almost nine lakh students went abroad for higher education last year. These students have spent \$60 billion (?5.1 lakh crores) on acquiring an education abroad in 2023. This figure has almost doubled from the \$37 billion spent in 2019, the year before the pandemic. This is more than 10 times the annual budget allocated by the Union Government for Higher Education (? 44,090 crores or \$5.2 billion) in 2023-24. Clearly, current Indian students seeking higher education prefer to go abroad if they had the resources. Yet we aspire to become the destination of choice for higher education for students of the world in the coming decades. Key focus areas

To achieve this ambitious goal, there are several key areas on which the country needs to focus, including fostering

interdisciplinarity in fundamental areas of teaching and research, enhancing the quality of faculty at all levels, promoting global partnerships, ensuring the internationalisation of the curriculum followed, improving governance and autonomy, enhancing access and equity, and embracing technology and innovation. By addressing these areas, India can cultivate a new generation of global leaders equipped to tackle the complex challenges of the 21st century. Education has been one of the core defining values of Indians. It has never been a secondary option, regardless of background, religion, ethnicity or era of existence. Since education is so central to our identity, now is the time to align our education system with the 21st-century goals of inclusivity, innovation, and global competence. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a promising framework to provide a first step to achieve this vision. Several key developments are needed in Indian higher education to empower the system for global leadership. Education needs to focus on transferrable skills. In an age where information is widely available, and is mixed up with bewildering layers of misinformation, higher education has to highlight the crucial skills of critical thinking, problem-solving and communication. Universities need to become the locus of both teaching and re-



search; collaborative research and innovation need to span across disciplines to address complex global challenges; and strong partnerships need to emerge in both teaching and research with industry and international partners. Importance of faculty

All this is possible if Indian institutions of higher education can attract and retain top-notch faculty from around the world. Currently only the top tier institutions can declare that their faculty are comparable to the best of

the world. However, these academics interact with only a small number of our students. Easier faculty mobility and collaboration across the world can partially address this. Empowering a wider range of institutions to develop online degree programmes, particularly in conjunction with international universities, can help achieve this goal. Currently only a handful of elite universities are allowed to offer formal online education and develop joint degree programmes with international partners.

Signify introduces Philips VitaUp in India: Revolutionizing personal well-being through light

Hyderabad: Signify (Euronext: LIGHT), the world leader in lighting, announced the launch of its revolutionary product, Philips VitaUp, in India. This innovative product is designed to support personal well-being by providing a low-intensity dose of UVB over a long period in an indoor setting.

Philips VitaUp aims to enhance overall health and well-being by promoting strong bones and teeth, supporting immune function, improving mood and overall cognitive functions. The importance of creating healthy indoor environments has become increasingly clear as today people are spending most of their time indoors. Philips VitaUp addresses this need by utilizing light to induce the production of Vitamin D, promoting overall health and well-being.

Research indicates that approximately 50% of the global population suffers from Vitamin D insufficiency, a concern exacerbated by modern lifestyles that limit exposure to natural sunlight. A study conducted in Sunderland, using similar technology, demonstrated the effectiveness of low-intensity UVB exposure in boosting Vitamin D lev-

els. This research, along with internal data from outdoor exposure studies and VitaUp demonstration rooms, supports the efficacy of Philips VitaUp in providing a safe and effective daily dose of UVB, equivalent to a 15-minute walk at noon, two to three times a week. Philips VitaUp's benefits extend beyond physical health, providing a low-intensity dose of UVB, supporting emotional well-being as well. It also features an integrated proximity sensor and an inbuilt 8-hour timer for safety and convenience, making it user-friendly and easy to use. Mr. Munish Peshin, Head of Offer Management, Professional Business, Signify Greater India, said, "We are excited to introduce Philips VitaUp to our customers in India. This product is a result of extensive research and development, aiming to bring the benefits of natural sunlight indoors. With its MasterConnect compatibility and simple design, Philips VitaUp enables daily UVB dose throughout the darker months of the year, enhancing overall wellbeing and productivity." Furthermore, Philips VitaUp is designed for optimal lifetime with thermal protection. This ensures that the product is durable and reliable, providing



long-term benefits to users. In terms of integration and control, Philips VitaUp stands out with its seamless compatibility. It features a Zhaga LEX-M form factor, compatible with SNS accessories, and DALI and MasterConnect compatibility through an isolated port. It also includes selected diagnostics for operation time and fault detection,

ensuring seamless integration and control. The introduction of Philips VitaUp aligns with Signify's commitment to enhancing life with light in line with the brand vision of #BrighterLivesBetterWorld. It represents another significant milestone in our ongoing mission to deliver innovative, sustainable, and human-centric lighting solutions in India.

Cambridge launches Cambridge Connection Bridge Course in India



Hyderabad ; Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a world leader in education, research, assessment, and academic publishing, has announced the launch of the Cambridge Connection Bridge Course to equip learners with the skills necessary for academic success and future careers. The programme aims to help learners thrive in STEM fields and excel in Indian competitive exams. As the demand for competitive exam readiness continues to grow, this course empowers students to unlock a wide array of academic opportunities. This programme, designed for students in grades 9 to 12, has been tailored specifically for the Indian market to address the distinct needs of learners. Currently offered for IGCSE students in grades 9 and 10, the Bridge Course provides learners with the essential skills and knowledge required to thrive in India's competitive academic environment. The Bridge Course adds to Cambridge's long-standing commitment to supporting learners in India, including initiatives such as the March Series exams, which allow students to receive their results in time to meet local admission requirements. Cambridge qualifications prepare and equip learners with the skills they need to thrive in the university while offering diverse and tailored career opportunities. The world's best higher education institutions recognise Cambridge qualifications that make learners future-ready with critical think-

ing skills, independent research abilities and deep subject knowledge. The Cambridge Connection Bridge Course seamlessly supplements the knowledge gained through the international Cambridge curriculum by bridging the topical gaps between the IGCSE and national curriculum while reinforcing core concepts for learners aspiring for competitive exams. This programme not only strengthens academic performance for IGCSE learners but also supports those aiming for entrance exams with a focus on PCMB subjects. It aligns learning with career aspirations while focusing on learner well-being and shaping future-ready skills. Vinay Sharma, Senior Vice President, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, South Asia, said, "With the increasing demand for STEM education in India and globally, the Cambridge Connection Bridge Course equips learners to excel in careers in this field as well as equip them to handle competitive exams.

It will act as a bridge between IGCSE and national curricula while reinforcing core concepts essential for competitive exams. The goal is to equip learners with a foundation that prepares them for both academic evaluations and competitive examinations." According to job trends and reports, as much as 70% of top-paying jobs globally require highly skilled STEM graduates. In fact,

Cambridge's latest Student Destination Survey also reveals that an increasing number of students are choosing STEM subjects, particularly engineering, computer science, data science, and AI, with a growing interest in IT and cybersecurity. This shift towards

STEM subjects, coupled with the need to perform well in competitive exams has led to the development of the programme. It ensures that learners benefit from the rigour of IGCSE while maintaining the flexibility to pursue competitive exam pathways.

Aramgarh flyover remains closed as locals await its inauguration



Hyderabad: Even as the travails of the commuters continue, the newly constructed flyover at the ever busy Aramgarh continues to remain closed for the traffic waiting for the Chief Minister, A Revanth Reddy to formally inaugurate it. The works on the second longest flyover in the city, stretching over 4.5 km, were completed around mid-December. Twice it was scheduled for inauguration but the same was postponed as the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) plans to get it inaugurated by Chief Minister.

One of the much awaited projects in the old city, the flyover was constructed at a cost of over Rs. 350 crores and nearly an equal

amount was spent for land acquisition for the project. The flyover was planned for nearly seven years on National Highway 44 and the GHMC took up the construction of the flyover as part of the Strategic Road Development Program (SRDP). The works which began towards 2021 end, were scheduled to be completed by 2023. Due to some local issues, there was a delay of one year.

The Chief Minister was to inaugurate the flyover in the first week of December but for some reasons the program was cancelled. The inaugural was then planned in the second week of December but again that did not take place. Local people complain of long traffic slowdowns as traffic bound for Aramgarh from Bahadurpura and vice versa have to ply through the narrow slip roads on either sides of the flyover. "The flyover should be thrown open to the public at the earliest to save them from torturous traffic slowdown on the road," demanded Syed Irshad, a local resident. The road between Bahadurpura and Aramgarh is an important stretch that connects more than two dozen colonies with the NH 44. An official said that flyover is expected to be inaugurated soon in January along with some other projects.

Lakshmika Jewellers Launches with Glamour and Elegance, Amidst Star-Studded Celebration

Hyderabad :Lakshmi and Kavya, the visionary founders of Lakshmika Jewellers, proudly celebrated the grand opening of their new store in Hyderabad on January 2, 2025. This marks the first store of Lakshmika Jewellers, where each design is customized to cater to a diverse clientele, ranging from the 2 Lakhs to over 50 Lakhs price range. The event, marked by elegance and sophistication, showcased the brand's dedication to exquisite craftsmanship and the timeless allure of fine jewelry. The launch event was attended by an enthusiastic crowd eager to explore the stunning collection of gold, diamond, and Polki jewelry. The occasion was further elevated by the presence of renowned actresses Ms. Dimple Hayati and Ms. Divi, whose star power added a touch of glamour to the festivities. On this special day, actress Divi expressed her admiration for jewelry, highlighting her enthusiasm for Lakshmika Jewellers' unique collections. Guests had the opportunity to engage with the founders and witness the unveiling of Lakshmika's meticulously crafted jewelry, designed to celebrate the richness of Indian traditions alongside contemporary artistry. Early feedback from visitors has highlighted the unique designs and quality of the pieces on display, reinforcing Lakshmika's commitment to excellence. "This launch marks not just the opening of a store but a celebration of heritage and craftsmanship," said Lakshmi. "We are thrilled to welcome our guests and customers to experience the beauty of our jewelry, which we hope will become a cherished part of their stories."



CRI Pumps Achieves a Significant Milestone: Receives 754 Crore Order from MSEDCL, Mumbai, Maharashtra for 25,000 Solar Pumping Systems



Hyderabad: CRI Pumps is proud to announce a significant milestone in its commitment to sustainability and renewable energy solutions. The company has been officially empanelled by the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited

(MSEDCL), Mumbai, Maharashtra to supply 25,000 Solar Pumping Systems, valued at ₹ 754 Crore, as part of the Magel Tyala Saur Krushi Pump (MTSKP) scheme. With this empanelment, CRI Pumps is poised to play a pivotal role in promoting the adoption

of renewable energy solutions, powering Maharashtra's agricultural landscape, and contributing to a greener, more sustainable future.

Commenting on this significant milestone, G. Soundararajan, Chairman of CRI Group, said, "We are privileged to be chosen by MSEDCL to supply these Solar Pumping Systems. This substantial order highlights CRI's unwavering commitment to innovation and excellence in developing reliable, energy-efficient, sustainable pumping solutions. With our robust execution capabilities, deep industry expertise, and extensive network across regions, CRI Pumps ensures seamless delivery and installation of these systems. As the global transition to

renewable energy gains momentum, CRI Pumps remains deeply dedicated to offering solar pumping systems that foster environmental stewardship and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come". With the successful installation of over 170,000 solar pumping systems and IoT-enabled smart pumps, CRI Pumps continues to set new standards in sustainable innovation. Through its advanced pumping technologies, CRI Pumps has realized significant achievements, including energy savings of approximately 5,200 million unit's kWh and a reduction of 4.13 million tonnes in carbon emissions, highlighting its profound contributions to energy conservation and environmental sustainability.

Formula-E case: Arvind, BLN Reddy ask ED for more time

Hyderabad: Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar and former HMDA Chief Engineer BLN Reddy, who were summoned by the Enforcement Directorate for questioning in connection with the Formula-E race case, have sought more time from the probe agency.

Reddy, who was instructed to appear before the ED on Thursday, did not turn up.

He wrote an email to the ED stating that he could not appear on Thursday and sought more time. The central probe agency reportedly responded positively to his request. Similarly, Arvind Kumar, who was also directed to appear before ED on Friday, requested for more time. The Special Chief Secretary is also learnt to have cited his inability to appear before the probe agency tomorrow and urged for more time.

Congress Govt pushes Telangana into debt spiral, plans record borrowing of Rs.30,000 crore

Hyderabad: The Congress government in Telangana is setting alarmingly poor records in fiscal mismanagement with its decision to borrow an unprecedented Rs.30,000 crore in the last quarter of the current financial year (2024-25). This massive borrowing spree is likely to not only shatter the State's budgetary estimates but also push its debt burden perilously close to the liabilities Telangana inherited at its formation in 2014. The government's calendar for borrowing indicates plans to participate in auctions on all 12 Tuesdays of the January-March quarter, raising Rs.10,000 crore each month. This level of dependency on market loans showcases a lack of foresight and governance, financial experts opined.

The planned borrowing would propel the State's market debt to Rs 70,757 crore for the year, almost equivalent to the Rs 72,658 crore in outstanding liabilities the State carried when it was carved out a decade ago. Economists and opposition BRS leaders are raising concerns about the State's financial health, warning that these reckless fiscal policies could cripple Telangana's economy for years.

Under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, States are permitted to borrow up to 3.5 per cent of their Gross State Domestic Product

(GSDP). Telangana's GSDP for 2024-25 was pegged at around Rs.16 lakh crore, allowing a borrowing ceiling of Rs.57,112 crore. However, the Centre restricted it to Rs.49,255 crore due to budgetary adjustments made during the COVID-19 period to maintain FRBM norms. But, the Congress government has already borrowed Rs.40,757 crore by December end. The additional Rs.30,000 crore borrowing plan would overshoot the budget estimates by a staggering Rs.21,502 crore. Experts have criticized the government's move as a blatant disregard for fiscal discipline as it is higher even by standard FRBM limits. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has clarified that the actual amount of borrowing depends on approval from the union Finance Ministry under Article 293(3) of the Constitution. Yet, the State Finance department remains tight-lipped on whether the Centre has cleared this exorbitant borrowing proposal over and above the ceiling fixed for the current fiscal. Economists point out that the Congress government's borrowing spree is not matched by visible improvements in infrastructure or public services. Instead, these funds appear to be fueling poorly-planned populist schemes and temporary measures that do little to generate long-term economic growth. Opposition parties, particularly the BRS, have charged



the Congress government with fiscal irresponsibility. "This is not governance but financial anarchy. Telangana, a State once hailed for its fiscal prudence under K Chandrashekhara Rao, is now staring at a debt disaster due to the Congress's reckless policies," said a senior BRS

leader. Surprisingly, the Congress had accused the previous BRS government of pushing the State into a debt trap, despite the latter initiating numerous development works and remaining among top States in capital expenditure at the national level which propelled the State's economic growth.

India got 14.3% of global remittances in 2024, its highest ever



In 2024, India received an estimated \$129.1 billion worth of remittances, the highest ever for a country in any year. Moreover, India's share in global remittances was 14.3% this year, the highest such share since the turn of the millennium for any country. The conclusions are based on a blog article published last week by the World Bank. Remittances refer to the money that individuals working abroad send back to support their families in their home country. They are often a crucial source of income for households in developing countries and can contribute significantly to the economy of the recipient country. Following India, Mexico and China received the largest remittances in 2024. Chart 1 shows the top 10 receivers of remittances in \$ million in 2024. The Philip-

pines, France, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Guatemala, and Germany are the other countries on the list. While China was third on the list, past years' numbers provide interesting insights. Chart 2 shows the share of global remittances for the top 10 countries mentioned in Chart 1 in the 2000-2024 period.

China's share of remittances grew from less than 1% in the early 2000s to over 10% by the late 2000s and early 2010s, matching India's numbers, before gradually declining to below 10% in the late 2010s. From 2020, the share declined rapidly reaching a two-decade low of 5.3% in 2024. According to the World Bank, China's rising economic prosperity and an ageing population slowed the pace of emigration of less-skilled people,

which contributed to this decline. India's share has remained above the 10% mark for most of the years since 2000, with few exceptions. In fact, in the post-pandemic years, there has been a rapid increase in its share. India's share in global remittances was twice the share of Mexico's in 2024 (7.5%); Mexico was a distant second. Though India leads in absolute remittance inflows, in some economies, remittances play a more critical role in funding current account deficits and fiscal shortfalls. To better understand this, Chart 3 depicts estimated remittances in 2024 as a share of a country's GDP. Each circle is a country. The farther the circle is to the right, the higher the remittance in 2024 as a share of GDP. The bigger the circle, the higher the remittance in 2024 in absolute figures. In Nepal, remittances formed over 25% of the GDP in 2024. In Tajikistan, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Samoa, Honduras, and Tonga, the share of remittances in 2024 formed over 25% of their respective GDPs. In India, remittances formed 3.3% of the GDP this

year. For many low-and middle-income countries, remittances act as a major source of income. In 2024, these countries received \$685 billion as remittances, the highest ever in a year. According to the blog, remittances to these countries have consistently outpaced other types of external financial flows. In recent years, remittances have even surpassed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in low-and middle-income countries put together. FDIs are investments by a foreign country to control or run a business in another country. Remittances are also much higher than the official development assistance (ODA) received by these countries. ODA is the aid from rich countries to help poorer ones develop, often through grants or cheap loans. Chart 4 compares remittances, FDI, and ODA received by low-and middle-income countries between 2000 and 2024. Over the past decade, remittances increased by 57% while FDI declined by 41% in low-and middle-income nations, the blog notes.

Withdrawal of Rs 2000 notes a major success, claims RBI

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank on Wednesday said 98.12 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, and only Rs 6,691 crore worth such notes are still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the withdrawal of Rs 2000

denomination banknotes from circulation. The total value of Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, declined to Rs 6,691 crore at the close of business on December 31, 2024, RBI said.

'History will rightfully count Manmohan Singh as a founding father of modern India'

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's life reads like the ultimate dream. Rising from humble beginnings to a glittering resume replete with degrees from the world's best universities, positions of the highest office in public life, global fame and repute, and feted with every coveted award. A tribute to his legacy would inevitably include a long list of the positions of power and responsibilities he held and his stunning professional accomplishments. In the modern meritocratic era of credentials and positions, his dazzling array of achievements would be Dr. Singh's (as I called him) defining legacy. But in my view, his defining legacy is to illuminate a virtuous path to extraordinary success in the harsh and treacherous terrain of politics and public service. His whole life is a standout exception to the belief that one has to necessarily sacrifice principles of probity, integrity, sincerity, loyalty, and humility to succeed in politics. His true legacy is about what he was not — the typically duplicitous, virtueless, self-obsessed political leader that is successful. His enormously successful pursuit of the politics of purpose and principles offers tantalising hope and inspiration to millions of idealistic youth to enter public life and dedicate themselves to nation-building. This is perhaps the legacy that Dr. Singh himself would have been proud to leave behind for the nation that he loved so dearly. I am very fortunate to have been the recipient of Dr. Singh's fondness for well over a decade. Over the past few years, as Dr. Singh became physically weaker, rendering him unable to venture much outside, his graceful wife, Gursharan Kaur, would tell me to visit regularly and "engage him intellectually". I visited him nearly every month for the past five years and interacted with him closely, including writing some articles for this paper. During these interactions, I learned copiously from and about him. I am shattered that it is now time to write his obituary and distraught that I am stuck outside India, unable to bid my last goodbye to him.

Perennial nation-builder Even in the private confines of his living room, Dr. Singh was scrupulously polite, warm, thoughtful, and modest. He may have been the wise sage to the external world but his curiosity for new information and learning was boundless. In the long years that I have known him closely, not once was there a semblance of even an intent to lecture or sermonise from a bully pulpit, a trait that typically plagues most accomplished people. I watched with amazement on the day after demonetisation in 2016, how despite being a former Prime Minister, Finance Minister and RBI Governor, he sought information from junior RBI officers to senior former Ministers and only after that he formed his opinion on the move. He was so deeply concerned about its deleterious impact on the poor that he felt he owed it to the people to warn the government, through an uncharacteristically strong speech in Parliament and an article in this paper, which then set the tone for the nation's response and actions. This was quintessential Dr. Singh — the unflinching patriot, the humble knowledge seeker, the thoughtful opinion maker, the constant guardian of people's welfare, and the perennial nation-builder. Dr. Singh's devotion to his duty was simply mind-boggling. In the past two years, when his health was frail and he was wheel-

chair-bound, he still insisted on being taken to the Congress party office to cast his vote in the Congress presidential election in 2022 and in the next year, to Parliament to fulfil his duties as an MP to cast a vote on behalf of the Opposition, both of which were neither crucial nor compulsory.

History will rightfully count Dr. Singh as a founding father of modern India. He acutely understood that building a nation like ours, with its enormous complexities and contradictions, is necessarily a political project of consensus-building on a foundation of strong institutions. His inclusive growth paradigm of economic development and a rights-based social welfare framework continue to be the twin pillars of India's governance model regardless of which government is in power. At the same time, Dr. Singh had a Keynesian philosophy to changing his mind when presented with new credible information. When I met him last in October, he discussed the shifting political landscape in many nations caused by free trade and its attendant impact on people and seemed open to changing his previous doctrinaire position on the benefits of free trade. It takes the sagacity, curiosity, and humility of someone like Dr. Singh to yearn for new information, process it, and alter their views, in the twilight of their hugely successful life. 'Be attached to purpose' Dr. Singh's greatest challenge was navigating the mines of India's and the Congress party's politics. But he believed strongly in the medium of politics for nation-building, however harsh and rough it may be. While his contributions to governance and policy are both legendary and highly lauded,

Simran Mangharam writes on lessons learnt in love, in 2024

It struck me, as I sat down to write this, that I talk quite a lot about how we should love each other. That is, of course, my job. But I would like to focus a little more, today, on our relationships with ourselves. That's where it all begins, after all... But there I go again, linking it to a larger mission. I'd like to end 2024 by offering an unequivocal reminder that you have every reason to be kinder to yourself, more patient, and more forgiving. I have three quick tips to help you get started. First, get into the habit of asking: "How am I treating myself?" "What's the nicest thing I've said to myself lately?" "In what little way could I make myself a priority today?"

This should help lead into Step 2: Making time for the things you love (call it self-care, downtime, a hobby; whatever makes it work). Reach out for help, if need be, to make this me-time possible. Let it become part of the culture of how things are done, in your home and in your life. Step 3: Extend your new self-regard to interactions with other people. Start, perhaps, by learning how to take a compliment. I am often surprised by how many people will toss one back at the deliverer, as if it were a grenade. I understand that this is driven by embarrassment, but it does two small injuries: it discourages the other person from ever offering another one and, more importantly, it reinforces an inher-



ent idea that you didn't deserve it. My recommendation: Try smiling and simply saying: Thank you. It can be a game-changer.

These are small steps, but reinforced as habits, they act as a reminder that we do deserve love. And that journey does begin within. What else have I learnt this year, that put a new spin on things? Here are my key pointers. * Forgive. Yourself, others, the past... it doesn't matter. Drop the dead weight. Let it go. You'll be surprised by how forgiveness can help emotions such as anger, resentment and hurt, accumulated over years, dissipate like a fog. This is something I find myself discussing often, with clients. Take the action required; sever a tie that causes harm. Move on. But even then, forgive. It is a great force of healing, and of good.

* Make room for change. Aim to always love your partner, even when you don't really like them. There will be missteps between any two people sharing a life: issues with money, sex, temperament, career, the kids. People change over time too. I've seen couples driven to the brink simply because one of them rather suddenly turned into a party-loving extrovert. Trust that, together, you can course-correct. But in order to do that, there will need to be a certain degree of flexibility in how you view each other. * Boundaries, boundaries, boundaries. Of

course you should be able to be your authentic self with a partner (or even a friend). But, in my experience, it isn't sustainable to try to mash two lives together as if they were play dough. You will need to figure out where the separations lie: friends, bathrooms, bedrooms. Find the line that works for you, or it may just end up drawing itself somewhere you never wanted it.

* Reach out: Physical contact can be the keystone in the arch that holds a relationship up. Simple hugs, holding hands, even loving eye contact or a peck on the cheek can boost emotional well-being and reinforce a bond. As a habit, they serve to tell a partner, like few other things can, that they are loved and valued. * Have the difficult conversation. This one is specifically for couples who may be struggling: It takes regular maintenance to keep anything ticking over healthily. It isn't just you; but also, it won't just go away. Talk, talk, talk — through whatever it is that is threatening the foundation you have built. I have seen too many couples opt for denial over a difficult conversation. The difficult discussion will come anyway; it will just be harder to have when it does. Argue, if that's what it takes; try to do so without personal attacks or judgement. Learn to admit when you are wrong; that certainly helps.

Haryana's Success In Sports Is The Result Of Visionary Sports Policies: CM Saini



Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), January 2 - Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that Haryana has become the pride of the entire country in the field of sports. The players here are succeeding in the Olympics, Paralympics, Asian and Commonwealth Games. A player is the heritage of the nation. We have made a sports policy called the 'Haryana Utkrishta Khiladi Seva Niyam 2021' to ensure employment for excellent players. Under this, 550 new posts were created in the Sports Department. Apart from this, 224 medal winning players have been given government jobs. Reservation has been provided to the players in direct recruitment of posts from Class I to Class II. Haryana is the first state in the country where highest cash prizes are given to the medal winning players. Apart from this, honorarium is also being given to 298 players who have performed excellently. Saini today participated in the Veer Mata Jija Bai State-Level Felicitation Ceremony organized by the Haryana state unit of Kreedha Bharti in Gurugram in the honour of mothers of medal winners and participating players in Paralympics and Olympic Games.

During the programme, the Chief Minister felicitated the mothers of the players who participated in the Paris Olympics and Paralympics in 2024. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the ceremony, organized in Gurugram-the city of Guru Drona, is a celebration of the role of mothers in the field of sports. He said felicitating the mothers of players who raised the Indian flag in the country and the world is a matter of pride. The ceremony is an opportunity to express gratitude not only to our players but also to their mothers. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi says that there is a mother behind every big success. It is the responsibility of the society to respect mothers.

The Chief Minister also congratulated the Haryana state unit of Kreedha Bharti for this unique initiative. He also announced a grant of Rs 21 lakh to the organization. Nayab Singh Saini, while reminding the historical contribution of mothers, said Mata Jija Bai, in whose name the ceremony has been organized, had prepared her son Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as a true warrior and leader. Due to her vision and hard work, the country got a great warrior like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who laid the foundation of Swaraj at that time. The Chief Minister said scholarships are being provided to the medal winning students participating in state, national and international sports competitions. From the year 2014 till now, scholarships of more

than Rs 53 crore have been provided to more than 29,000 students. The government has opened sports nurseries to hone the skills of sportspersons from childhood. At present, there are 1,489 sports nurseries in the state where 37,225 sportspersons are getting training. In these nurseries, players aged from 8 to 14 years and players aged from 15 to 19 years are being given incentives every month.

The Chief Minister said 5 out of 6 medals in Paris Olympics-2024 have been won by the players of Haryana. In the Paralympics also, out of the 29 medals won by the country, 8 medals were won by the players of Haryana. Earlier, 30 players from the state participated in Tokyo Olympics-2020 where India won 7 medals, out of which 4 medals were won by the players of Haryana. Similarly, the players of Haryana also waved the Indian flag in the Commonwealth Games. 43 players from Haryana participated during the Birmingham Commonwealth Games-2022. In this, the players of Haryana won 20 medals. These achievements are the result of Haryana's farsighted sports policies. CM Saini said along with physical fitness and sports skills, a player also needs mental balance, discipline and courage. The development of these qualities in a child starts from his mother. The first coach of a player is his mother and there is no coach greater than her. The Chief Minister said recently, the Central Government has selected the names of many players of the state for the Arjuna Award and Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award. These include Manu Bhaker, Saweety Boora and many other names. During the programme, Industry and Commerce Minister Rao Narbir Singh said the population of Haryana is around two per cent of the country but despite this, the medal winners in sports have made it the number one state in sports. He said the medal of a player not only makes the family proud but it also increases the pride of the entire society, state and nation. Minister of State for Sports Gaurav Gautam said the most selfless relationship is that of a mother. It is a matter of pride to receive the blessings of the mothers of the players who have made the country proud. While highlighting the achievements of the government, he said Rs 592 crore has been spent on the players in the last decade. The government is working for the welfare of the players and their families, he added. Haryana Will Play A Pivotal Role In Realizing Prime Minister's Vision Of Viksit Bharat- Chief Minister Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), January 2 - Haryana Chief Min-



ister, Nayab Singh Saini said that the state will certainly play a pivotal role to realize Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's vision of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.

On Thursday he presided over a pre-budget consultation meeting for the fiscal year 2025-26 in Gurugram with stakeholders from industry and manufacturing sector. Minister for Industries and Commerce, Environment, Forests, and Wildlife, Rao Narbir Singh, Sohna MLA, Tejpal Tanwar, and Gurugram MLA, Mukesh Sharma also attended the meeting. The representatives from various organizations associated with the industrial and manufacturing sectors shared their suggestions for the upcoming budget.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister reiterated the state's commitment to an inclusive approach toward prosperity and progress, highlighting the role of industrial institutions in Haryana's economic development. Chief Minister Saini carefully listened to the suggestions shared by stakeholders and assured them that key issues would be considered in the upcoming budget. He said that the budget would not only address immediate needs but also focus on achieving long-term objectives. Describing the budget as a reflection of collective aspirations and priorities, the Chief Minister further stressed the importance of engaging with all sections of society to ensure positive steps are taken to meet the needs and aspirations of every citizen of Haryana. During the meeting, the Chief Minister also shared Haryana's remarkable progress in agriculture, industry, education infrastructure, and technology over recent years. He said that priority will be given to every suggestion shared by the stakeholders for strengthen-

ing rural economy, promoting industrial investment, empowering youth through skill development and social welfare, proper representation in the upcoming budget. He also assured to sympathetically consider the suggestions put forward by the representatives regarding improving health services, public transport in industrial areas, and necessary reforms in industrial policy.

During the meeting, Chief Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Rajesh Khullar, shared that the Chief Minister, who also holds the portfolio of Finance Minister, has introduced a new initiative allowing citizens to submit budget suggestions online. Through this portal suggestions can be submitted across various sectors and sub-sectors. Suggestions can be given by going to the sector and sub-sector category through the portal.

Over 1,000 suggestions have already been received through this platform, shared Rajesh Khullar. Additional Chief Secretary and Financial Commissioner, Revenue & Disaster Management and Consolidation Department, Anurag Rastogi, said that previous pre-budget consultations had yielded impactful suggestions. Programmes like 'Harhit Stores', drone technology, STEM labs, and Super 30 were developed based on these suggestions. Principal Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department, D Suresh, and representatives of NASSCOM Hero MotoCorp, IMT Manesar Association, Faridabad Industries Association, GIA Gurugram, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, Reliance Limited, Rewari Chamber of Commerce and Industry, CREDAI, NAREDCO, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and various industrial organizations working in the state were also present during the meeting.

In Mumbai, a joyride that turned fatal

It was at noon on December 18 that Tanvi Wakchaure saw her father, Deepchand, for the last time. Deepchand, a 45-year-old plumber, had dropped Tanvi, 17, at college in Govandi, an eastern suburb of Mumbai. He did not tell her where he was headed to next. When he did not return by night, Deepchand's family, who live in the same area, started getting worried. "We began calling his friends one by one," says Tanvi. They learned that Deepchand, an avid explorer, had boarded a ferry to Elephanta Island, located 9 nautical miles off the coast of Mumbai from the Gateway of India. Every day, about 3,000 people visit the UNESCO world heritage site, says Sardar J. Mahadkar, president of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Santha Maryadit, an organisation representing ferry owners. The island is home to the rock-cut Elephanta Caves, which were constructed in the mid-5th and 6th centuries AD and reflect Hindu and Buddhist iconography.

"He liked to explore the city," says Deepchand's friend, Chandrakant Hevale. "That happened to be one of those days. When we found out that he had boarded the ferry and there had been an accident in the Arabian Sea, we rushed to the Colaba police station in the early hours of December 19." The Colaba police station is located about 600 metres from the Gateway of India. The police asked the family and friends to go to the state-owned J.J. Hospital. On rushing to the hospital, the family found Deepchand's body. "Just a day earlier, he and my mother had celebrated their wedding anniversary," remembers a distraught Tanvi. At around 3.30 p.m. on December 18, an Indian Navy speedboat had rammed into the passenger ferry not far from Elephanta Island. The ferry capsized. Thirteen people, including Deepchand, died. Two remained missing. On December 19 and 21, their bodies were also recovered. The death toll increased to 15. In deep water

Every day, during the off season (the rainy months of July-October), at least 25-30 rides are scheduled from the Gateway of India, an arch built in the Indo-Islamic style in the 20th century to commemorate the landing of King George V in India, to Elephanta Caves. During holiday season (October-January), this number increases to 50 or even 100, says Sardar. Mumbai ferry accident: commuters demand action The Mumbai administration has started distributing life jackets to passengers taking ferry to commute from Gateway of India after a major accident between Navy craft and ferry on Wednesday that killed at least thirteen people. However, the commuters are disappointed with the ignorance of administration towards the safety of passengers. They are of the opinion that safety measures should have been taken way before and not just after an accident. On December 18, the last ferry of the day, Neel Kamal (blue lotus), had left the Gateway at 3:00 p.m. Neel Kamal had a capacity of 80 passengers, but it was carrying 110-115 passengers that day, says an investigation officer on the case from the Colaba police station. Natharam Chaudhry, 24, a carpenter based in Kurla, was on the upper deck, enjoying the breeze, when the ferry was around 20 minutes from its destination, the Gharapuri jetty at Elephanta Island. He says many of his co-passengers were lounging on the lower deck.

Natharam was among the first to spot the Navy speedboat, but there seemed to

be no cause for alarm. "I was fascinated, so I started shooting the speedboat with my phone camera," he says. The speedboat took two sharp turns before hurtling towards the ferry. It rammed into the right side of the vessel "with a loud bang, like an earthquake," Natharam recollects. "We ran downstairs. The ferry started sinking on the right side, so all the passengers congregated on the left side." Realising that there was no way he could balance himself on the sinking ferry, Natharam grabbed a life jacket, strapped it on, and jumped with his cousin and uncle into the cold water. "The moment I jumped in, I thought of my parents. I panicked about what they would do without me. People were in the water shouting for help," he says.

Natharam went blank for a bit after that, but it was this quick-thinking action that saved his life. His uncle and cousin survived too. Survivors allege that the ferry did not have enough life jackets. One survivor says, "The people who managed to access life jackets managed to live, while some others drowned." Natharam was the complainant in the First Information Report (FIR) registered at the Colaba police station against the Navy speedboat which was carrying two Navy personnel and four workers. The driver of the Navy speedboat has been booked under Sections 106(1) (causing death by negligence), 125 (actions that endanger personal safety), 282 (rash navigation of a vessel), and 324 (mischief causing damage to government or local authority property) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. Natharam's video is now being treated as evidence by the police. Within a few hours of the accident, the Indian Navy released a statement. It said that the speed boat, which was undergoing engine trials, "lost control and collided with a passenger ferry, Neel Kamal, off Karanja, Mumbai."

A Defence spokesperson explained the accident: "The throttle (acceleration) was stuck in the top position, preventing them from taking a turn or slowing down the boat." Of the 115 people who were rescued, 13 people — one Navy personal and 12 civilians, including three workers on the speedboat — were declared dead by Mumbai's civic body and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. By December 21, two missing bodies were recovered from the sea. The Chief Minister announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh to the families of the dead. The Prime Minister's Office also announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh for each family of the dead and ₹50,000 for the injured from the Prime Minister National Relief Fund. The Indian Navy has constituted a Board of Inquiry to investigate the accident. The rescue operation The survivors say they received help within 20-30 minutes of the accident.

A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) patrol boat and a Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) pilot boat were the first to reach the spot. "We heard people screaming for help. We saw some people holding children tight and some clutching on to the boat, which was partially submerged in the water. We first focused on rescuing children," says a CISF officer, who was patrolling a 2-3 kilometre radius from the accident spot. The officer says the biggest challenge was oil spillage. "The diesel from the ferry had spilled on the passengers. It became difficult for us to hold them and haul them up from the water as they kept slipping from our hands." The captain of the JNPA pilot boat, Anmol



Shrivastav, says he heard a distress call on radio channels 12 and 13 from an oil tanker, Tony, moored at Jawahar Dweep 5, a jetty at the Jawahar Dweep oil terminal on an island off the coast of Mumbai. The tanker reported that a ferry was sinking and requested urgent assistance.

"I checked my location and realised that I was only about five minutes from the incident site. When I reached the spot, I found that nearly 95% of the ferry had sunk. Approximately 50 people, including children, were clinging to the tiny bit that remained above water. There were 20-25 people floating nearby. Some were wearing life jackets and some were not," says Anmol. Eleven Navy boats, three Marine Police boats, two Coast Guard boats, and four helicopters were also deployed in the area for the search-and-rescue operation, says a Defence spokesperson. Along with the help of CISF personnel, the JNPA rescued 57 people, says Anmol. "The CISF's boat was lower in the water, allowing easier transfers. Together, we created a chain of rescue operations. The CISF pulled people from the water and transferred them to our pilot boat." Later, the Mumbai Port Authority (MPA) pilot boat, Purva; the Naval ferry, Suvridha; and two fishing boats also began assisting in the rescue operations. Arif Bamne, a master (boat driver) with the MPA, says, "All we could hear was 'bachao bachao (help, help)'. It felt like a scene from a film. A foreign couple helped us in rescuing people and performing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) on those who were critical." The MPA helped in rescuing at least 35 passengers, he says.

The passengers also helped one another. "A German man who knew how to swim well helped rescue a three-year-old child and gave him CPR. He also helped us rescue other passengers," says Anmol. All the passengers were taken to the JNPT Hospital, the Navy Dockyard, Ashwini Hospital, St George's Hospital, and Karanja Hospital. The passengers were mostly from other districts, including Sangli, Dhule, Nagpur, and Nashik; and Goa and other regions. The autopsy of 11 out of the 15 dead was carried out at the Indira Gandhi Rural Hospital in Uran in Navi Mumbai. "The reason for the death was asphyxiation due to drowning," said Medical Superintendent Dr. B.M. Kale. The rest were taken to J.J. Hospital. Navy personnel Karmveer Yadav is still in a critical stage and undergoing treatment. Two people, a six-year-old boy and a 43-year-old man, went missing after the accident. Six Navy and three Coast Guard personnel were

deployed to search for them. On December 19, the rescue team found the body of the man, identified as Hansaram Bhati, a Malad-based proprietor. The next afternoon, they found the body of the boy identified as Zohan Pathan. Hansaram's son Tarun, who had held the hands of Natharam Chaudhry and his cousin, was rescued. Since then, he has been in a state of shock. "Tarun has got a fever and is constantly asking about his father," says Jongaram Bhati, 58, Hansaram's brother. Zohan had come to Mumbai on vacation with his family from Goa. While his maternal aunt, his father, and his 10-month-old brother survived the accident, Zohan and his mother Shafina Pathan, 35, died in the accident. Sitting outside the Indira Gandhi Hospital in Uran, his maternal aunt, Sonali Gonde, recalls the tragic turn of events. "My sister and her elder son went down to the lower deck looking for a life jacket. She informed me that no life jackets were left, so I asked her to come up. But when I looked down she was gone. All I had were her chappals in my hand. We had shopped for those in Colaba market before taking the ferry ride." Sonali says her sister died because there were not enough life jackets on the ferry. While the owner of the ferry, Rajendra Padte, refuses to respond to questions, his brother, Shekhar, had only one thing to say; "The ferry was new. It was launched just a year ago." Trials and tribulations Locals and ferry owners demand to know why the Navy was conducting trials in an area that is extensively used by ferries. "For the last 3-4 years, the ferries have been tolerating all kinds of shenanigans by the Navy boats. They perform stunts and sometimes come very close to the ferry," claims a tourist guide, Trikal Patil. Kavita, who sells caps at Elephanta Caves, echoes this allegation. She says, "In the last 5-6 years, we have seen altercations between people in the ferry and Navy personnel." A Defence spokesperson dismissed these allegations. "This is not a joyride [for the Navy]. It is for the safety of the harbour. The nature of trials is to check extremities. These may seem like stunts but they may be part of trials." The secretary of Jal Vahatuk Sahakari Sanstha, Iqbal Mukadam, points out that several oral and written complaints have been lodged with the Maharashtra Maritime Board and the Mumbai Port Authority about the movements of the Navy's speed boats. "We raised concerns regarding the speed limits of the speed boats and about possible accidents," he says. Minor collisions between ferry boats and Navy boats have been reported in the past, he adds.