



# KGF

# KGF

## Kamma Global Federation

*Unite... Flourish... Empower...*



### Dear Members of the Kamma Community !

Under the esteemed leadership of the Kamma Global Federation, along with the Tamil Kamma associations, we are proud to organize the historic gathering "Kamma Mahaanadu - 2026," with the participation of lakhs of people.

The primary goal of this grand assembly is to unite the 6.5 million strong Kamma population of Tamil Nadu.

Come... let us unite, raise our voice, and proclaim our strength to the world. When we stand together with one purpose, the future belongs to us. Opportunity is ours... Power is ours!

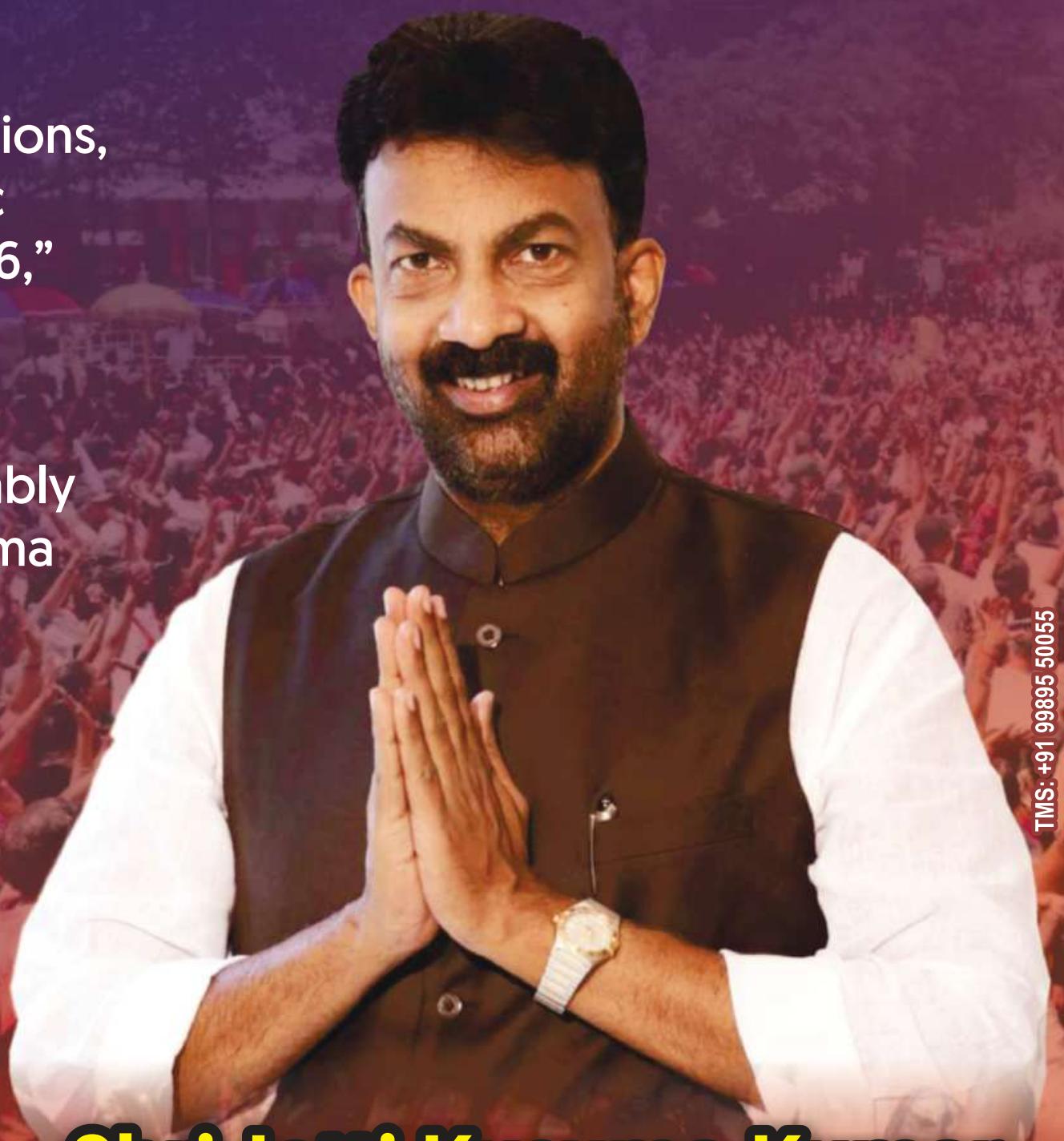
Join this Mahaanadu and demonstrate the true spirit of Kamma unity.

## Kamma Mahaanadu

2026

[Kamma Naidus Grand Assembly]

8<sup>th</sup> February – Sunday, 3.30pm  
Sendamangalam, Sripurumbudur, Tamil Nadu  
(Chennai–Bengaluru National Highway)



**Shri Jetti Kusuma Kumar**  
Founder & President, Kamma Global Federation (KGF)

*O proud Kamma people across the world... unite !  
The call of Kamma Mahaanadu is upon us - step forward and be part of history.*

Website: [www.kammaglobal.com](http://www.kammaglobal.com). Email: [kammaglobalfederation@gmail.com](mailto:kammaglobalfederation@gmail.com). Mobile No: 90555 17555



Kamma Global Federation

రండి... ఏకమనుదాం... మన సత్తా చాటుదాం...

KGF

కేజీయం

# కమ్మ మహానాడు

2026

ప్రియ బంధువులారా !

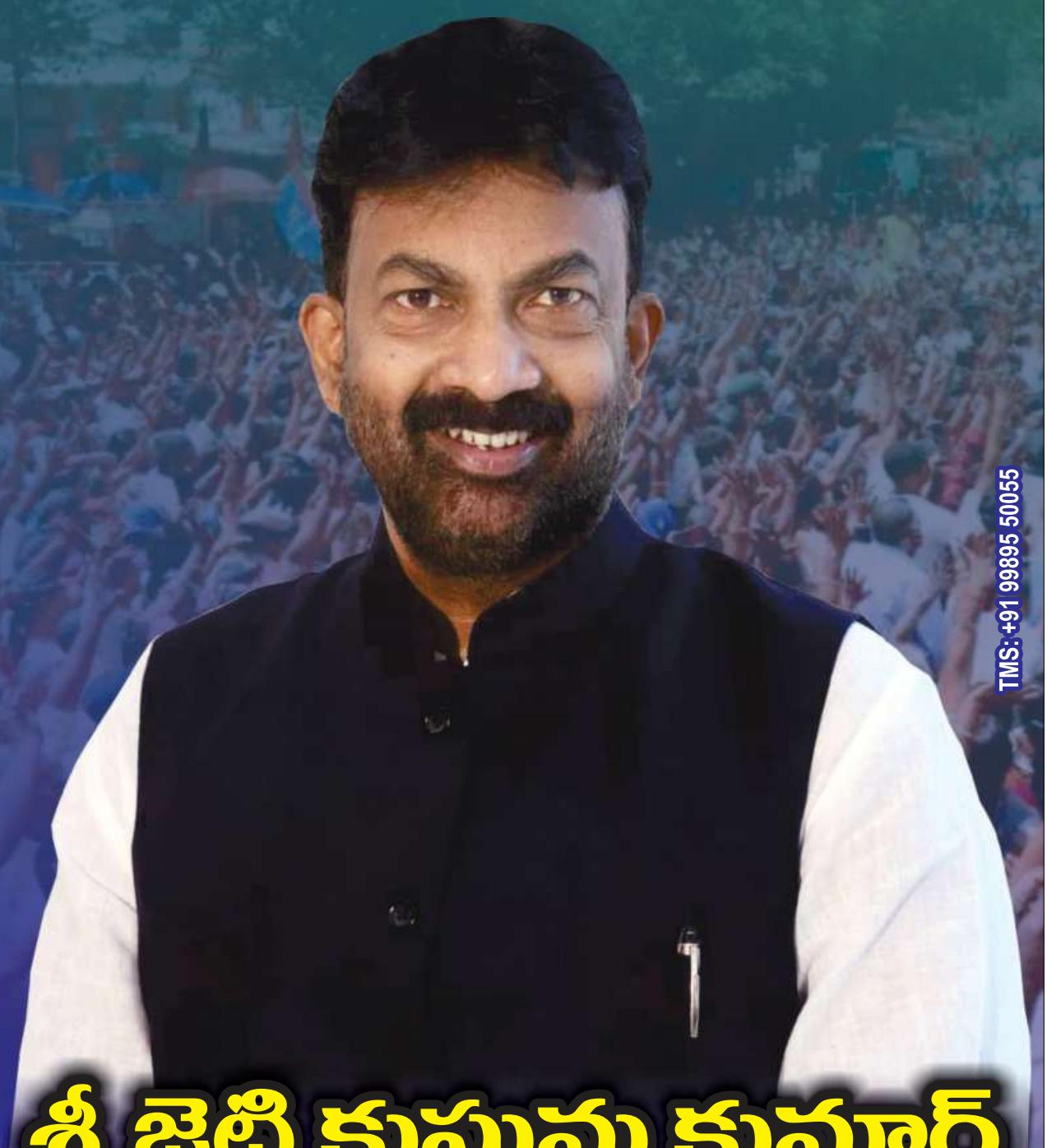
8 ఫిబ్రవరి - ఆషాదం, మా. 3.30 గంలకు  
సేందురంగళం, శ్రీ పెరంబడూర్, తమిళనాడు  
(వైష్ణవీక్షణార్థ జాతీయ రహదారి)

కమ్మ గ్లోబల్ ఫెడరేషన్ అధ్యర్థంలో  
తమిళ కమ్మ సంఘాలు కలిసి సంయుక్తంగా  
లక్షలాది మందితో నిర్వహిస్తున్న  
చాలత్తాత్త్వక ఫుట్టం 'కమ్మ మహానాడు - 2026'

తమిళనాడులోని 65 లక్షల మంది  
శక్తివంతమైన కమ్మ జనాభాసి ఏకతాటిపైకి  
తీసుకురావడమే ముఖ్యమైనది.

రండి.. ఒక్కటై గళమెత్తి జగమంతా ఎలుగెత్తి  
మన శక్తిని చాటుదాం, మనమంతా ఏకమైతే,  
మన లక్ష్యం ఒక్కటైతే.. అవకాశం మనదే..!  
అధికారం మనదే..!!

కమ్మ మహానాడుకు తరలి రండి..  
కమ్మ శక్తిని, ప్రపంచానికి చాటి చెప్పండి.  
మీరూ పాల్గొనడి.., పదిమంచిని కదిలించండి..  
మన సత్తా చాటండి...!



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ప్రపంచ కమ్మ మహా జనులారా... ఏకం కండు..!! కమ్మ మహానాడు పిలుస్తంది... కదలి రండు..!!

Website: [www.kammaglobal.com](http://www.kammaglobal.com). Email: [kammaglobalfederation@gmail.com](mailto:kammaglobalfederation@gmail.com). Mobile No: 90555 17555

TEEN TITANS

## India regains U-19 World Cup

Suryavanshi's blistering knock of 175 sets up a thumping 100-run win against England

**SPORT** » PAGE 22



**CHABAHAR PORT**  
\$120-million payment completed, says MEA

**NEWS** » PAGE 14

SHOCKING TURN

## A panchayat dream and a child's murder

How a daughter was sacrificed for power

**GROUND ZERO** » PAGE 13



**'GOOSKHOOR PANDIT'**  
U.P. books filmmakers over title of movie

**NEWS** » PAGE 15

NEARBY



### Stalin releases Urban Greening Policy 2026

**CHENNAI**  
Chief Minister M.K. Stalin released the Tamil Nadu Urban Greening Policy 2026, aimed at building climate-resilient and sustainable cities. » PAGE 10

### Advisory issued as crow samples show infection

**CHENNAI**  
Following the detection of H5N1 avian influenza virus in samples from a dead crow in Chennai, the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine issued an advisory to the public. » PAGE 10

**METROPLUS WEEKEND** » 8 PAGES  
**PROPERTYPLUS** » 12 PAGES

## India's oil imports from Russia hit 38-month low

Russia's share in India's crude oil imports dropped to 25% in December from 34% the previous month; U.S. President has claimed India will stop Russian oil imports in exchange for lower tariffs

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

The value of India's crude oil imports from Russia fell to a 38-month low of \$2.7 billion in December 2025, with Russian oil making up less than a quarter of India's imports, down from 34% just a month before, an analysis of the latest official data shows. Oil imports from the U.S., on the other hand, grew nearly 31% over December 2024.

Over the last week, U.S. President Donald Trump and his team have repeatedly claimed that India will stop its purchases of Russian oil in exchange for the U.S. cutting tariffs on Indian imports from 50% to 18%.

India, however, has neither confirmed nor denied this specific assertion. Instead, it has maintained that it is diversifying its energy sources "in keeping with objective market conditions and evolving international dynamics".



According to data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India's Russian oil imports, at \$2.7 billion in December 2025, were 15% lower than the amount imported in December 2024 and 27.1% lower than the \$3.7 billion worth of imports in November 2025.

As a result, Russia's share in India's overall oil

imports fell to 24.9% in December 2025, the lowest in three years. In terms of volume, too, India imported only 5.8 million tonnes of oil from Russia, the lowest since February 2025.

India imported \$569.3 million worth of oil from the U.S. in December 2025. While this was 60.5% lower than the amount imported in November 2025, that was because November saw oil imports from the U.S. surging to a seven-month high. Oil imports from the U.S. were nearly 31% higher than in December 2024.

In volume terms, India imported 1.1 million tonnes from the U.S. in December 2025, 58% higher than in December 2024.

**CONTINUED ON**

» PAGE 14

## Suicide attack at Shia mosque kills 31 in Pak.



**Grief-stricken:** Relatives of victims of the suicide attack at a Shia mosque outside a hospital in Islamabad on Friday. AFP

**Agence France-Presse**  
ISLAMABAD

A suicide blast at a Shia mosque in Islamabad killed at least 31 people on Friday, with a police source saying more than 169 are wounded in the deadliest attack in Pakistan's capital since the 2008 Marriott bombing.

City officials said 31 people died in the blast at the Imam Bargah Qasr-e-Khadijatul Kubra mosque in the Tarlai area on the city's outskirts.

"The attacker was stopped at the gate and

detonated himself," a security source said.

The casualty figure was "expected to rise further", a senior police official said.

Muhammad Kazim, a 52-year-old worshipper, said an "extremely powerful" explosion ripped through the building as prayers were starting.

"During the first bow of the Namaz (prayer ritual), we heard gunfire," he said. "And while we were still in the bowing position, an explosion occurred."

**CONTINUED ON**

» PAGE 14

HC dismisses Vijay's plea for relief in tax penalty case

**Mohamed Imranullah S.**  
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Friday dismissed a writ petition filed by actor-turned-politician Vijay in 2022 against the imposition of a penalty of ₹1.5 crore on him by the Income Tax (I-T) Department for not having voluntarily disclosed an additional income of ₹15 crore during the financial year 2015-16.

Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy refused to set aside the penalty, as the actor had disclosed his additional income and paid taxes for it only pursuant to a search and seizure operation carried out by I-T sleuths on September 30, 2015. He concluded that the penalty order had been issued within the period of limitation prescribed under the Income Tax Act.

**CONTINUED ON**

» PAGE 10



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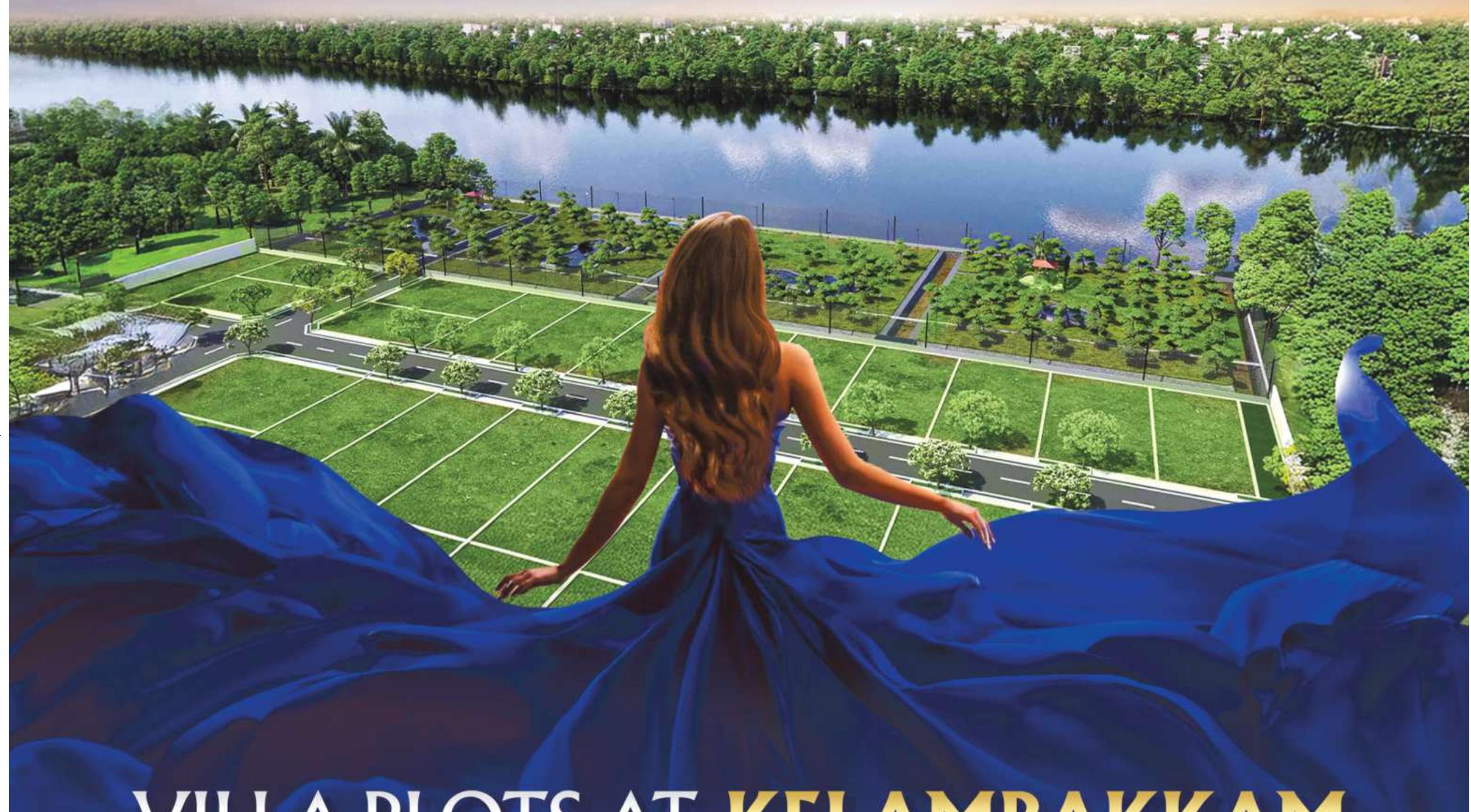
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TVK began distributing applications to aspiring candidates for the 2026 Assembly election at its headquarters at Panaiyur in Chennai.

## Residents miffed as TVK cadre throng Panaiyur office to collect poll papers

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

A section of residents in Panaiyur along the East Coast Road launched a demonstration on Friday objecting to hundreds of cadre descending at the Tamila Vettai Kazhagam (TVK) headquarters in the locality, blocking access for locals and parking cars haphazardly in the area.

The party, launched by actor-politician Vijay, on Friday began distributing applications for candidates aspiring to contest the upcoming Assembly election.

As party workers gathered at the TVK headquarters to get applications, residents of nearby localities raised concerns about repeated overcrowding and indiscriminate parking of vehicles. They alleged that vehicles were parked on the main road, adjacent lanes and also in front of

houses, thereby blocking roads and preventing residents from entering or exiting the locality.

TVK joint general secretary C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar claimed that over 10,000 applications had been distributed within a span of a few hours on the first day. Due to the overwhelming response, distribution was stopped prematurely on Friday.

The distribution will resume on Saturday and continue till February 14. He urged party workers to collect the forms at their convenience during the stipulated period and not rush to get their forms.

Following the complaints of overcrowding, the party has announced that ticket aspirants can download the application form online and submit to the party office either in person or through post/courier.

**Timings**  
**CHENNAI**

SATURDAY, FEB. 07
RISE 06:34 SET 18:12
RISE 22:55 SET 10:06
SUNDAY, FEB. 08
RISE 06:34 SET 18:13
RISE 23:44 SET 10:44
MONDAY, FEB. 09
RISE 06:34 SET 18:13
RISE 00:00 SET 11:24

**2 employees of software firm held for swindling ₹29 lakh**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Two employees of a private software company in Anna Nagar have been arrested on the charge of misappropriation of around ₹29 lakh from the company. The arrested persons have been identified as Suresh, 40, of Ayambakkam and Alex, 25, of Thiruverkadu.

The police said Jayakumar, 43, a resident of Padmanallur, runs a software company on Anna Nagar 3rd Avenue. On November 25 last year, while CCTV cameras at the company were being repaired, Suresh, along with a woman, had disabled the CCTV system.

An examination of the company's accounts revealed that Suresh, Alex, and four others, misappropriated ₹29 lakh of the company's funds. Three laptops and two mobile phones were also stolen from the office. Based on a complaint by Jayakumar, police arrested the accused. Efforts are on to trace the other suspects.

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Tiruvallur 30 18  
Chennai Airport 31 22  
Chennai City 30 23

**Chennai Airport Today**  
31°C The morning will be pleasant. The day will be slightly warm. The night also will be pleasant. Mostly dry weather to prevail.

**Chennai Airport Tomorrow**  
31°C The weather will be dry. The day will be slightly warm. The night will be pleasant.

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# CUMTA writes to AAI over shifting cargo terminal to rear side of city airport

The proposal is part of City Logistics Plan for 2025-26; the plan aims at reducing traffic congestion in the city by re-routing cargo movement and help in creating space for additional apron facilities

**Sunitha Sekar**  
CHENNAI

The Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA) has yet again written to the Airports Authority of India (AAI) proposing to shift the existing cargo terminal to the rear side of Chennai airport. This will help in providing more space for additional apron facilities and establish an exclusive corridor for cargo movement.

This is part of CUMTA's City Logistics Plan for 2025-26, which aims at reducing traffic congestion in the city by re-routing cargo movement and creating dedicated cargo connectivity.

The AAI had originally planned to build a satellite terminal (T5 terminal) in the rear side of the airport near the remote bays, which would increase the passenger handling capacity of the airport. As an extension of this plan, the AAI also envisaged the construction of an elevated corridor from National Highway-32 to provide access to this terminal.

Subsequently, it requested the State government's approval for building this corridor. The latter asked for a hydrological impact study to be done to ensure that water flow on Adyar river isn't affected due to the pillars to be built for the proposed corridor. Recently, the AAI submitted this study as well. The airports body says the land available on the rear side can cater to both the satellite terminal and the cargo terminal.

But, according to the CUMTA, it would do well to shift the cargo operations alone to the rear side of the airport, since the exclusive corridor will facilitate faster cargo movement without having to navigate along with regular traffic.



**Relocation bid:** This is the second time that CUMTA has written to the AAI seeking to shift the cargo terminal. FILE PHOTO

**As per CUMTA, building an exclusive corridor will facilitate faster cargo movement without the need to navigate through regular traffic**

"Since the State government is planning to build the Parandur airport in a few years, it is wiser to utilise this space as a cargo terminal. It will help to improve the cargo handling capacity of the city manifold," an official said.

According to CUMTA: "The major movements of

commercial air cargo originate from industrial areas like Thirumudivakkam and Irungattukottai in the western parts of Chennai metropolitan area. The approach route is Outer Ring Road, crossing Chennai Bypass via Pallavaram. In a scenario of shifting the air cargo terminal to the west side of Chennai airport, the new connectivity can be provided to the new air cargo terminal via ORR-Bypass route."

This is the second time that CUMTA has written to AAI seeking to shift the cargo terminal. "We already held a meeting with AAI in this regard in June 2025. Now, we have sent them a reminder letter to implement this plan and are awaiting their response," another official said.

**AAI awaits response**

An AAI official said the plan was referred to the organisation's headquarters in New Delhi. "If this corridor is built and the right of way will be used by the villages nearby, then there are financial implications and a cost-sharing agreement may be needed. We will have a meeting as soon as we receive a response from New Delhi," the official said.

## 27-year-old arrested for killing his mother

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

The police have arrested a 27-year-old youth for allegedly murdering his mother at their rented house in Nolambur.

The police said the accused, Nikhil Britto, committed the crime in a fit of rage as his mother, Auxilia, 56, was repeatedly scolding him for being unemployed. Britto, a mechanical engineering graduate, had quit his job in Bengaluru a few months ago. The police said Auxilia, who was unwell, had repeated

ly insisted that her son find another job.

On Wednesday, Britto allegedly sent a message to a friend stating that he had killed his mother. When the Nolambur police entered the house based on an alert, Britto allegedly attempted to flee but was apprehended. Auxilia was found dead with bleeding injuries.

The police said Britto confessed to killing his mother by assaulting her with a mobile phone charging cable and a knife. The accused was remanded in judicial custody.

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I, Chinnaiah S/o. Arumugam R/o. 48, Sivan Kovil, Sembanur Po, Karukkai Tk, Sivagangai - 630313, have changed my name from Sekar to Chinnaiah for all purposes vide affidavit.

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T.YASODHA, S.SUJATHA, Advocates, Flat No. 1, Grd Fir Kanavalli Apts, No.29, 18th Avenue, Ashok Nagar, Ch-83

#### TENDERS

Oushadhi The Pharmaceutical Corporation (I.M.) Kerala Ltd. Kuttanthurai, Thirissur-14, Ph: 0487-2453807, 2453842

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A Reputed Charitable & Educational Institution invites tenders for Renovation and Modernisation of Primary School at Chennai (Free Education). Interested contractors may write to M/s V Chelli - Architect and consultants at [varsha@lodedesign.com](mailto:varsha@lodedesign.com) for obtaining details & Tender Documents (Tender document fees Rs.5000/-, non-refundable) on or before 16/02/2026, 5 pm.

3. Voting process shall be closed by 6.00 pm.

4. All the proceedings will be video graphed.

5. A non-refundable amount of Rs.10,000.00 to be paid as Nomination Charges payable at Chennai favouring Arulmigu Abinaya Dharmashivachariyar Matam.

All the proceedings related to meeting of members, co-option and election will be conducted at the Office of Matam (No.73/38, Kachaleswarar Agraharam) at the designated dates.

Justice Chitra Venkataraman, Election Officer, Mobile No. 9840990000

05.02.2026

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நாள் : 05.02.2026 முதல் 08.02.2026 வரை  
நேரம் : காலை 10:00 முதல் தேவை வரை  
இடம் : கலைவாஸர் ஆரங்கம், சென்னை

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## INBRIEF



## Vaiko's speeches in Parliament to be compiled in five volumes

MDMK general secretary Vaiko met Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in Chennai on Friday and requested him to write an introductory chapter for a five-volume compilation of his speeches in Parliament, which runs to several thousand pages. Mr. Vaiko had served in both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. He said he had also requested N. Ram, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, to contribute his notes for the volumes.

## CM congratulates Indian team on U-19 ICC World Cup win

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday congratulated the Under-19 men's Indian Cricket Team for winning the ICC World Cup. In a post on X, Mr. Stalin said, "Congratulations to our Team India on lifting the #ICC Men's #U19WorldCup and giving the nation yet another proud moment, a true triumph of talent and temperament. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's breathtaking innings in the final and his extraordinary tournament will be remembered for years to come," he said.

**Spotlight**  
Read longform articles from our regional editions

- Andhra Pradesh: Tiger tale: Life in the territory of fear in Andhra Pradesh [newsth.live/andhratigers](#)
- Delhi: Death by cyberchondria [newsth.live/cyberchondria](#)
- Karnataka: Shrinking shock absorbers of Bannerghatta National Park in Bengaluru [newsth.live/bannerghatta](#)
- Kerala: Transplanted lives: Organ donation in Kerala gains traction [newsth.live/transplantation](#)
- Telangana: Migrant hands rooted across Telangana's farms [newsth.live/telanganamigrants](#)

## Statewide firefighting training programme for security guards to be held on Monday

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

As part of the ongoing Fire Safety Awareness Campaign, the Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services Department will organise a State-wide basic firefighting training programme for private security guards on February 9.

The training programme will be conducted

from 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at all the 384 Fire and Rescue Services Stations across Tamil Nadu.

The programme is for security guards employed in private companies, hospitals, apartments, commercial complexes, and other private establishments. A total of 5,732 private security guards from various organisations are expected to participate in

the programme, according to sources in the department.

The free training will cover topics such as the use of firefighting equipment, methods to extinguish fires, and the safe evacuation and rescue of occupants during emergencies at workplaces.

G. Sathyaranayanan, Joint Director, Fire and Rescue Services Depart-

ment, Northern Region, Chennai, said the programme would be conducted at 42 fire stations in the northern region.

He hoped that providing basic training to private security guards and ensuring that they maintain close liaison with Fire and Rescue Services officers would help improve coordination during emergency response situations.

## Youth found dead after being duped of ₹35,000

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

The MGR Nagar police has registered a case in connection with the death of a college student, S. Subhash, 19, of Nesapakkam,

under suspicious circumstances, after he lost ₹35,000 to cyber fraud.

The incident occurred after he clicked a link to an advertisement that offered a loan on a mobile application.

## Corporation signs MoU to maintain infrastructure

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tamil Nadu Small Industries Development Corporation to maintain civic infrastructure in the Guindy and Ambattur industrial estates.

Under the MoU, the GCC will maintain roads, street-lights, high mast lights and storm-water drains, and handle solid waste management in both estates.



**PUBLIC (ELECTIONS-II) DEPARTMENT**  
SECRETARIAT, CHENNAI - 600 009.

**TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
Tender No.2/2026/940

e-Tenders are invited from reputed Companies / Agencies for fixing of GPS with Vehicle Tracking System in FST, SST, VST vehicles, EVMs, VVPATs transportation vehicles and Zonal Party Vehicles on rental basis for the General Elections to Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, 2026 for a period of one (1) year as per the guidelines/ instructions of the Election Commission of India. The details can be seen in the tender document which can be downloaded free of cost from the websites <https://tntenders.gov.in> and [www.elections.tn.gov.in](http://www.elections.tn.gov.in)

- Querries from the Companies / Agencies should be raised in the website <https://tntenders.gov.in> by 05:00 P.M. on 10.02.2026. The reply to the queries of the Companies/Agencies shall be uploaded by this Department by 05:00 P.M. on 13.02.2026 in the website <https://tntenders.gov.in>.
- The last date for submission of tender document by e-Procurement module – 3.00 P.M. on 20.02.2026.
- Technical Bids Opening to ascertain Number of bids received – 03:30 P.M. on 20.02.2026.
- Detailed Technical Evaluation by the Tender Evaluation Committee – Will be decided later
- Financial Bid Opening - Those bidders who have Technically qualified will be informed.
- Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)- Rs.5,00,000/- by online module

For contact : 044 – 25665327

DIPR/805/Tender/2026

Additional Chief Electoral Officer & Additional Secretary to Government

# Delay in land acquisition stalls work on Orathur reservoir for three years

Only 68% of the work has been completed; the ₹55.84-crore project that was initiated in 2020 to mitigate flood risk in southern suburbs and augment water supply has run into legal hurdles

K. Lakshmi

CHENNAI

**W**hile the Water Resources Department pushes ahead with the ambitious Mamallan reservoir project to meet Chennai's growing water needs, another key initiative – a proposed reservoir across the Orathur tributary of the Adyar river – has remained incomplete for nearly three years.

Conceived as a flood-mitigation measure and to augment water supply, the project has run into stumbling blocks, including pending court cases, stalling progress on the ground.

The ₹55.84-crore project, which was initiated in 2020, aims at merging Orathur and Arambakkam tanks, and Orathur tributary to form a new reservoir. While the project was envisaged to be completed by 2021, only 68% of the work has been completed so far owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, delay in land acquisition, and transfer of alternate lands to the owners.

#### Pending bund work

Officials of the WRD said that work to build 490 metres of the 2,875-m-long connecting bund between the two waterbodies re-



The new reservoir will have a storage capacity of nearly 587 mcft in the first phase. This will increase to 1,000 mcft once the entire area is desilted in the second phase. FILE PHOTO

mained pending, as acquisition of private lands has not been completed.

The delay has been compounded by legal hurdles related to the reclassification of pastoral land in Korukkenthalangal and Orathur under the land exchange process and the issuance of patta.

The proposed reservoir is necessary to reduce flood risk in southern suburbs such as Mahalakshmi Nagar and Varadharajapuram and to irrigate lands spread across 181.26 hectares. It would also supply 100 million litres of water daily to Chennai, officials said.

"Last year, we carried out works to restore breached bunds and pre-

vent flooding in southern suburbs. A diversion channel was formed to redirect flood water to the Adyar river. The reservoir already has water to a depth of 6 ft-7 ft," an official said.

#### Improvement works

V. Rajasekaran, president, Federation of Varadharajapuram Residents' Welfare Associations, said improvement works such as desilting portions of Adyar river and building a retaining wall helped reduce inundation in flood-prone areas.

Residents also said the monsoon rainfall was comparatively lower last year and that the new reservoir must be formed soon to prevent flood risk in areas around the Adyar river in southern suburbs.

Spread across 302.39 hectares, the new reservoir will have a storage capacity of nearly 587 million cubic feet (mcft) in the first phase, which will increase to 1,000 mcft once the entire area is desilted in the second phase.

While the surplus water would be discharged into the Adyar near Varadharajapuram, a canal would be formed to supply 150 mcft of water to Padappai, Ammanambakkam, and Manimangalam tanks.

Efforts are being taken to complete the project, designed on the lines of Theroy Kandigai-Kannankottai reservoir, soon, officials added.

# State government allocates ₹51.92 crore for proposed bronze museum at Egmore

#### The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

**Of the ₹51.92 crore, ₹40.02 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of the museum complex within the Egmore Museum campus**

allotted for thematic galleries on bronzes.

#### Traditional building

Mr. Manivasan said the Commissioner of Museums had obtained a detailed project report from Sanrachana Architectural Studio for the construction of a traditional building through the Public Works Department at a cost of ₹41.91 crore, and a gallery with modern technology and interiors through the Museums Department at a cost of ₹14.30 crore.

After examining the report submitted by the Commissioner of Museums, the government sanctioned a total amount of ₹51.92 crore. "To showcase these sculptural masterpieces, which are renowned for their serene expressions, elegant postures, as well as intricate *mudras*, a gallery with a traditional architectural design will be constructed within the museum complex, at an estimated cost of ₹40 crore, ensuring an immersive experience that will captivate international visitors," Mr. Thennarasu said.

In his order granting administrative sanction and allocation of funds, Mr. Manivasan also recalled the earlier announcement that a total of ₹1 crore would be



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**S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER**

For & on behalf of President of India, Chief Engineer (CON) S.E.Railway, Garden Reach, Kolkata-700043 invites E-Tender for the under-mentioned work. Following tender has been uploaded on website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) The tender will be closed at 12:00 hrs. on due date e-Tender Notice No.: 4612-GRC-CE-C-SO-01-2026. Description of Works : Mechanical works at upcoming C&W examination and ROH facilities at Barpali loading Bulb in connection with Mahanadi Coalfields Limited Siding work of South Eastern Railway. Approx. Cost: ₹ 29.64 Crore; Bid Security: ₹ 16,31,800.00; Completion period: 18 months; Closing Date : 06.03.2026; Interested tenders may visit website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) for full details/description/specification of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these items will be accepted. NB: "Prospective Bidders may regularly visit [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) to participate in all other tenders." (PR-1154)

**Metro Railway, Kolkata**

Tender Notice for e-tendering is invited by Principal Chief Engineer, Metro Railway for the following work: Name of work: Supply, fixing, commissioning & maintenance of Rail Gauge face lubricator machine at Blue Line (Station Dakshineswar to Station Kavi Subhash) of Metro Railway Kolkata. Approx Cost of Work: Rs.5,38,99,616.20, Earnest Money: Rs.4,44,500.00, Completion Period: 60 Months, Date and Time of Closing: 27.02.2026 at 12:00 Hrs. The Tender Document and other details can be obtained from the website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in), Amendments/Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted only on the website. Abridged e-Tender Notice No.: Civil-2547-2026 (Open) Follow us at: [@metrorailwaykol](https://metrorailwaykol) [@metrorailwaykol](https://metrorailwaykol)

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**INVITATION FOR BID (IFB)  
(LOCAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)**

**SRM e-Tender No. T-2610/MSETCL/CO/Projects/Pre-Tender (RFx No. 6000001487) (1st Call)**  
MSETCL invites offers by SRM e-tendering in TWO bid system (Techno-Commercial Bid and Price Bid) from the eligible registered bidders for the following work as detailed below.  
"Establishment of 132/33kV Shirisol Substation along with construction of 132kV D/C LILO Line On 132kV Bambhor-Erandol line for 132kV Shirisol Substation (RL-23.546km) Dist. Jalgaon under Nashik Zone, MSETCL, Maharashtra."  
Interested bidders may obtain further information available on the website <https://srmtender.mahatransco.in>  
The date of downloading of Bid documents available on the website is from 02.02.2026.

Sd/-  
Chief Engineer (Projects), MSETCL

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY****OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

The Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.) E.C.Railway/Samastipur for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open Tender from experienced and financially capable tenderers for the following works in E-Tendering mode of IREPS web portal of Indian Railways:-

**SL. No. 1 Tender Notice No. : TC-10-2026-SPJ,** Name of work : Construction of 10 bedded RPF barrack with basic required furniture at Bettiah, Tender Value (in ₹) : 18303543.53, Earnest Money (in ₹) : 241500.00, Completion period of the work.: 12 Months.

**SL. No. 2 Tender Notice No. : TC-11-2026-SPJ,** Name of work : Mansi-Saharsa TTR (TWS+CMS)C- 20, Sets (1:12), Tender Value (in ₹) : 6865183.91, Earnest Money (in ₹) : 137300.00, Completion period of the work.: 12 Months.

**SL. No. 3 Tender Notice No. : TC-12-2026-SPJ,** Name of work : Supply of welding portion (52KG/90UTS) and other accessories for welding of rail joint by SKV process with Single Shot Crucible Method in connection with various P/Way Works in the Jurisdiction of Sr. DEN-HI/SPJ., Tender Value (in ₹) : 10014911.62, Earnest Money (in ₹) : 200100.00, Completion period of the work.: 12 Months.

**SL. No. 4 Tender Notice No. : TC-13-2026-SPJ,** Name of work : Balance work for side slope protection work for approaches of Major Bridges and between Km 3 to Km 5 in DBG bypass line., Tender Value (in ₹) : 42656872.77, Earnest Money (in ₹) : 36340.00, Completion period of the work.: 12 Months.

**SL. No. 5 Tender Notice No. : TC-14-2026-SPJ,** Name of work : (1) At Rajnagar - Raising of Platform no. 1 and 2 to high level, (2) At khajauli - Raising of Platform no. 1 by high level. & (3) Provision of boundary wall, drain and circulating areas at Khajauli station.., Tender Value (in ₹) : 691400.00, Completion period of the work.: 15 Months.

**SL. No. 6 Tender Notice No. : TC-15-2026-SPJ,** Name of work : Supply of welding portion (52KG/60KG/80UT-260) and other accessories for welding of rail joint by SKV process with Single Shot Crucible Method in connection with various P/Way Works in the Jurisdiction of Sr.DEN-I/SPJ., Tender Value (in ₹) : 35202902.36, Earnest Money (in ₹) : 32600.00, Completion period of the work.: 12 Months.

**1. Last Date & time for receiving of Tender & E-Tender mode on IREPS web portal :-** 27/02/2026 upto 12.00 hours. 2. **Opening Date & time for E-Tender:** 27/02/2026 after 12.00 hours. 3. **Website particulars where complete details of tender & tender document can be seen on Website:** [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in). Amendments /modifications if any shall not be published in the newspapers but the same shall be uploaded in the website.

**Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-ord**

**East Central Railway/Samastipur**

**PR/1746/CON/SMHXIPatna/COMML/T25-26/56**

**C 205/26**

**1079/12/2025-26/8021**

**Note: Corrigendum and Amendments, if any, will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>**

**Tender Enquiry No. 17/GCD/PTA/TS/PSPCL/2025-26 Dated: 07.02.2026**

Addl. SE Construction Division PSPCL Patiala invites Open e-Tender for "outsourcing work of erection, testing and commissioning of Additional 02 no. 20 MVA Power Transformers (Under Annexure B) along with bay equipments related works at 66 KV S/S Samgoli & Dhakoli (DS Circle Mohali) partial turnkey mode under Grid Construction Division Patiala, under Grid Cons. Circle, Ludhiana" For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 07.02.2026 (09:00 AM onwards).

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**Addl. SE Construction Division PSPCL Patiala invites Open e-Tender for "outsourcing work of erection, testing and commissioning of Additional 02 no. 20 MVA Power Transformers (Under Annexure B) along with bay equipments related works at 66 KV S/S Samgoli & Dhakoli (DS Circle Mohali) partial turnkey mode under Grid Construction Division Patiala, under Grid Cons. Circle, Ludhiana" For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 07.02.2026 (09:00 AM onwards).**

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## IN BRIEF



## Village panchayat secretaries stage protest for pay revision

More than 500 village panchayat secretaries from across Tamil Nadu took part in a protest held near the Collectorate on Friday. The protesters said they were appointed in 2018, but were still working under the existing basic pay structure without any revision. They demanded inclusion under the revised time-scale of pay, and parity with other government employees performing similar duties. The secretaries also sought issuance of a government order for salary fixation and related benefits, a press release said. "Assurances were given earlier by officials of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department after representations at the district level. However, no formal government order has been issued so far," the release said. Petitions had been submitted to senior State government officials, seeking action, the association added.

## 'DMK is delaying formation of seat-sharing committee'

Congress MP from Sivaganga Karti Chidambaram on Friday said the DMK was delaying the formation of a committee to hold seat-sharing talks with the Congress for the Assembly election. Mr. Karti told journalists in Pudukkottai that the Congress had formed a five-member seat-sharing negotiations committee. Despite talks between DMK Parliamentary Party leader Kanimozi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi nine days ago, the DMK was yet to form a committee. The Congress committee was ready to hold talks, but the DMK was delaying constituting its committee, he said, adding that the ruling party should immediately form a committee to end any confusion over divergent views (expressed by different leaders). He said both parties knew they would win only if they remained allies.

## + CM unveils Karl Marx statue at govt. museum complex

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday unveiled a statue of foundational Communist ideologue Karl Marx at the Government Museum Complex in Egmore, Chennai.

Mr. Stalin unveiled the statue in the presence of a host of personalities, including CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam, CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi founder Thol. Thirumavalavan, MDMK chief Vaiko, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K. Selvaperumthangai, senior CPI(M) leader G. Ramakrishnan, Director of THG Publishing Private Ltd. N. Ram, and DMK Lok Sabha Member T.R. Baalu.

Ministers Ma. Subramanian, P.K. Sekarbabu, and E.V. Velu took part.

On April 2 last year, Mr. Stalin announced that the State government would install a statue of Karl Marx in the city.

Marx, the author of *Das Kapital* and *The Communist Manifesto*, had con-



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin unveiling a statue of Karl Marx at the Government Museum complex in Egmore on Friday. R. RAGU

demned the torture of Tamils under British rule, VCK MP Ravikumar said.

Responding to former BJP State president Tamilsai Soundararajan, who had questioned the necessity of the Karl Marx statue unveiled by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Mr. Ravikumar said that unlike the "gurus" of Ms. Soundararajan, the Communists had never apologised to the British.

Mr. Ravikumar recalled Marx's reference to the Madras Torture Commis-

## Stalin lays foundation for Tamil Nadu's first Sea Turtle Conservation Centre in city

The Centre of Excellence will be set up with World Bank assistance at cost of ₹14.50 cr; it is aimed at enhancing institutional capacity, easing operational complexity of marine turtle conservation

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday laid the foundation for Tamil Nadu's first Sea Turtle Conservation Centre at Guindy in Chennai.

An official release said the proposed Centre of Excellence, which will be established under the World bank-aided Tamil Nadu Sustainably Harnessing Ocean Resources and Blue Economy (TN-SHORE) at a cost of ₹14.50 crore, is aimed at enhancing institutional capacity and tackling the increasing scientific and operational complexity of marine turtle conservation.

The establishment of the centre is crucial as the State's coastline is one of the most important marine turtle nesting habitats in the country, especially for the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtle, the release said.

The coasts of Chennai, Tiruvallur, Chengalpattu, Nagapattinam, and Cuddalore see significant nesting activity year after year. Tamil Nadu is the only State in the country to have five of the world's six sea turtle species.

The centre will have dedicated infrastructure to cater to a host of needs, from scientific research, te-



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin virtually laying the foundation for the Sea Turtle Conservation Centre at Guindy in Chennai on Friday.

lemetry, monitoring and centralised data management to training and capacity building. It will also be a nodal institution for coordination between departments, and for technical expertise, the release said.

## Low survival rates

As such, sea turtles have very low natural survival rates, and only one or two hatchlings out of a 1,000 get to adulthood. There is also the impact of anthropogenic pressures like artificial lighting, incidental capture during fishing, climate change, marine pollution, coastal development and coastal habitat degradation. To combat

**Tamil Nadu is the only State in the country to have five of the world's six sea turtle species**

these challenges, the State government has been intensifying sea turtle conservation efforts.

## Night patrolling

Apart from distributing over 2,000 Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) to decrease incidental turtle mortality, the government has been carrying out interventions like large-scale night patrolling in the nesting season, creating and managing hatcheries in the

nesting beaches, and sensitisation programmes for fishermen.

It has resulted in egg collection increasing from 70,700 in 2019-20 to 3.20 lakh in 2024-25. Also, hatching releases have gone up from 1.16 lakh in 2020-21 to 2.87 lakh in 2024-25.

Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu, Minister for Forests and Khadi R.S. Rajakannappan, Chief Secretary N. Murugandan, Additional Chief Secretary of Environment, Climate Change, and Forests, Supriya Sahu, and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force Srinivas R. Reddy participated.

## Mitsubishi Electric opens air conditioner, compressor unit at Gummidiipooondi

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Mitsubishi Electric India, a Japanese electrical and electronic equipment maker, opened its new air conditioner and compressor manufacturing unit at Gummidiipooondi near Chennai on Friday.

**'Double-digit growth'** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister for Industries T.R.B. Rajaa said the State leads the country with around 40,000 factories. "Tamil Nadu is growing at 11.19%, the only State registering a double-digit growth," he said. It produces 31% of India's electronics items and accounts for 41% of India's electronic exports.

Atsushi Takase, managing director, Mitsubishi Electric India, said, "India is witnessing a rapid growth in energy-efficient and high-quality air-conditioning solutions. This facility will support this growing demand through local manufacturing, while enabling us to respond faster to customer needs, strengthen quality control, and ensure sustainable operations."

**Core hub** The company would position India as a core hub within Mitsubishi Electric's global air conditioning business, he said, adding that the investment underscored its long-term commitment to India in general and Tamil Nadu in particular.

## Governor, CM should bury the hatchet: former V-C

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Former Anna University Vice-Chancellor E. Balagurusamy on Friday urged Governor R.N. Ravi and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to arrive at a "temporary, pragmatic compromise" on the appointment of Vice-Chancellors to Tamil Nadu's public universities.

In an open letter, Prof. Balagurusamy proposed the consensual use of existing university Acts and established conventions for appointment of Vice-Chancellors, either on an interim or a regular basis, as a possible way forward. This would, however, be subject to the final outcome of judicial review.

**Administrative paralysis** The absence of VCs in several universities had led to "administrative paralysis, delayed academic decisions, stalled faculty recruitment and promotions, uncertainty in financial governance, and a growing erosion of academic morale", Prof. Balagurusamy added.

## T.N. govt. orders transfer of 13 police officers

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government on Friday ordered the transfer of 13 police officers including 10 Indian Police Service (IPS) officers.

S. Rajeswari, Inspector General of Police and Member Secretary, Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board, has been transferred and posted as Inspector General of Police, Crime Against Women and Children, Chen-

nai, in place of A. Kayalvizhi, who has been posted as Inspector General of Police and Member Secretary, Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board.

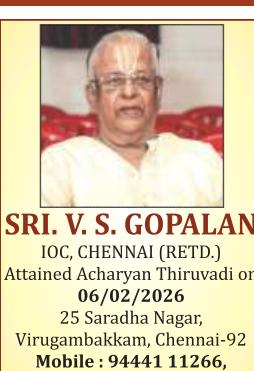
R.V. Ramya Bharati, Inspector General of Police

on compulsory wait in the DGP/HoPP office, has been posted as Inspector General of Police, Crime, Chennai, in place of P.K. Senthil Kumari.

(For the full list of transfers, visit <https://newsthrive.com/ZOfwkh>)

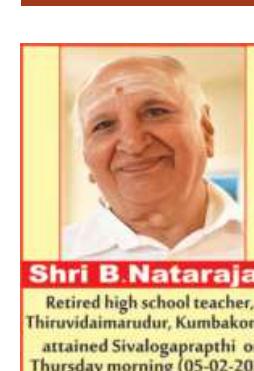
## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH



**SRI V. S. GOPALAN**  
IOC, CHENNAI (RETD.)  
Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on  
06/02/2026  
25 Saradha Nagar,  
Virugambakkam, Chennai-92  
Mobile : 94441 11266,  
99675 34067, 97899 51843

## DEATH



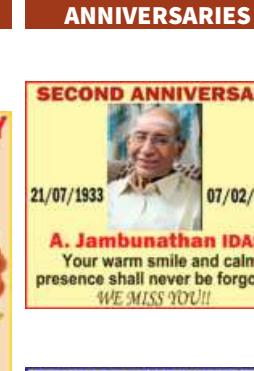
**Shri B. Natarajan**  
Retired high school teacher,  
Thiruvilamaduram, Kumbakonam  
attained Sivalogapragrathi on  
Thursday morning (05-02-2026)  
at Fremont, CA surrounded by  
loved ones.  
*Bereaved by*  
Kamakshi (Wife) CN Venkatasubramanian,  
CN Santhanakrishnan, CN Sukanya  
WhatsApp No: 94421 10219

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



**R. RAJALAKSHMI**  
W.O. Late Navalpakkam Rajagopal  
"You are living in our hearts"  
*Fondly Remembered By*  
Raaghavan and Sudha  
Krishnamurthy and Sandhya  
Sampath and Jayashree  
Radha and Selvakumar  
Kalyani and Suryanarayanan  
Grand Children and Great Grand Children...

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



**SECOND ANNIVERSARY**  
21/07/1933 07/02/2024  
**A. Jambunathan IDAS**  
"Your warm smile and calm  
presence shall never be forgotten  
WE MISS YOU!!"

## DEATH



**VIMALA RANGASWAMY (96 yrs)**  
With profound sorrow, we  
announce that our mother  
attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on  
5th February 2026. She went  
peacefully amidst loved ones.  
A Srinath +91 9845887790  
Sita Kumar +91 990133822



**FIRST ANNIVERSARY**  
25.07.1949 07.02.2025  
**Adv. E. RAJASEKARAN**  
Senior Advocate and Notary Public  
Not a day passes without me thinking  
of you. I miss you beyond words.  
Wife : Selvi Rajasekar  
and All Loved Ones

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES



**First Year Remembrance  
In loving memory**  
Shri. M.S. Muthukumarasamy  
Born on: 03.01.1983 - Passed away on: 07.02.2025  
*Always in our hearts*

## Modi should answer questions related to national security in Parliament: Cong. MP

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Congress MP Sudha Ramakrishnan on Friday dismissed allegations that women Opposition members had intended to protest against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an "unprecedented manner" in the Lok Sabha. She charged

Mr. Modi with using these allegations as a pretext to avoid answering questions related to India's national security.

Ms. Sudha told *The Hindu* that the Leader of Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, raised questions over General Naravane's account of how Government of India responded during the Chi-

nese incursion into Indian territory in 2020, which was published in a magazine, and about Mr. Modi being mentioned in Jeffrey Epstein files.

"Why can't Mr. Modi clarify these issues in Parliament? What does Epstein mean by Mr. Modi dancing in Israel (as claimed in Epstein's emails)? Shouldn't issues related to national security be answered in Parliament?" she asked.

According to her, Mr. Gandhi was prevented from raising these issues.

Why can't Mr. Modi clarify these issues in Parliament? What does Epstein mean by Mr. Modi dancing in Israel (as claimed in Epstein's emails)? Shouldn't issues related to national security be answered in Parliament?" she asked.

According to her, Mr. Gandhi was prevented from raising these issues.

## From Page One

## Madras HC dismisses Vijay's plea for relief in tax penalty case

However, he left it open to the writ petitioner to assail the penalty order before the appellate authority on grounds other than limitation, since he had not gone into those grounds and dismissed the petition by rejecting the ground of limitation alone. Opposing the writ petition, the I-T Department had argued that the actor would not have disclosed the income but for the searches.

Mr. Vijay's counsel had contended that the penalty proceedings were hit by the limitation period. Stating that the proceedings should have been initiated on or before June 30, 2019, and not on June 30, 2022, he claimed that the limitation period would begin from the date when the Assessing Officer refers a matter to the Additional/Joint Commissioner of Income Tax. I-T Department senior standing counsel A.P. Srinivas said the I-T sleuths had conducted a search and seizure operation on the premises belonging to Mr. Vijay on September 30, 2015, and seized certain incriminating materials. The materials indicated that P.T. Selvakumar and Shibu of SKT Studios, producers of the actor's 2015 movie *Puli*, had paid him ₹4.93 crore in cash, apart from the remuneration of ₹16 crore through cheques. They had deposited the Tax Deducted at Source only for the cheque amount and not the cash transaction.

When confronted with the records, the actor reportedly admitted to have received ₹5 crore in cash and agreed to pay the taxes for it. When asked how much unaccounted-for income he had earned in the last six years, he said he had not received any besides the ₹5 crore for *Puli*. To cooperate with the I-T Department, the actor agreed to disclose an additional income of ₹15 crore (including the cash transaction of ₹5 crore) for the financial year 2015-16 and pay the necessary taxes for it. On July 29, 2016, he filed his return of income for the assessment year 2016-17, declaring his total income to be ₹35.42 crore, including the additional ₹15 crore. While filing the returns, he claimed depreciation of assets worth ₹17.81 lakh and sought exemption for his fans' club expenses of ₹64.71 lakh. However, the department disallowed his claims and passed an assessment order on December 30, 2017, determining the taxable income to be ₹38.25 crore. The assessment order also stated that the actor would not have disclosed the additional income but for the search and seizure operation. The department imposed penalty under Sections 271(I)(c) and 271AAB(I) of the I-T Act.

Though he chose to go on statutory appeal against the assessment order and the penalty imposed under Section 271(I)(c), the penalty under Section 271AAB(I) alone had been challenged by way of a writ petition.

## IN BRIEF



## Textile industry, traders' body representatives call on CM

Representatives of various textile industry bodies and the Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangangal Peramaippu called on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at the Secretariat in Chennai on Friday. An official release said they thanked him for the various announcements made at the recently held textile conference at the CODISSA Trade Fair Complex in Coimbatore. Separately, the Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangangal Peramaippu representatives, headed by its State president A.M. Vikramaraja, also called on Mr. Stalin and thanked him for extending the time limit for free welfare board membership registration for traders and for issuing orders reducing rents for HR&CE Department properties.

court to prevent the release of *Parasakthi* on OTT and other platforms without giving due credit to him.

After watching the movie in theatre, the scriptwriter filed an application to prevent the release of the movie on OTT and other platforms. His counsel M. Purushothaman insisted that the producer give due credit to his client as the "writer and original conceptualiser" of the movie.

He said the applicant had penned a script, titled 'Chemozhi', running to 56 pages and registered it with the South Indian Film Writers Association on Ja-

February 27, 2010. He alleged that the same script had been used with some changes for the making of *Parasakthi*.

On the other hand, ad-

vocate Vijayan Subramanian, representing Dawn



Pictures Private Limited, vehemently opposed the plea. He contended that the film's director Sudha Kongara was the scriptwriter for *Parasakthi* and she had drawn inspiration from the well-documented

history of the anti-Hindi agitations.

## Narrative and context

"The narrative framework of the film consciously situates itself within these historical events only to lend authenticity and context to the period portrayed, while the characters, their interpersonal relationships, narrative arcs, motivations, dialogues, dramatic incidents, and emotional trajectories depicted in the film are entirely fictional. They are original creative expressions conceived independently by the director and the creative team," he said.

Stating that the appli-

cant seeks to equate similarity of theme or historical setting with copyright infringement, Mr. Subramanian contended that it was impermissible in law since copyright protection does not extend to ideas, themes, historical events, social movements or facts, but only to the original expression of such ideas.

"The director has exercised her independent creative judgment in crafting a fictional cinematic work that merely uses a historical milieu as its canvas and it is a practice recognised for long. The applicant has filed this application on an erroneous assumption that exclu-

sive rights can be claimed over historical events and real-life incidents," he told the court.

He also accused the applicant of having taken out the application at the eleventh hour and said *Parasakthi* was scheduled to be released on OTT on Saturday. Mr. Purushothaman, on his part, complained that the producer's counter-affidavit had been served upon him only an hour before the hearing of the case. After hearing both sides, the judge adjourned the matter without any interim orders and said the injunction application would be taken up for hearing on Monday.

## Over the years, DMK and Cong. have forged a mutually complementary electoral tie-up

In the 2024 Lok Sabha election, even though the national party lagged behind the Dravidian party in terms of vote share in contested seats, the margin was less than one percentage point; the narrow gap in vote shares indicates that all the parties in the alliance benefit from one another

## NEWS ANALYSIS

## T. Ramakrishnan

CHENNAI

The presence of the Congress in the DMK-led coalition has become a talking point in political circles, with the two parties not finalising a seat-sharing arrangement for the Assembly election in Tamil Nadu so far.

The observations expressed publicly by Praveen Chakravarty, a Congress functionary, about the value of his party in an alliance, have created a buzz. Though a precise assessment has been difficult in view of electoral tie-ups almost continuously for over 20 years, the value of his party, he claims, hovers between 10% and 12%.

Notwithstanding his claim, a perusal of the data regarding the Congress' vote share in percentage

## Alliance scorecard

The table looks at how the DMK-Congress alliance performed in elections in the State since 2004.



Note: During the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the DMK and the Congress did not contest together

and the party's vote share in contested seats for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections since 2004 reveals that except on one occasion, the national par-

Year & Election	Party	No. of seats contested	No. of seats won	Votes polled	Vote share (%)	Vote share in seats contested
2004 Lok Sabha	DMK	16	16	70,64,393	24.6	58.3%
	Cong.	10	10	41,34,255	14.4	59.2%
2006 Assembly	DMK	132	96	87,28,716	26.46	45.99%
	Cong.	48	34	27,65,768	8.38	43.5%
2009 Lok Sabha	DMK	22	18	76,25,397	25.1	44.9%
	Cong.	15	8	45,67,799	15.03	38.9%
2011 Assembly	DMK	124	23	82,49,991	22.39	42.2%
	Cong.	63	5	34,26,432	9.3	35.73%
2016 Assembly	DMK	180	88	1,36,69,116	31.64	41.06%
	Cong.	41	8	27,74,075	6.42	36.74%
2019 Lok Sabha	DMK	24	24	1,42,74,862	33.05	58.95%
	Cong.	9	8	53,73,145	12.44	52.71%
2021 Assembly	DMK	188	133	1,74,30,179	37.7	46.45%
	Cong.	25	18	19,76,527	4.27	41.36%
2024 Lok Sabha	DMK	22	22	1,17,54,710	27.21	47.2%
	Cong.	9	9	46,59,734	10.78	46.4%

2004, when the two parties came together in the State after a gap of 24 years, that the Congress registered higher vote share in contested seats than the DMK. Even then, the margin was very thin – 1.1 percentage point. At the all-India level, the election assumed importance as the national party had returned to power after a gap of eight years.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha election at the peak of the Congress' unpopularity, it put up nominees in all 39 constituencies. Many leaders had opted out of contesting at that time. The party did not win any seat and its vote share was 4.31%. In the southern districts, where the national party had polled 8.2%, its vote share was perceptibly higher than in the rest of the State. Only in Kanniyanumkumari did the party finish second, and in all other constituencies, it had forfeited deposits.

tion and that all the parties in the alliance benefit from one another. If any party in a coalition fares much better than its allies, the general interpretation is that the party in question enjoys a distinct advantage in terms of numerical strength. However, the data since 2004 do not give any such indication about the Congress.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha election at the peak of the Congress' unpopularity, it put up nominees in all 39 constituencies. Many leaders had opted out of contesting at that time. The party did not win any seat and its vote share was 4.31%. In the southern districts, where the national party had polled 8.2%, its vote share was perceptibly higher than in the rest of the State. Only in Kanniyanumkumari did the party finish second, and in all other constituencies, it had forfeited deposits.

## Advisories issued as crow samples show avian flu infection

## The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Following the detection of H5N1 avian influenza (bird flu) virus in samples collected from a dead crow in Chennai, the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine has issued an advisory for members of the public.

"Avian influenza rarely spreads to humans," Director of Public Health A. Somasundaram said.

The advisory reiterates that avian influenza is a viral disease that spreads from an infected bird to other birds, and transmission to humans is rare. However, it notes that those who handle birds, especially sick and dead birds, and those who work in slaughterhouses must exercise caution. Those with flu-like symptoms – such as cough, cold, fever, and difficulty in breathing – must seek medical assistance at the nearest government health facility.

Residents have been urged to inform the Animal Husbandry Department of any unusual bird deaths in their locality and maintain personal hygiene measures like hand-washing and also ensure that the environment around them is clean. In terms of food, improperly cooked eggs or meat should be avoided. Residents must also avoid travelling to areas where

an outbreak has been reported. The advisory also cautions residents not to believe in rumours.

For more information, people can dial 104.

## GCC surveillance

A communication from the Animal Husbandry Department said the Greater Chennai Corporation and municipalities have been asked to enhance biosecurity and carry out thorough disinfection in areas where crow mortality has been reported. The local bodies have also been asked to dispose of bird carcasses through deep burial.

Instructions have been issued to officials not to conduct necropsies at the field level to prevent the spread of infection. The Forest Department has, meanwhile, been requested to intensify surveillance in fringe areas.

In January, residents in areas of Chennai, including Adyar, Velachery, and Neelankarai reported dead or dying crows. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying of the Union government later confirmed that strains of H5N1 were found in crow samples lifted from Adyar. The communication from the Centre said municipalities should strengthen bio-security and undertake thorough disinfection in areas where bird mortality has been reported.

Residents have been urged to inform the Animal Husbandry Department of any unusual bird deaths in their locality and maintain personal hygiene measures like hand-washing and also ensure that the environment around them is clean. In terms of food, improperly cooked eggs or meat should be avoided. Residents must also avoid travelling to areas where

## Stalin releases Tamil Nadu Urban Greening Policy 2026

## The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday released the Tamil Nadu Urban Greening Policy 2026, aimed at building climate-resilient, liveable, and sustainable cities. According to an official release, the government has been pursuing a mission-mode, State-wide greening effort through the Green Tamil Nadu Mission, with the objective of progressively enhancing forest and tree cover to 33%, improving climate resilience, and strengthening ecological security.

Some of the greening efforts by the government include the planting of over 12.05 crore seedlings, expansion of agroforestry on more than 2.24 lakh acres, mangrove plantation and restoration, palmyrah dibbling at scale, establishment of 100 village wooldots (*Maragathapooncholai*) in 38 districts, creation of 1,000 micro-forests (*Kurunkudugal*) on industry premises, notification of 100 new reserve forests, integrating greening with livelihood, climate action, and sustainable development.

The policy provides a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for integrating trees, urban forests, parks, wetlands, and blue-green infrastructure into urban planning. All departments and agencies will allocate a proportionate share of projects towards greening and landscape restoration. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) shall explore the possibility of levying a green fee for urban greening activities.

According to the policy, a State-level coordination committee will be formed to ensure effective convergence across departments. The Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS) Department will set up a dedicated urban forest wing to promote greening initiatives in urban areas.

City-level urban biodi-



For ecological security: Chief Minister M.K. Stalin releasing the urban greening policy at the Secretariat in Chennai on Friday.

versities will allocate a proportionate share of projects towards greening and landscape restoration. Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) shall explore the possibility of levying a green fee for urban greening activities.

## Plan for ULBs

Incentives are proposed to be given to institutions and individuals for the achievement of defined 'Urban Greening Factors'. Every ULB shall endeavour to maintain a minimum of 15% of its total urban area under green cover. ULBs will also strive to adopt the 3-30-300 Urban Green Liveability Guideline of the Nature-based Solutions Institute, Sweden. ULBs shall also strive to develop the City Biodiversity Index, also known as the Singapore Index. The policy will encourage the adoption of urban and regional development plans, and monitoring dashboards will be set up for urban greening initiatives.

All departments and agencies

will also explore the possibility of levying a green fee for urban greening activities.

According to the policy, a State-level coordination committee will be formed to ensure effective convergence across departments. The Municipal Administration and Water Supply (MAWS) Department will set up a dedicated urban forest wing to promote greening initiatives in urban areas.

City-level urban biodi-

## Chief Minister inaugurates projects across State

## The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday inaugurated upgraded district headquarters hospitals, additional facilities for hospitals, Samathuvapurams, and office buildings across the State.

By videoconference, he inaugurated upgraded district headquarters hospitals and new buildings for government hospitals, microbiology laboratories, Indian medicine and homoeopathy wings, and urban and rural health centre buildings constructed at a total cost of ₹348.59 crore under the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Also inaugurated were a new building and microbiology laboratory at the Government Food Analysis Laboratory in Guindy, a microbiology laboratory at the Food Analysis Laboratory in Madurai, and a Drug Control Assistant Director's office building for the Namakkal zone, besides three urban primary health centres and five rural primary health centres.

Mr. Stalin also opened buildings constructed at a cost of ₹289.38 crore under the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department. They include Samathuvapurams at Poovankuppam in Cuddalore district, Kadayakudi in Pudukkottai district, and Thalaiyil in Tiruchi district. He inaugurated a road from Pudupatti to Kedamalai in Namakkal district for the benefit of tribal people, along with office buildings, bridges, anganwadi centres, school buildings, community halls, and fair price shops.

## IN BRIEF



## ED summons actor Jayaram in Sabarimala gold theft case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Malayalam actor Jayaram for questioning in the Sabarimala gold case-linked money laundering investigation, officials said on Friday. The SIT had questioned Jayaram sometime back in Chennai. A video of the actor and Unnikrishnan Potti, the prime accused, performing puja together was reported to be the basis for Mr. Jayaram's questioning. The actor had then denied any wrongdoing.

## Kerala actor arrested in hit-and-run case; let off on bail

The Thiruvananthapuram City police on Friday recorded the arrest of Malayalam film actor Maniyapilla Raju in connection with a hit-and-run incident in which two youth were injured after his car knocked down their motorcycle on Thursday night. Mr. Raju appeared at the Museum police station around 9.30 a.m., nearly 12 hours after the incident. He was later released on station bail following a medical examination at the General Hospital.

## Kerala not to implement National Population Register

The Kerala government has issued a fresh notification on Thursday to reaffirm that the National Population Register (NPR) will not be implemented in the State under any circumstances. The order comes even as preparations begin for the upcoming national Census. The gazette notification reiterates that all activities related to the update of the NPR in Kerala have remained suspended with effect from December 20, 2019.

**Give details of steps taken to clear illegal immigrants, HC tells police**

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

Observing that the reported presence of a large number of illegal immigrants in Bengaluru city and other parts of the State is a national security issue, the Karnataka High Court has directed the city police to give details about steps taken for clearing illegal immigrants.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna issued the direction in his February 4 interim order while staying one of the two criminal cases registered against Puneeth Kerahalli, a self-proclaimed activist, in connection with his acts of entering places, including private lands, where illegal immigrants were allegedly residing.

Orally questioning what was wrong if any person tried to identify illegal immigrants and wanted the police to take action, the court stayed a First Information Report (FIR) registered *suo motu* by the police on the petitioner's conduct of entering the some places in the city where alleged illegal immigrants, said to be from Bangalore, were residing.

The court orally told the Additional State Public Prosecutor B.N. Jagadeesha that illegal immigration posed a threat to national security.

The court has asked the police not to take coercive step against the petitioner in this case while directing the police to produce the video footage of the alleged incident after Mr. Jagadeesha told the court that there were video recordings on the alleged act of assault by the petitioner.

## Message on wheels



Participants in the Central Industrial Security Force Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon 2026 at R.K. Beach in Visakhapatnam on Friday. The cyclothon, which began on January 28, will conclude on February 22, and aims at creating awareness about coastal security. K.R. DEEPAK

## Three convicted in Hampi gang rape, murder case

The Hindu Bureau  
KALABURAGI

A sessions court at Gangavathi in Koppal district of Karnataka on Friday convicted all three accused in the high-profile Hampi gang rape and murder case that had drawn national and international attention following the brutal sexual assault on two women, including a foreign tourist, and the killing of an Indian male tourist near the UNESCO World Heritage Site last year.

The court held Mallesh, 22, Sai, 21, and Sharana, 27, guilty of multiple serious offences, including murder, gang rape, rape, attempt to murder and causing injuries to two male tourists.

## Public Prosecutor submits that the crime amounted to a "rarest of rare" category

robbery. The sentence will be pronounced on February 16.

The court convicted all three accused for the murder of Bibhas Kumar Nayak, a tourist from Odisha. The court also found the three accused guilty of attempt to murder and causing injuries to two male tourists.

All three were convicted for robbery by causing hurt to the Indian woman victim. Additionally, the

court convicted Mallesh and Chaitannay Sai for gang rape and rape of the Indian woman, and Chaitannay Sai and Sharana for gang rape and rape of the Israeli woman.

The Public Prosecutor submitted that the crime amounted to a "rarest of rare" category and sought appropriate sentencing.

The crime occurred on the night of March 6, 2025, when the victims and their companions were attacked near the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal in Sanapura, close to Hampi. The brutal sexual assault on an Indian and a foreign national and the murder of an Indian tourist, had triggered widespread outrage.

## Kerala's 'adopted daughter' writer Pepita Seth becomes an Indian citizen at 84

The Hindu Bureau  
THRISSUR

Celebrated writer, photographer, and Padma awardee Pepita Seth, whose work brought Kerala's culture and art to global attention, has officially become an Indian citizen, marking an emotional milestone in a life deeply intertwined with the State's traditions.

At a citizenship document handover ceremony held at the Thrissur collectorate on Friday, Ms. Seth received her Indian citizenship papers from Collector Arjun Pandian.

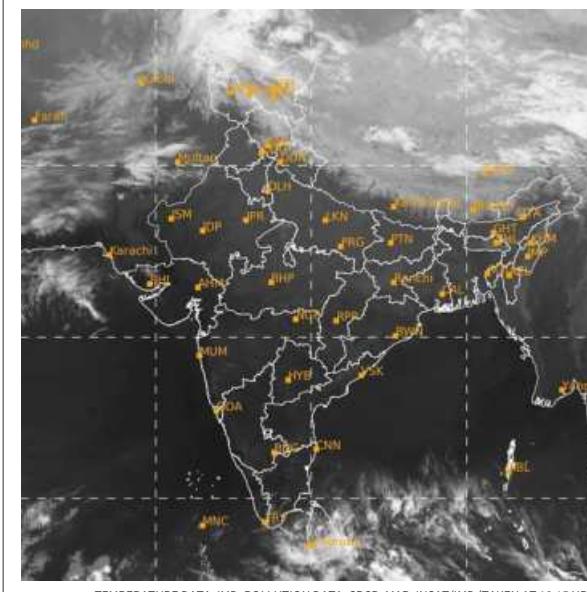
Describing the occasion as special, the Collector said it recognised Ms. Seth's extraordinary con-

tribution to taking Kerala's cultural heritage to the world.

Seth. "I feel immensely proud to become an Indian at the age of 84," she said, adding that India had long been her true home. With the formal handover of documents, her long-cher-

## WEATHER WATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

**Forecast for Saturday:** Dense fog likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	27.6	11.4	Kozhikode	—	34.6	24.2
Ahmedabad	—	32.0	18.8	Kurnool	—	33.3	19.4
Aizawl	—	27.9	12.0	Lucknow	—	24.3	9.0
Allahabad	—	25.0	9.2	Madurai	—	33.4	21.2
Bengaluru	—	29.5	16.0	Mangalore	—	34.6	21.2
Bhopal	—	27.0	12.0	Mumbai	—	35.1	20.4
Bhubaneswar	—	32.2	16.6	Mysuru	—	31.2	17.0
Chandigarh	—	23.5	8.3	New Delhi	—	24.8	9.1
Chennai	—	30.2	22.5	Patna	—	23.8	12.8
Coimbatore	—	32.5	19.5	Port Blair	—	30.6	23.9
Dehradun	—	25.9	8.7	Puducherry	—	29.6	20.5
Gangtok	—	14.8	8.8	Pune	—	31.7	18.9
Goa	—	35.6	22.0	Raipur	—	31.3	17.9
Guwahati	—	28.2	12.2	Ranchi	—	24.7	13.0
Hubballi	—	32.0	17.0	Shillong	—	17.6	6.1
Hyderabad	—	30.4	17.5	Shimla	—	18.4	6.6
Imphal	—	25.1	5.0	Srinagar	—	12.2	2.5
Jaipur	—	27.2	10.3	Thiruvananthapuram	—	32.8	24.0
Kochi	—	31.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	31.3	20.6
Kohima	—	19.2	8.6	Vijayawada	—	31.0	19.7
Kolkata	—	26.4	16.3	Visakhapatnam	—	29.9	20.7

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	...35	103	19	...112	...104	...
Bengaluru	...6	...31	20	...161	...130	...
Chennai	...9	...10	51	...83	...104	...
Delhi	...12	202	45	...255	...206	...
Hyderabad	...6	...10	57	...166	...152	...
Kolkata	...9	...98	35	...182	...130	...
Lucknow	...7	...51	61	...97	...200	...
Mumbai	...27	...92	34	...144	...133	...
Pune	...7	...77	51	...250	...211	...
Visakhapatnam	...9	...88	20	...135	...160	...

**Yesterday**  
In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Dewas, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 304 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 30

**Air Quality Code:** ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**NO<sub>x</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.



A.N. Radhakrishnan

the implementing agency of a women empowerment programme conducted by the National NGO Confederation - took ₹63,500 from her promising a scooter at 50% discount. The money was handed over on May 9, 2024, and it is alleged that neither the scooter was delivered nor the money was returned, the FIR states.

Mr. Radhakrishnan is the chairman of SIGN.

Police sources said Mr. Radhakrishnan and others were named in the FIR based on the complainant's statement that they were associated with SIGN.

In the latest case, the complainant alleged that Mr. Sumesh, who introduced himself as coordinator of the Society For Integrated Growth Of The Nation (SIGN) - which was

Mr. Radhakrishnan, a former State vice president of the BJP, categorically denied any involvement in the scam and said the money will be repaid.

The scam relates to the alleged cheating of people by falsely promising scooters, laptops, and sewing machines at half price using CSR funds.

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Born in Britain, her fascination with India began through the diary of her maternal grandfather, who had served in the British Army. At the age of 27, she set out to explore the country's diversity - a journey that would shape her life and work. Her love for photography and writing eventually brought her to Thrissur, which she came to regard as a home rivaling her birthplace.

Through her lens, she captured some of the most evocative images of Kerala's cultural life and everyday rhythms. She is now a well-known figure in the local photography scene, having won several awards for her work. Her passion for Kerala's rich heritage and vibrant culture continues to inspire her to this day.

Ishwari's wish to acquire Indian citizenship has now received official recognition. She is now a full-fledged member of the Indian nation, a testament to the power of determination and the strength of human bonds. Her story is a reminder that no dream is too big, and no challenge is too great to overcome with the right attitude and support.

## BJP leader among four booked in CSR funds case

The Hindu Bureau  
KOCHI

The Kerala police have booked four people, including senior BJP leader A.N. Radhakrishnan, in connection with the CSR fund scam in which over 1,600 cases have already been registered in different parts of the State.

The latest case was registered on Thursday based on a complaint filed by a 50-year-old woman from Kunnumkara.

Apart from Mr. Radhakrishnan, Sumesh of Chennamanad, and Rupesh Menon and K.T. Bineesh, both from Vazhakala, have been named accused in the case. They have been charged with criminal breach of trust and cheating.

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## Distressing regularity

Illegal mining should become socially expensive and operationally prohibitive

The explosion in an illegal rat-hole mine in Meghalaya on February 5, killing at least 18 workers, is a grim reminder that court supervision cannot substitute governance. Illegal coal mining in India is a long-running problem, but the northeast, especially Meghalaya's coal belt, has a distinct ecosystem – of small privately or community-owned landholdings, thin coal seams, weak local enforcement, and supply chains – that can launder illegal coal into legitimate markets through intermediaries. Rat-hole mining is the norm (for illegal setups), and they are prone to collapsing because they lack engineered roofs and side-wall protections. The National Green Tribunal ordered its cessation in 2014, but illegal mines have continued due to a high local dependence on income from coal, fragmented ownership and contractorships that spread accountability and patronage. Operators of illegal mines also under-report accidents and keep workers off formal records; and while workers' deaths hit the headlines, injuries – due to polluted water, acid drains, unstable landscapes, and degraded roads – and child labour do not.

Illegal coal is currently not easy to separate from legacy or auctioned coal once it has entered the supply chain. But the expected cost of illegal extraction and transport needs to go up. Meghalaya already has a framework to prevent illegal mining, transport, and storage under the MMDR Act. Using technology to reduce the cost of detection, it should add mandatory GPS tracking for all coal carriers, invalidate consignments that deviate from a specific route, and integrate satellite and drone patrol data with control rooms. Illegal mining should also become socially expensive, perhaps through community monitoring, incentivised by sharing penalties with local bodies. Conversely, the State should pressure intermediaries with seizure, cancelled licences, prosecution, and blacklisting from auctions. Next, bans fail sans alternatives, so the State should displace illegal mining as an income source by setting up credit and market linkages for horticulture, construction, small manufacturing and tourism, and retrofitting public works to absorb mining labour. Finally, the State must dismantle incentives on the supply side; the February 5 blast shows that illegal mines continue to access an informal labour market. To this end, the State may allow workers to testify in exchange for amnesty, and aggressively pursue errant contractors. It should also subvert the administrative tolerance for such contractors by rotating postings in hotspot districts and independently auditing permits, among others. Treating rat-hole mining as an enforcement issue alone risks pushing the practice further underground.

## Cycles of revolt

Pakistan risks being in eternal conflict with the Baloch rebels

The coordinated attacks by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) across multiple districts underline a grim truth. Pakistan's largest province remains trapped in a deepening cycle of violence. According to Pakistani authorities, at least 30 civilians and 18 security personnel were killed in the January 31 attacks. In response, the Pakistani military reportedly killed at least 150 Baloch fighters. But such reprisals are unlikely to produce any lasting improvement in Balochistan's security situation. In March 2025, after Baloch militants hijacked the Jafar Express, Pakistan's largely reactive, and often disproportionate, military responses, have done little to break the cycle. On the other side, Baloch rebel groups, including the BLA, the Balochistan Liberation Front, and several smaller outfits, have established the Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar, a united front, for improved coordination. While militant violence against civilians is indefensible, the Pakistani state's long reliance on coercion has fuelled the very insurgency it seeks to crush. As security conditions along the country's tribal borderlands deteriorated in recent years, particularly after the Taliban captured power in Kabul, Baloch rebels and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan Islamists used the chaos to regroup themselves and intensify hit-and-retreat operations, leading to a rapid decline in internal security across provinces bordering Afghanistan.

Balochistan is Pakistan's most resource-rich province, with vast mineral reserves and a strategic Arabian Sea coastline. It has drawn growing international attention, especially as the \$60-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor passes through it. More recently, Pakistan has pitched mineral extraction deals to American companies. Baloch nationalists and militants argue that extraction and infrastructure projects proceed with little transparency, minimal local participation and limited economic benefit for local communities. Security crackdowns and counterinsurgency campaigns have worsened alienation. Human rights groups have repeatedly documented enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detentions. Equally troubling is Islamabad's reflexive tendency to blame India for unrest in Balochistan, without presenting verifiable evidence. This narrative may serve short-term political ends, but avoids the introspection required. Since its annexation in 1948, Balochistan has witnessed five major waves of rebellions. Each time, the Pakistani state relied on brute force to restore order, only for violence to return after only a fragile lull. If Pakistan is serious about peace and stability in the region, opting for political reconciliation, rather than confrontation, addressing long-standing Baloch grievances, including economic and political exclusion, and opening channels for dialogue, even with rebel groups, are essential steps. Otherwise, the country risks remaining locked in a perpetual conflict with its own people.

# 'Hop-on, hop-off' – the state of climate governance

The current architecture of global climate governance increasingly resembles a pair of 'hop-on, hop-off' buses. One has the CMP (the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol), and the other, the CMA (the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement), circling endlessly without real direction. There is no obligation to reach the stated destination.

In this vacuum, the politics of climate change has emerged as the undisputed winner. National interest overrides global urgency with predictable regularity. Consensus, once celebrated as a virtue, reflects the inability of the parties to agree on the rules of voting, thus ensuring a veto for each party, diplomatically disguised as cooperation. Ambition appears in preambles; hesitation dominates operative paragraphs. Alongside politics stands the economics of climate change, shaping its contours with even greater force.

### The common man is last

When governments hesitate, markets step in. Corporates, financiers and technology leaders thrive in the uncertainty that slows political action; short-term profits rarely, if ever, wait for long-term planetary consequences. The climate economy is driven not by precaution but by opportunism, because incentives reward the present. The future, after all, is not at the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, ordinary people lose, as they usually do. Their attention remains anchored to immediate needs: food, housing, health, employment. Climate change is a distant abstraction until it arrives as disaster, by which time they are victims, not stakeholders. And if citizens are not demanding climate action, politics need not respond, since risks outweigh benefits. For most people, climate change is neither daily nor urgent.

Scientists have long completed their part. The physics is established, the risks quantified, the future scenarios depicted, and uncertainties explained. What follows is not scientific uncertainty but the politics of science – uncertainty repurposed to justify delay, to diffuse responsibility, and to argue that the moment for decisive action is perpetually "not yet".

Politicians have also played their predictable role. The politics of climate change consists largely of managing expectations, avoiding costs, and postponing decisions. Governing the climate within political timeframes is an impossible equation.

Economics reinforces this short-termism. Proofs on the near horizon overwhelm moral arguments; growth imperatives overwhelm



**C.K. Mishra**  
is former Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India



**A.K. Mehta**  
is former Chief Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India

There is an illusion of progress in climate negotiations, with more process and less action

ecological restraint. Future generations are not market participants. Therefore, markets do not account for them.

The result is a system in which each sector moves according to its own logic: science pursues truth through evidence, politics pursues power, economics pursues profit, individuals pursue livelihood, and climate pursues aspiration. The system behaves exactly as designed – and, therefore, achieves exactly as predicted. Not surprisingly, every Conference of the Parties is described as a success, with virtually no climate action to follow, except those that assist in the concomitant pursuit of power and profit. We know the destination. But the path remains obscured by competing priorities and an unwillingness to bear cost. Thus Kyoto failed. Paris is failing. The desire for climate stability remains widespread, but the willingness to act remains selective.

### Drift, inadequacy, no driver

This is the structural condition of global climate governance today – not collapse, but drift; not absence, but inadequacy; not denial of the destination, but absence of a driver. COP30 only confirmed this. It delivered the "global mutirão" package, emphasising cooperation and togetherness to address climate change, but its measures remain largely voluntary, burying the basic spirit of common but differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing nations enshrined in the Convention. It failed to change much because it was never designed to. The promises were new; the politics remained the same.

It was advertised as the COP that would "keep 1.5°C alive", even though the world had already drifted far beyond its reach. No negotiator realistically expected a 1.5°C outcome; the political space for such ambition does not exist. According to the UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2024, global greenhouse gas emissions reached around 57.4 GtCO<sub>2</sub> in 2024, the highest in human history. At the current rate, the world is projected to cross 1.5°C in the early 2030s.

Countries were politely urged to be more ambitious, but no new obligations were created. Even the attempt to include clear fossil-fuel language failed. Finance followed the same rhythm. Parties expressed ambition to scale up climate finance, but the final text relied on voluntary measures and offered no binding timetable. Actual needs for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries exceed \$2.4 trillion-\$3 trillion per year, while current flows are under \$400 billion. What emerged instead was a document full of encouragement and intentions but empty of commitments. No country agreed who would pay, how much, or by when – much as it has always been.

Adaptation, the work of preparing societies for rising heat, floods, droughts, and storms, also stalled. Although leaders pledged to "triple" adaptation finance at COP30, the decision did not specify a baseline year or binding sources of funds, leaving the pledge effectively aspirational. Countries adopted a long list of indicators to measure progress, but the list was put together hastily, criticised for lack of clarity, and disconnected from any plan to provide the large sum adaptation requires.

If anything is clear after more than three decades of climate negotiations, it is that all countries need to prepare to adapt, since adaptation will have to be undertaken with or without a global agreement.

Loss and damage, the issue of helping countries hit hardest by climate disasters, made small steps. COP30 formally opened the new loss and damage fund to applications, yet the fund's capitalisation and initial disbursements remain small relative to projected needs, underscoring the gap between institutional creation and operational capacity.

Technology transfer – getting climate-friendly technologies to developing countries – again stayed more in concept than in action. New programmes were announced. New themes were added. But the financial support required to operationalise them did not follow.

Capacity building, especially the support poorer countries need to monitor and report their climate progress, also moved in circles. The just transition agenda, ensuring that climate action does not leave workers and vulnerable communities behind, produced strong statements. Rights were acknowledged, principles affirmed, and processes created. But none of it is binding, and none of it comes with resources. It recognises justice; it does not deliver it.

### A widening gap

Across all seven pillars, the pattern is unmistakable. COP30 produced more language, more platforms, more frameworks, more processes – but not more action. The gap between what the climate needs and what politics delivers remains as wide as ever.

Yet, for all its structural flaws, chronic inertia, and theatrical ambition, the UNFCCC and its COP process remain the only universally legitimate, near-universal-membership forum humanity possesses for coordinated climate action. Neither the G-7, the G-20, BRICS, nor any coalition of the willing has the mandate, inclusivity, or legal architecture to substitute for it. Abandoning it would leave even less hope than persisting with it. The problem is that while one can hop on and hop off the CMP and the CMA, one cannot hop off the planet.

# The India-EU trade deal is also a strategic turning point



**Constantino Xavier**  
is Senior Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

Last week, India and the European Union (EU) achieved what, until just a year or two ago, many observers considered impossible: meeting halfway to conclude a long-elusive trade agreement. Negotiated, stalled, revived and reimagined over a quarter of a century, the deal represents far more than a technical breakthrough on tariffs. It marks a strategic inflection point in what could become one of the most consequential partnerships to stabilise an international order that is marked by rapid, uncertain and conflictual transition.

**A meeting point with a risk-averse Brussels**  
The commercial breakthrough did not emerge from a vacuum. It is the result of two drivers – one political and the other geopolitical. First, in an example of how summit diplomacy does pay off, both sides have been engaging at the highest level for the last 10 years, beginning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Brussels in 2016.

The unprecedented frequency of meetings, which included the India-EU leaders' summit in 2021, allowed for a frank exchange of perspectives that built trust and enabled the pursuit of the highest-hanging fruit despite repeated failures since 2007. This mutual political trust mattered at home because it empowered the Indian and European leadership to invest significant personal and political capital to overcome a variety of internal obstacles and risks.

The Modi government worked with, rather than against or around, various domestic stakeholders and their protectionist impulses to explain why the EU offers a qualitatively different economic partner than next-door China. Previous trade deals with the United Kingdom or Australia helped create momentum, assess roadblocks and build industry support. And on the EU side, the tandem between the Commission and the Council laid clear political guidelines that pushed the otherwise risk-averse Brussels bureaucracy to move beyond rigid free trade agreement templates. With this political direction, negotiators finally found common ground.

The economic deal opens up avenues for India and the European Union (EU) to stabilise the international order

Second, and more importantly, this deal is driven by the urgency of responding to an international system that is shaking, if not collapsing. The agreement is the most tangible product of the extraordinary geopolitical churn unleashed by U.S. President Donald Trump's commercial offensives, but also the continued coercion and economic security threats posed by China and Russia.

### The larger picture

Driven by political and geopolitical factors, the resulting economic agreement is best understood not as the culmination of a mere trade negotiation but also as the foundation of a broader EU-India strategic realignment. But trade will not sustain this convergence. If the India-EU partnership remains confined to tariffs and market access, it risks becoming a tactical adjustment rather than a durable strategic shift.

To avoid this fate, New Delhi and Brussels must now move quickly to flesh out the other dimensions of their strategic partnership enunciated during last week's summit, most notably in defence and security, energy, technology and mobility.

In defence and security, the logic for deeper cooperation is increasingly compelling. India and the EU have a stake in ensuring maritime stability and freedom of navigation. There are growing opportunities for joint military exercises, information sharing, and the development of security capacity among Indo-Pacific states. The agreement reflects an interest in moving beyond ad hoc engagement toward institutionalised cooperation, coupling defence industrial interests with financing, trade and technology priorities.

Energy cooperation is equally critical. Europe's push for energy diversification and decarbonisation intersects with India's need for affordable, scalable, and sustainable energy solutions. Joint investment in green hydrogen, renewable technologies, and resilient energy infrastructure could anchor long-term interdependence while advancing shared climate goals.

Technology represents perhaps the most consequential frontier as global technology governance fragments along geopolitical lines. India and the EU have an opportunity to shape standards and norms that reflect values without stifling innovation. Cooperation on semiconductors, digital public infrastructure, artificial intelligence and data governance could reduce mutual vulnerabilities and enhance strategic autonomy on both sides.

Finally, the mobility of students, researchers and skilled workers will be essential to translating political alignment into societal and economic depth.

Addressing long-standing frictions over visas and professional recognition would not only strengthen people-to-people ties but also support innovation ecosystems across both partners.

Taken together, these sectors offer a path toward genuine India-European interdependence. Without such multi-sectoral investment, the current alignment risks remaining contingent on external pressures rather than internalised interests.

### Foundation to build on

India and the EU now have a rare opportunity to give practical meaning to their old mantra of multipolarity that dates back to the 2000s. In coordination with other middle powers, New Delhi and Brussels can help deliver growth and security that is rooted in openness, resilience and shared democratic values. This will have to be a partnership that delivers tangible public goods across the Indo-Pacific – to keep China in check – and across the Global South, which seeks reliable development partners.

In an era defined less by alliance blocs than by issue-based coalitions, the India-EU convergence – if sustained and deepened – may finally emerge as one of the pillars of a more stable international system.

The economic deal is a start. The strategic test now lies in what follows.

*The views expressed are personal*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### In Parliament

Whenever the Bharatiya Janata Party government is on a sticky wicket, it resorts to certain 'tactics'. This time it was the bogey of the Opposition 'planning to attack' the Prime Minister in Parliament ("Told PM to avoid LS as Cong. MPs planned an 'unexpected

act': Birla", February 6). As the Opposition was armed with important and issues to corner the government on – first, the revelations of a former Army Chief in his book on the India-China conflict of 2020, and second, the rights of India in the trade deal with the United States even at the

cost of India's long-standing relationship with Russia, and the welfare of Indian farmers and local manufacturers – the ruling party's game plan was quite evident. Can the Prime Minister miss a session in Parliament on an important occasion when the entire nation is

### under his command?

#### Tharcius S. Fernando,

Chennai

### The BJP in Tamil Nadu

The article, "Why the BJP struggles in Tamil Nadu (Opinion page – 'State of Play', February 4), was a neat prognosis of the failure of the Bharatiya Janata

### Party (BJP) in Tamil Nadu.

The observation that there

is a shift from the Bhakti

movement to the

self-respect movement

which has been

anti-Brahmanical and

hostile to Brahmin rituals

and Sanskrit modes of

### BJP is looked upon as an upper-caste party and cannot replace the Dravidian parties which stand by the oppressed.

#### N.G.R. Prasad,

Chennai

Letters emailed to

letters@thehindu.co.in

must carry the postal address

and the full name.

# GROUND ZERO



Yedapally police station head constable Mustaq Ahmed shows the place where Pandurag Baburao Kondamangale dropped his six-year-old daughter into the waters of the Nizam Sagar distributary canal at ARP camp in Nizamabad district. RAMAKRISHNA G.

## A panchayat dream, a daughter's murder

On January 29, a girl's body was found in the Nizam Sagar distributary canal in Telangana's Nizamabad. The police say the girl's father killed her, his firstborn, so that his wife could contest the panchayat election. Under Maharashtra's rules, candidates with more than two children cannot contest local elections. **Marri Ramu** travels to Nizamabad and Nanded to trace the sequence of the tragedy

**O**n the afternoon of January 29, Mustaq Ahmed, head constable of the Yedapally police station in Telangana's Nizamabad, and Mohan, a constable, were questioning residents about a land dispute, when they received a call informing them that a girl had been washed away in the Nizam Sagar distributary canal. The waterway ran just a stone's throw from the ARP camp in Yedapally mandal, off the Nizamabad-Bodhan National Highway 63.

Ahmed says they immediately kick-started their bike and set off. "When we reached the spot, we saw rescuers laying the body of the girl on the bund side," he recalls.

The girl, sporting a glittery bindi on her forehead, seemed to be about 5-6 years old. Barring a contusion on her forehead, she did not seem to have any other injuries. The policemen observed that unlike in most drowning incidents they had probed, the body showed no signs of bloating. "She had died just a few minutes earlier. We felt guilty that we could not save her," Ahmed says.

The duo made some quick inquiries. They found that an 18-year-old man, P. Pawan Kalyan, was standing near the small bridge over the canal and speaking to a friend on the phone when he noticed the girl being swept away in the canal.

"Kalyan said he shouted for help," Ahmed says. "Venkatesh, an auto driver who was nearby, rushed to the spot on hearing him yell. By then, the girl had apparently been swept further away."

Venkatesh did not give up. He rode his bike along the bund's mud road and, after nearly 300 metres, jumped into the canal's 3-foot-deep stream near a small gate. He caught the girl and pulled her out with the help of others. She was unresponsive and had no pulse.

### The girl with the bindi

The police began to make inquiries to identify the girl. They sent notices to all the police stations under the Nizamabad Police Commissionate to see if any complaints had been filed about missing girls, but none came up. They took the body to the Nizamabad Government Hospital. Then, they registered a case under Section 194 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which mandates that the police inquire and report on cases of suicide, homicide, or suspicious, unnatural deaths.

While checking with nearby police stations, the investigators also shared the girl's pictures and an audio message on WhatsApp groups, seeking help to establish her identity. Three days passed with no leads. The investigation seemed to have hit a dead end – until constable Sudheer received a call that provided crucial details.

Sudheer was the driver for the circle inspector, D. Vijay Babu, who was investigating the case. The caller, a close relative from Mukhed, a taluk headquarters in Nanded district, Maharashtra, contacted Sudheer claiming he knew the girl. He sent a photo, which showed a child who looked exactly like the one found in the canal, wearing the same clothes. The relative said the girl was from Mukhed, nearly 50 kilometres from Bodhan, and had been reported missing. He ad-

ded that villagers were worried and had been discussing her disappearance.

Every time I pass by this canal, the horrible image flashes in my mind. For me and others of the village who saw it, we just can't shake it off

P. VINOD KUMAR  
Complainant

The Bodhan police contacted the girl's family. A few village elders and members of the family, including the girl's mother Ankita, arrived in Bodhan and identified the body. The girl was Prachi, the older of the twin daughters of a hair salon owner, Pandurag Baburao Kondamangale. After forensic doctors performed an autopsy, which confirmed that she had died due to drowning, the police handed the body over to the family. As they prepared to return to Maharashtra, the Yedapally police began their work.

**Alone at a canal**  
Although the autopsy confirmed drowning as the cause of death, the police remained puzzled as to how the girl had ended up at the canal alone.

The ARP camp, often mistaken by many for a defence or research facility, is a cluster of three villages. These grew around the Nizam Sugar Factory, established decades ago to process locally grown sugarcane. With irrigation from the factory's canals, even remote areas are covered with lush green fields of paddy and other crops. The canal's side bunds – overgrown with bushes and flanked by sprawling paddy fields – conceal the water distributary that runs just a few feet away, parallel to the road. It was strange for a girl of her age to have just wandered off there.

"We believed that someone had taken her up to the canal. Whether she slipped into the water or was pushed was the question," says Bodhan Assistant Commissioner of Police, P. Srinivas.

The investigators began probing the case. When they found a lead, they brought Kondamangale to Bodhan. He said that his daughter had gone missing from January 29 and that he had approached the local police to trace her. Circle inspector Vijay quotes him saying, "We were hoping she would come home sooner or later."

Despite the incessant probing, Kondamangale stuck to his story. That is when, the inspector says, the police finally presented the lead they had – CCTV footage. The video showed Kondamangale riding his bike in Bodhan with his daughter Prachi sitting pillion. Realising that his

cover was blown, Kondamangale allegedly began to confess to his crime.

According to the investigators, Kondamangale left his salon with his daughter seated on the two-wheeler. Hours later, they reached the ARP camp. "He stopped at a secluded place. He carried the girl in his arms and walked towards the canal. He stood on the canal's edge and dropped her into the water," Vijay Babu says.

The police say they were horrified that Kondamangale had taken his own daughter's life. The motive, however, was so shocking that they could hardly believe it. "He said he or his wife wanted to contest the panchayat (local body) elections. But the two-child rule of the Maharashtra government was a stumbling block for them because they had three children: twin daughters and a 3-year-old son," says Nizamabad Police Commissioner, Sai Chaitanya.

The 2-child rule for panchayat elections was imposed by various State governments in the early 1990s, primarily as a population control measure. It was put in place to ensure accountability among local representatives.

"To reach his political ambition, Kondamangale decided to kill one of his children and chose Prachi," the Commissioner says. Although Kondamangale had allegedly admitted to the crime, investigators still had several loose ends to tie up. They began probing his background, starting from his village of Kerur, 8 km from Mukhed.

**Hungry for the post**  
Kerur's nearly 3,000 residents are solely dependent on agriculture. The village has narrow streets, lined mostly with thatched-roof houses and a few concrete ones, and is surrounded by vast tracts of dry land. Some streets are dirty with overflowing drainage water, while a few have tiled pathways. The villagers claim that their sarpanch, 36-year-old Ganesh Ramachandra Shinde, was doing his bit to develop the village.

Panchayat elections are scheduled to be held in the village in the next 6 months. While, according to a lottery system, Kerur was under the 'open category' 5 years ago, which means that the seat for the sarpanch is not reserved for any specific social category, this time it is reserved for persons from Other Backward Classes (women). Kondamangale, who runs the hair salon in a rented commercial complex on the main road, lives in a rented house in Baralinaka of Mukhed. Since his family belongs to the OBC category, his wife was eligible to contest for the sarpanch post.

The police are not sure how the salon owner suddenly decided to enter politics. "At some point, Kondamangale began aspiring for either himself or his wife to become the sarpanch. He confessed that the sitting sarpanch, Shinde, was ready to support him if he chose to contest this election," Vijay Babu says.

As per Kondamangale's admission before the police, Shinde used to keep dropping by his salon and sometimes his house. He encouraged Kondamangale to field his wife as a candidate. "The second accused, Shinde, said he would spend ₹15 lakh for this and would take care of any problems and asked the first accused, Kondamangale, not to reveal his name to anyone," states the remand report submitted to the local court. Bolstered by Shinde's support, Kondamangale felt he was inching closer to the seat of sarpanch. The only roadblock was the 2-child rule.

Vijay Babu says that initially, Kondamangale confessed he had considered giving up his 3-year-old son for adoption to one of his uncles. Since he had not obtained a birth certificate for the child, he thought this would allow him to bypass the two-child norm. But he dropped the idea, as hospital records listed his wife as the child's mother, which, he believed, could cause problems for their political ambitions.

"He admitted during the interrogation that he and his relative went to the Mukhed municipal office to verify if he could give his son up for adoption. They even went to Pune to seek clarifications on the matter. We are verifying his statements," says Vijay Babu. "Realising that the adoption plan was not the solution, he began ex-

ploring what other act could make him or his wife sarpanch and finally decided to kill one of his children." The police say that inquiries with Ankita and other family members suggested that Kondamangale was particularly fond of Prachi, and she of him, which makes the case all the more perplexing for them.

Prachi's twin sister, younger by just a few minutes, reportedly did not like sitting pillion on the bike. On January 29, the police say, Prachi did not go to school. When she arrived at the salon a little before noon, her father told her he would take her on a long ride and made her sit pillion on the bike. "He masked his face with a towel and left his mobile phone at the salon. This indicates that the murder was premeditated," Vijay Babu says.

Kondamangale started from Mukhed towards Bodhan. Entering the Yedapally area, he followed the Nizam Sagar distributary canal, stopped at an isolated point, and dropped her into the water. "While she was screaming 'Papa, Papa,' he did not look back. He returned to the main road and then proceeded towards Maharashtra," reads a sentence in the remand report.

He masked his face with a towel and left his mobile phone at the salon. This indicates that the murder was premeditated

VIJAY BABU  
Circle Inspector

When Ankita asked about the whereabouts of her child, Kondamangale apparently led her to believe that he had gone out on work and was not sure where she was. The couple approached the local police, requesting them to trace her.

The investigators believe that the accused deliberately did not lodge a formal complaint with the local police. "Had he done that, a case would have been registered and the police would have immediately found out about his ghastly act," says an investigator.

On February 2, the police revised the charges to Sections 140(I) (kidnapping), 103(I) (murder), and 238 (destruction of evidence, providing false information) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. They arrested the two accused and remanded them to judicial custody.

Ankita, her daughter, and son have shifted to their relative's house.

### Support for the sarpanch

In Kerur, Shinde enjoys a lot of support. Several villagers describe him as "innocent" and demand that he be set free immediately. When Yedapally sub-inspector, M. Rama, went to the village, the villagers gheraoed her, raising slogans that their sarpanch had been falsely implicated in the case.

"In the few years, our village, under the leadership of Shinde, has seen some progress. New drainage lines were laid. We are getting tiled internal roads," says Venkat Shinde, a resident.

Another resident of the village, Balaji, says, "We are not sure why Kondamangale killed his child. But we know that our sarpanch is not the type to abet a crime."

Rajesh of Kerur, who runs a bookstore at Mukhed, feels, "Our villagers were already teasing Pandurag by referring to him as sarpanch saab whenever they met him. May be that went to his head and he resorted to this extreme step of killing Prachi."

Some residents are upset that the case has tarnished the name of the village. Hanmant Baliram Shinde says, "This case is showing our entire village in poor light even though we did not do anything wrong."

For the ARP camp sarpanch, P. Vinod Kumar, the complainant in the case, Prachi's death is the most disturbing incident of his life. "Every time I pass by this canal, the horrible image flashes in my mind. For me and others of the village who saw it, we just can't shake it off," he says.

ramu.marri@thehindu.co.in



The house of the accused at Kerur village, Maharashtra. RAMAKRISHNA G.

**From Page One****India's oil imports from Russia hit 38-month low**

Overall, December 2025 saw India diversifying its oil imports in a dynamic manner, sourcing crude oil from 19 countries, up from 16 countries in December 2024. Among these 19 countries, 10 saw their shares in India's crude oil basket increasing, while nine saw their shares falling.

While Mr. Trump has claimed that India has agreed to stop buying Russian oil and will instead buy more American and Venezuelan oil, officials in the Indian government say that the economics of this decision does not yet make sense.

"The U.S. will export oil from the Gulf Coast, which is about 4.5 to five times farther via ship than Russia is from India," a senior government official told *The Hindu*. "The distance from Venezuela is the same. At the moment, India is getting a discount from Russia on the oil it sells. This, plus the lower shipping distance, means it is much cheaper to import from Russia than from the U.S. or Venezuela."

According to some industry estimates, the cost of shipping oil from Venezuela or the U.S. Gulf Coast could be as high as \$4.5 a barrel, compared to a maximum of \$1 a barrel from the West Asia.

Estimating the cost of transporting oil from Russia is difficult as different companies work out separate deals with non-sanctioned entities in Russia.

The data shows that Indian companies paid an average of \$506.7 per tonne for oil from the U.S., while they paid \$469.4 per tonne for oil from Russia in December 2025. India did not import Venezuelan oil in December 2025.

According to a rough analysis by the State Bank of India, if India were to entirely switch away from Russian oil and replace it with oil from Venezuela, this choice would be commercially viable if the Venezuelan crude is bought at a discount of \$10 to \$12 a barrel due to its sourness.

**Suicide blast at Shia mosque in Pak. kills 31**

No group immediately claimed responsibility, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said those behind the blast would be found and brought to justice.

The attack was the deadliest in the Pakistani capital since September 2008, when 60 people were killed in a suicide truck bomb blast that destroyed part of the five-star Marriott hotel.

Videos shared on social media showed several bodies lying near the mosque's front gate, with people and debris also strewn across the red-carpeted prayer hall.

**'A heinous crime'**

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar branded the attack "a heinous crime against humanity and a blatant violation of Islamic principles".

"Pakistan stands united against terrorism in all its forms," he said in a post on X.

The attack comes as Pakistan's security forces battle intensifying insurgencies in southern and northern provinces that border Afghanistan.

Pakistan is a Sunni-majority nation but Shias make up between 10 and 15% of the population and have been targeted in attacks throughout the region in the past.

Islamabad has said separatist armed groups in southern Balochistan, and the Pakistani Taliban and other Islamist militants in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, near Islamabad, have used Afghan territory as a safe haven from which to launch attacks.

Afghanistan's Taliban government has repeatedly denied Pakistan's accusations.

Bilateral relations have plummeted, with forces from both sides regularly clashing along the border.

**ED files chargesheet in R.G. Kar graft case**

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday filed a chargesheet in connection with allegations of corruption at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, naming former hospital principal Sandip Ghosh.

Iran's Ambassador to India, however, said that the government has not so far conveyed its plans for the future of the port, even as Opposition MP Manish Tewari accused the government of acting prematurely to "opt out" of the port deal.

The government's statement, that comes days after it ended its annual Budget allocation for Chabahar port, indicates it will be unable to manage the port unless the U.S. withdraws sanctions. Rather than risk

**\$120 mn committed to Chabahar port in Iran completely paid: Centre**

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

The government on Friday told Parliament that it has completely paid up its commitment of \$120 million for Chabahar port, well before the U.S. sanctions waiver runs out in April 2026.

After the rape and murder of a doctor inside the hospital premises in 2024, the ED began investigating alleged corruption at the institution. Mr. Ghosh, who is currently in judicial custody, was arrested for his role in the corruption.

The ED has filed a Prosecution Complaint against Mr. Ghosh and three other accused entities in a money laundering case under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

**Protests flare in Manipur over Kuki-Zo MLAs in govt.**

Effigies of legislators who have joined the new govt. burnt during a rally; people in Churachandpur district and Moreh town observe a 24-hour shutdown called by the Kuki Students' Organisation

**Rahul Karmakar**  
GUWAHATI

Kuki-Zo groups continued to protest for the second day on Friday in Manipur's hill districts against three Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators from the community who have joined the State's new government.

Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen, former Director-General of Police L. M. Khaute and Ngursanglur Sanate are facing a social boycott for joining the government headed by Yumnam Khemchand Singh. Protesters burnt their effigies at a public rally in Churachandpur. People across Churachandpur district and other Kuki-Zo areas, including Moreh town bordering Myanmar, observed a 24-hour shutdown called by the Kuki Students' Organisation.

Friday's peaceful shutdown followed a dawn-to-dusk bandh enforced by seven organisations on Thursday, which was marked by violence and arson. The Kuki-Zo Council lauded the people for participating in the rallies.

"The overwhelming participation of the people



**Fiery dissent:** The Kuki Women's Human Rights Organisation holds a protest against the participation of Kuki-Zo MLAs in the formation of the Manipur government, in Churachandpur on Friday. ANI VIDEO GRAB

reflects the deep anguish, anger, and collective rejection of the actions of those Kuki-Zo MLAs who have chosen to join the formation of the Manipur government, in complete disregard of the people's sentiments, collective resolutions, and the immense suffering endured by our community," the organisation said in a statement.

In Churachandpur district's B. Vengnom village, locals felicitated four other Kuki-Zo MLAs for not "betraying" the community by joining the State government. Manipur has 10 Ku-

ki-Zo MLAs, seven of them belonging to the BJP.

A majority of the Kuki-Zos want the MLAs from the community not to join the Manipur government unless the Centre accedes to their demand of creating a Union Territory-like separate administration.

**Warning against harm**  
As the shutdown hit normal life in other Kuki-Zo areas, the Indigenous Tribes Advocacy Committee (ITAC) of Pherzawl and Jiribam districts issued a warning against any attempt to intimidate or

cause harm to Mr. Sanate, the MLA representing the Tipaimukh constituency.

"Ngursanglur Sanate is the legitimate and constitutional representative of the ITAC jurisdictional area... Any attempt to demean, intimidate, threaten or cause harm to Ngursanglur Sanate in any manner, as well as vandalism, destruction, or stealing and robbing of his properties, shall be viewed as deliberately disrespecting the collective stand of the tribal populace of Pherzawl and Jiribam areas," the organisation said in a statement.

**AAP leader shot dead; Opposition slams Punjab govt.**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHANDIGARH

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Satwinderpal Singh alias Lucky Oberoi was allegedly shot dead by two unidentified assailants in Punjab's Jalandhar on Friday, even as the Opposition parties took a dig at the AAP government over the poor law and order situation in the State.

The police said the incident took place around 8 a.m. when two unidentified assailants on a scooter opened fire at 43-year-old Lucky outside Gurudwara Singh Sabha in the Model Town area. He was leaving after offering prayers at the gurdwara.

Lucky, who was in charge of a ward in Jalandhar Cantonment, was in a special utility vehicle when the assailants opened fire at him.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Investigation), Jalandhar, Manpreet Singh said "The incident occurred around 8 a.m. Lucky was on his way after offering prayers at the gurdwara when two unidentified assailants shot at him. He was taken to a hospital in an unconscious state.

A doctor at the private hospital where Lucky was admitted told the presspersons that an examination



Lucky Oberoi revealed he had been fired upon 8-9 times.

Punjab Director-General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav visited Jalandhar and held a high-level meeting with senior police officers to review the investigation.

Taking a dig at the government, State Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa of the Congress said: "Law and order in Punjab has collapsed under Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's watch. The shocking daylight murder of AAP leader Lucky Oberoi outside a gurdwara in Jalandhar exposes the grim reality: if even ruling party leaders are not safe, what hope remains for ordinary citizens?"

"Punjab today is gripped by fear, gang violence, and administrative paralysis while the AAP government remains busy with PR and excuses. The Chief Minister must answer: who is responsible for this complete breakdown?" he said.



**Kunal Kamra moves High Court against Sahyog portal**

**Vinaya Deshpande Pandit**  
MUMBAI

Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra has moved the Bombay High Court challenging the validity of the government's 'Sahyog' portal which enables the blocking of content posted on social media. He has called it an "unconstitutional and unreasonable" assault on the freedom of speech.

The petition, filed by Mr. Kamra earlier this week, has challenged some of the IT Rules amended in October 2025. "Rule 30(d) of the IT Rules and the Sahyog Portal are also *ex facie* unconstitutional, as they enable the blocking or take-down of information on Internet platforms on wholly vague grounds," the petition, accessed by *The Hindu*, stated.

The Sahyog portal is a centralised online platform used to automate and streamline the issuance of, and compliance with, content take-down notices for "unlawful online content". It was launched in 2024.

"The continued functioning of this portal has a profound and deeply prejudicial impact on the exercise of key fundamental rights of citizens of India. It affects both the ability of the citizens to talk freely and express themselves, and also affects the free flow of information in our democracy," the petition has stated.

Mr. Kamra has sought the suspension of Sahyog portal till the hearing of the petition.

**ED files chargesheet in R.G. Kar graft case**

**Shiv Sahay Singh**  
KOLKATA

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday filed a chargesheet in connection with allegations of corruption at R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, naming former hospital principal Sandip Ghosh.

Iran's Ambassador to India, however, said that the government has not so far conveyed its plans for the future of the port, even as Opposition MP Manish Tewari accused the government of acting prematurely to "opt out" of the port deal.

The government's statement, that comes days after it ended its annual Budget allocation for Chabahar port, indicates it will be unable to manage the port unless the U.S. withdraws sanctions. Rather than risk



The government's statement indicates it will be unable to manage Chabahar port unless the U.S. withdraws sanctions. GETTY IMAGES

a drawn-out process later, the government appears to have disbursed its total standing commitment, made in a 10-year MoU with Iran, signed in May 2024.

"India has fulfilled its commitment of contributing \$120 million for the procurement of port equipment," the Ministry of External Affairs said in

its response to a query in the Lok Sabha.

"Pursuant to discussions with the U.S. side, the [U.S.] issued guidance extending the conditional sanctions waiver until 26 April 2026. The Government of India remains engaged with all concerned in order to address the implications of these developments," the MEA said.

**SC rejects Jan Suraaj's petition challenging Bihar Assembly polls**

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday chastised former poll strategist Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraaj Party, which sought the setting aside of the 2025 Bihar Assembly elections, that political parties cannot use the judicial platform as an avenue to gain popularity after failing defeat at the ballot box.

The party has accused the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar of splurging ₹15,600 crore as "dole" in violation of the Model Code of Conduct, creating a serious dent in the coffers of a State whose finances are already tight.

"How many votes did your political party get in the election? People reject you, and now you use the judicial platform to get

popularity," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, addressed senior advocate C.U. Singh, for Jan Suraaj Party. The petitioner-party alleged corruption on the part of the State government for transferring ₹10,000 each to women under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana immediately after the announcement of the 2025 Assembly poll schedule.

Chief Justice Kant said the Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar of splurging ₹15,600 crore as "dole" in violation of the Model Code of Conduct, creating a serious dent in the coffers of a State whose finances are already tight.

The court allowed the party to withdraw the plea and gave it liberty to approach the Patna High Court, saying the issue pertained to only one State.

M CH-CHE



Opposition members protest in the Well as Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla conducts proceedings on Friday. SANSAD TV

## Cannot run such a House, says Birla as protests continue

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha failed to function on Friday as the Opposition kept up its protests on the Indo-U.S. trade deal and over excerpts from an unpublished book by former Army chief General M.M. Naravane (retd) on the 2020 face-off with China.

The House proceedings were adjourned first till noon and then for the day as the Opposition protests continued unabated.

It was the second day when the House could not take up a discussion on the Union Budget presented on February 1.

As soon as the House convened for the day, many Opposition members trooped into the Well,

shouting slogans and displaying placards.

Speaker Om Birla commented that he cannot run "such a House". Stating that 19 hours and 13 minutes had been wasted due to disruptions in the current session, he said members were disrespecting the House. He said many MPs had questions lined up.

With the Opposition unrelenting, Mr. Birla then adjourned the House till noon.

When the House met again, senior MP Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the chair, urged the Opposition members to take their seats and put down placards. As Opposition members refused to relent, he adjourned the House till Monday.

## CPI(M) leader moves Right to Disconnect Bill in Rajya Sabha

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

In a bid to address the worsening work-life balance and rising mental health concerns, CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member A.A. Rahim on Friday introduced the Right to Disconnect Bill, which seeks to guarantee employees the right to disengage from work-related communication outside of fixed working hours.

Post-lunch sessions in both Houses of Parliament are reserved for Private Member's Bills.

Mr. Rahim said the Bill arose from a long-standing demand to curb the "always-on" digital work culture that has taken a toll on India's youth. Work-related emails, messages, and calls increasingly spill far beyond office hours, intruding into weekends, public holidays, and even sanctioned leave.

"Young professionals,



A.A. Rahim

— such as disciplinary action, poor performance appraisals, or denial of career opportunities — for exercising this right.

In 2017, the French parliament enacted a similar law requiring companies with over 50 employees to negotiate policies enabling workers to ignore digital communication after hours.

Mr. Rahim's Bill places statutory obligations on employers. Companies would be required to draft and implement a comprehensive Right to Disconnect policy in consultation with employee representatives or recognised trade unions. Such a policy would define working hours, permissible after-hours communication, emergency protocols, grievance redress mechanisms, and measures to promote digital wellness and mental health in the workplace.

particularly those in the IT, platform, and service sectors, have been disproportionately affected, facing constant pressure to remain available in the absence of clear legal protections," he said.

The Bill seeks to formally recognise employees' right to personal time, mental rest, and recuperation. It proposes that workers should not be obliged to respond to work-related communication after office hours and should not face any adverse consequences

## Modi signed a 'trap deal' on U.S. pressure: Congress

Kharge says PM surrendered before Trump because of Epstein files, sacrificed India's farmers, and has no courage to face Opposition queries; MPs say govt. failed to share details of trade agreement

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Protesting against the Narendra Modi government for not sharing details of the India-U.S. trade deal, the Congress on Friday brought a poster that read "Trap Deal", to the main entrance of the Parliament complex.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge later attacked the government over the trade deal, saying U.S. President Donald Trump pressured Mr. Modi into signing it because of the Epstein files [documents pertaining to late U.S. financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein].

"The truth is that over the past few days, Narendra Modi has been troubled because matters related to him have come up in the Epstein files. After that, Narendra Modi surrendered before Trump and struck a trade deal. He sacrificed the country's farmers. Modi is making our people poor and making America's farmers rich," Mr. Kharge told reporters while reacting to the Prime Minister's reply to the Motion of Thanks to the Presi-



Demanding answers: Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi, suspended Lok Sabha MPs Hibi Eden, Dean Kuriakose, Manickam Tagore, and other Opposition MPs protest on Parliament premises on Friday. ANI

dent's Address. On Thursday, Mr. Modi replied to the Motion of Thanks in the Rajya Sabha in which he mounted a scathing attack on the Congress. However, he skipped the customary reply to the Motion of Thanks in the Lower House because of repeated disruptions by the Opposition members.

The Congress chief said Mr. Modi did not have the courage to answer the questions posed to him. The government did not want to run the House in a democratic manner, Mr. Kharge said.

In the Lok Sabha as protests continued over various issues, MPs from the Congress and some other Opposition parties staged a protest at the main entrance to the Parliament House complex over the trade agreement with the U.S., the controversy surrounding former Army chief General M.M. Naravane's unpublished memoir and the suspension of eight MPs.

As soon as the Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 11 a.m. on Monday, the Opposition MPs gathered near the Makar Dwar of Parliament and raised slogans.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the MPs suspended for the remainder of the current Budget session of Parliament, and several other members participated in the protest.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi took a swipe at Mr. Modi by raising the slogan and telling reporters, "jo uchit samjhoo woh karo [do whatever you deem appropriate]". The reference is from General Naravane's memoir.



K. Vanlalvena

A Mizoram National Front (MNF) member in the Rajya Sabha said on Friday that he had not been allowed for the past week to raise an alleged corruption worth ₹187.90 crore in the procurement of private land for defence purposes near the Lengpui airport in Mizoram.

## Mizoram MP says not allowed to raise defence land scam

**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

A Mizoram National Front (MNF) member in the Rajya Sabha said on Friday that he had not been allowed for the past week to raise an alleged corruption worth ₹187.90 crore in the procurement of private land for defence purposes near the Lengpui airport in Mizoram.

K. Vanlalvena, Mizoram's lone representative in the Upper House, told *The Hindu* that since the beginning of the Budget Session, he had been submitting Zero Hour notices to the Rajya Sabha Chairman seeking to raise the issue, but they had not been admitted.

He stated that he had written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and that his party had also filed a criminal complaint with the Chief Vigilance Officer of the Government of Mizoram, demanding a probe by the Central investigating agencies.

Detailing the allegations, the MP said private land near Lengpui Airport and Siphrir village near Aizawl had been acquired by the State government for installation of air defence systems by the Indian Air Force (IAF) at "exorbitant

rates", in violation of the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

In his letter to Mr. Shah, the MP alleged that key safeguards under the act — including publication of acquisition notifications in local newspapers, consultation with village councils, and conduct of social impact assessment studies — were bypassed. "As a result, public money amounting to over ₹187.90 crore appears to have been laundered through questionable intermediaries..." he said in the letter. "Accountability must be ensured, and those responsible for this gross violation of law and trust must be brought to justice," he added.

## EC directives ignored, disabled people made to wait in queue for SIR hearings in Bengal

**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**

NEW DELHI

Thirty-nine-year-old Arpita Banerjee, a resident of Barranagar in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, has been battling multiple health problems since childhood, exacerbated by neurological disorders.

Born in November 1987, Ms. Banerjee had been on the earlier 2025 voter list and was included in the post-special intensive revision (SIR) draft electoral rolls published in December last year. Soon after, however, she received a notice to attend a hearing over a "logical discrepancy" arising from a mismatch in the spelling of the surname "Banerjee" in her and her father's records.

Her 76-year-old father, a small-time businessman, accompanied her to the hearing, where they had to wait for a good three hours



An elderly person being assisted as he arrives at a centre to attend hearing under the SIR exercise in West Bengal. PTI

before officials clicked her photograph and accepted her disability certificate as documentary evidence, as mandated under the SIR rules. The experience, however, has left her traumatised.

Similar difficulties have been reported by other voters with disabilities. Lokman Sheikh, a person with visual disability from Raghunathganj Assembly Con-

stituency under Murshidabad district, had to wait in the queue during his hearing, with no separate facility for people like him.

According to Election Commission data, West Bengal had 5,07,089 registered voters with disabilities in the 2024 electoral rolls used for the Lok Sabha election.

The EC provides a home voting facility for voters with disabilities.

During the SIR in West Bengal, the EC issued directives on January 7, exempting certain categories of voters, including persons with disabilities, from physical hearings. The directive stated that disabled electors who submit specific requests to the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) or Assistant EROs, either directly or through family members, may not be called for hearings. If notices had already been issued, officials were instructed to contact such voters by phone and conduct verification at their homes.

However, activists say the situation on the ground is starkly different, largely due to the short notice period. "Most voters are being asked to appear within two days or even the very next day. As people are already anxious and under great stress, they are not

taking any chances and are rushing for hearings despite great hardships," said Shampa Sengupta, a Kolkata-based disability rights activist.

A senior EC official from West Bengal told *The Hindu* that it was the responsibility of booth-level officers (BLOs) to process and facilitate exemption requests, as they are local residents familiar with families in the area.

V. Muralidharan, general secretary of the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD), said, "While the EC has robustly implemented home voting for elderly and disabled voters during elections, the same groups face unnecessary harassment during voter roll revisions".

"Many disabled persons have complained of being humiliated and treated in an undignified manner..." he said.

## Kashmir will become a part of Pakistan, says Shehzad Sharif in PoK

**Press Trust of India**

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's civilian and military leadership on Thursday reaffirmed their "unwavering support" for the Kashmiri people, as rallies and demonstrations were held across the country to show solidarity with them.

"The solution to the Jammu-Kashmir dispute is to honour the wishes of the people of Kashmir and the implementation of the UNSC's resolutions," Prime Minister Shehzad Sharif told Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's (PoK) Assembly in Muzaffarabad as the country observed the "Kashmir Solidarity Day".

Mr. Shehzad said that he had come to stand in solidarity with "our brothers

India has repeatedly that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh shall remain integral parts of the country

in Kashmir on behalf of the Pakistani people and the Pakistani leadership".

"Kashmir will become a part of Pakistan," he said.

India has repeatedly told Pakistan that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "was, is and shall forever" remain an integral part of the country.

Mr. Shehzad claimed that the Kashmir issue was diplomatically "reigned with full force" in the wake of the four-day India-Pakistan conflict in May 2025.

## Kerala MP moves private Bill to hold Census every 10 years

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI



Haris Beeran

exercise will now start on April 1 and conclude in February 2027, a delay of six years from the regular schedule.

The Amendment Bill said that a "periodical census is a legal imperative for the reason that constitutionally-mandated policies of social justice, which include reservations in electoral constituencies, education and public employments, cannot be pursued effectively without correct population data, particularly caste-wise data". It added that detailed caste-wise data is necessary to avoid and correct wrongful inclusions of undeserving castes and exclusions of deserving castes, and to guard against a few dominant castes in a reserved category crowding out others.

Neither the Constitution nor the Census Act, 1948 as it stands today mandates a census to be

## U.P. Police lodge FIR against filmmakers after title controversy

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

cently went viral on social media.

The case names the OTT platform and the film's makers for allegedly attempting to spread social discord and disturb public peace and law and order.

The controversy erupted after a teaser of the film, starring Manoj Bajpayee as a corrupt police officer, was unveiled earlier this week at a Netflix event in Mumbai announcing upcoming titles.

Various groups objected to the pairing of the words "Pandar" (Pandit) with "Ghooskhor" (bribe-taker), calling it derogatory and offensive.

The issue snowballed amid allegations of bias against Brahmins in the State.

## U.P. SIR gets extension, final list to be out in April

**Mayank Kumar**

LUCKNOW

The Election Commission of India (EC) on Friday extended for the fourth time the deadline for the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh.

The extension was given following a request by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa, the poll body said.

Mr. Rinwa said claims and objections can now be filed until March 6.

Notices can now be issued to electors till March 27, and the final publication date of electoral rolls is April 10.

Out of the 15.44 crore voters in the previous list, 12.55 crore names were retained in the draft list.

M CH-CHE

## IN BRIEF



## Supreme Court allows minor to end 30-week pregnancy

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed the medical termination of a 30-week-old pregnancy of a minor while noting that a person cannot be compelled to carry her pregnancy to its full term. "What has to be considered in the instant case is the right of the minor child to continue a pregnancy which is *ex facie* illegitimate in as much as she is a minor and has to face this unfortunate situation...of having the pregnancy owing to a relationship that she had," a Bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan remarked in court. The court highlighted the right to reproductive autonomy of a woman.

## Maoist leader, six others killed in Gadchiroli operations

Top Maoist leader Prabhakar and six cadres were killed in the Abujmud region of Gadchiroli in Maharashtra in anti-Maoist operations over the past three days, the police said on Friday. Three women cadres are among the deceased. One police jawan died in the operation, while another was injured. Prabhakar, alias Loketi Chandar Rao, carried a reward of ₹25 lakh on his head. The police have so far recovered three AK-47 rifles, one SLR, and one .303 rifle from the location. The identities of other Maoists have not yet been ascertained. The deceased jawan, Deepak Chenna Madavi (38), hailed from Mandra in Aheri tehsil of the district.

14-year-old gang-raped in M.P., four arrested

## The Hindu Bureau

BHOPAL

A 14-year-old girl who was returning from school was allegedly abducted and raped by four men in the Mauganj district of Madhya Pradesh, the police said on Friday. All the four accused have been arrested.

According to the police, the incident occurred on Thursday afternoon when the girl, a resident of a village near Mauganj city and a Class 8 student, was returning with her friend.

The 24-year-old prime accused, who was the girl's former senior and known to her, offered them a ride, Mauganj Superintendent of Police Dilip Soni said. "He dropped the friend midway and took the girl to a nearby area and called three of his friends," he said. The men raped her and abandoned her there, the police said.

## Home Minister calls for hi-tech solutions to secure J&amp;K border amid UAV threat

## Peerzada Ashiq



Amit Shah inspects drones at a border outpost area in Jammu on Friday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah toured several border outposts in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday and underlined the need for "advanced technological solutions" to new challenges posed by the adversary.

The International Border (IB) has reportedly seen an increase in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) activity,

which are apparently being used to drop weapons on the Indian side.

Mr. Shah addressed Border Security Force (BSF) personnel manning forward posts along the IB in Kathua, Jammu and stressed "constant vigilance by personnel deployed on the frontlines" and the "introduction of modern tools to strengthen border security".

"Emerging challenges

Jammu region has also witnessed five encounters between security forces and terrorists this year. The firefights left one soldier and three terrorists dead.

Mr. Shah also lauded the role of the armed forces during Operation Sindoora in May last year. He said the Jammu frontier destroyed 118 enemy posts and three terror launch pads across the border. "The government and the BSF both share the common objective of keeping the borders secure. Your dedication to remaining constantly vigilant on the frontlines is extremely important," Mr. Shah said.

"Whether it is the Rann of Kutch, the deserts of Rajasthan, or Jammu and Kashmir, I always return after learning from all of you (security personnel) a true sense of dedication to duty," the Minister said.

**Several UAV sightings**  
More than half a dozen sightings of UAVs have been reported by security agencies in the Jammu region so far this year. The

## Centre lays down eligibility criteria for 'deep tech' start-ups in country

## Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI



To be counted as a deep tech start-up, companies must apply to the DPIIT for certificate.

The Centre has provided an official definition of what constitutes a "deep tech" start-up in India.

A buzzword until now, the "deep-tech" start-up, according to a gazette notification by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

made public on Thursday, is one that is primarily concerned with producing a solution based on new knowledge/advancements in a scientific or engineering discipline.

## What should it do?

It must spend most of its money on research and development (R&D) activities; owns or is in the process of creating significant novel intellectual property (IP) and taking steps to commercialise the same; faces extended development timelines, long gestation periods, high capital

such companies have and the time it takes to come to fruition.

To be counted as a deep tech start-up, companies must apply to the DPIIT for a certificate.

The DPIIT is the final authority that determines whether a company qualifies as a startup or a deep tech startup. It will decide this based on "guidance" from an Inter-Ministerial Board of Certification, which includes a Joint Secretary, DPIIT (Convenor); a representative from the Department of Science and Technology (DST); a representative from the Department of Biotechnology, according to the notification.

The notification also prohibits a defined start-up from investing in activities that are not directly connected to its core mandate of working and creating new knowledge – for instance investing in real estate or "speculative assets", or shares, and

securities – unless they are core to the company's knowledge production.

These definitions are important given the Centre's thrust on technology-driven start-ups. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation is the custodian of the ₹1 lakh crore Research and Development Innovation (RDI) Fund that is expected to invest in emerging technology and fund research over seven years. A part of these investments will go to deep tech start-ups.

Earlier this week, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh said companies with RDI funds could get financing at concessional rates of around 2%-4% with tenures up to 15 years.

The Principal Scientific Adviser's office prepared a deep tech policy in July 2023, though this has yet to be approved by the Union Cabinet.

## FAITH

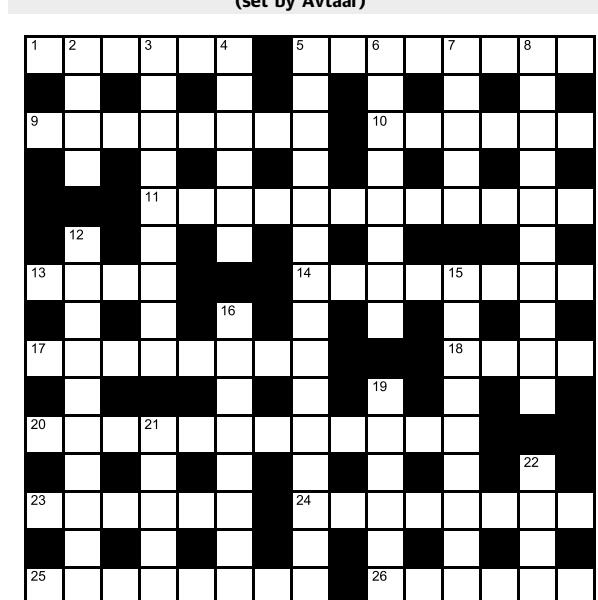
## The tree of dharma

The Mahabharata has 18 parvas. The Kurukshetra war took place for 18 days and the Bhagavad Gita has 18 chapters, pointed out Thenthirupparai Aravindalochanan in a discourse. The Mahabharata epic itself may be seen as a tree. It is as if dharma itself took the form of a tree. The seed of this tree is the Anukramanika parva. The roots of this tree are the Pauloma parva and the Asthika parva. The trunk of the tree is the Sambhava parva. The Sabha parva is symbolic of the birds that nest in a tree. The Bhishma parva and the Vana parva are the branches of this tree. The Drona parva represents the leaves and the Karna parva represents the flowers. The Virata parva and the Udyoga parva are the sap of the tree.

The Salya parva is the fragrance of the flowers that blossom on this tree. The Stri parva is the tip of the branches. The Shanti parva is equivalent to the fruits of this tree of dharma, because the purpose of studying the Mahabharata is to attain *shanti* (peace of mind). The Asvamedha parva is representative of the juice of the fruits. The Ashrama vasa parva is the food of the birds. The Mausala parva is the sound made by the birds in the tree. Those who explain the meaning of the Mahabharata, those who listen to such explanations, and those who adhere to dharma – these people are the protectors of this tree. The 18 parvas of the Mahabharata track the entire story of the Pandavas and their rivals, the Kauravas, from the early years, the treachery of Duryodhana, the exile of the Pandavas, the Kurukshetra war, Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna through the Gita and Bhishma's teachings through the Vishnu Sahasranama.

## TH CROSSWORD

14711



- 1 Retired officer about to be welcomed into fair on the hour (6)
- 5 Women's trophy losing base - broken by kid in flannels (8)
- 9 Swine's struggle to restrain one bold mongrel (4,4)
- 10 Stretch out after cycling, play to get silver (6)
- 11 Doctor brings soulless classical fiddlers near the beach (7-5)
- 13 Cover over pool (4)
- 14 Yankee firm cornered by famous Confederate soldier (4-4)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at <https://thehindu.com/crosswords>



## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

PLATE GLASS HERB  
ELLAH XER  
EXTRACTION THEA  
KOSMETIC  
STAR SPANGLED  
RADICAL TSHIRTS  
EIB EAT  
AVOCADO MILITIA  
KPNNAQOEPE  
BOARDMEETING  
RTSAGL  
ECHO TENDERLOIN  
AILOUS  
DUCT EFFRONTERY

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

## RBI plans ₹25,000 compensation for cyberfraud victims

## Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI



Sanjay Malhotra

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to introduce a framework to compensate victims of online frauds up to ₹25,000 for losses incurred in small-value fraudulent transactions. The draft guidelines will be issued soon.

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## IN BRIEF

**RBI raises loan limits for small businesses, backs REIT loans**

India's central bank announced steps to boost credit to small businesses and real estate sector to improve access to formal financing and strengthen last-mile lending, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said in his policy address. The Reserve Bank of India proposed doubling the limit on collateral-free loans for small enterprises to ₹2 million from ₹1 million. It also said banks would be allowed to lend to real estate investment trusts, subject to prudential safeguards. REUTERS

**MRF net profit surges over twofold to ₹692 crore in Q3**

Tyre maker MRF on Friday posted a twofold jump in its consolidated net profit to ₹692 crore for the third quarter ended December riding on the back of robust sales to companies and replacement sales. The company had reported a net profit of ₹315 crore for the October-December quarter of the last fiscal. Its revenue from operations increased to ₹8,050 crore in the period under review against ₹7,001 crore in the year-ago period, MRF Ltd. said in a filing. PTI

**Bajaj Life eyes pension fund manager, GIFT City licences**

Bajaj Life Insurance will seek regulatory approvals to offer Pension Fund Management services for NPS subscribers as well as establish an insurance office in the International Financial Services Centre, GIFT City, Gandhinagar. The expansion is to enhance the ability to offer comprehensive financial solutions, specifically focusing on bridging the retirement gap in India and providing insurance avenues for the global Indian, Bajaj Life Insurance said.

**Nifty50 recovers 3.45% post domestic, global events**

**Ashokamithran T.**  
MUMBAI

India's benchmark Nifty 50 rose 3.45% in the past week, closing the day at 25,693.7 points on Friday, as markets calmed down from sudden surprises like the STT hike, the U.S.-India trade deal and the Anthropic-led AI scare.

The index opened at 25,333.75 points on February 1, 2026 and dropped to 24,571.75 points, the week's low, on the very day before closing slightly up at 24,825.45 points. Following this, the index moved to the week's high of 26,341.2 points on February 3 as clarity regarding the U.S. tariffs emerged.

The optimism lasted little time as trade deal details were awaited. The next day, Anthropic's new legal tool feature on Claude AI chatbot spooked U.S. IT stocks such as Alphabet Inc. and Microsoft spurring a sell-off in Indian IT stocks, with the Nifty IT index dipping more than 5% in a single session.



Nifty IT index dipped more than 5% in a single session.

**PFC, REC boards approve merger**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MUMBAI

Mahindra Group has announced plans to establish its 'largest' integrated manufacturing facility for automobiles and tractors in

**RBI holds policy rate, FY26 inflation outlook seen at 2.1%**

Policy rate to remain low for a long time; macroeconomic fundamentals, including external sector, are very strong, says Gov. Malhotra; real GDP growth projections for Q1FY27, Q2 revised upwards



**Banking on positivity:** 'RBI will remain proactive in liquidity management and ensure liquidity in the banking system.' REUTERS

upward revision in the inflation outlook is primarily due to an increase in prices of precious metals, which contribute about 60-70 basis points. The underlying inflation continues to be low," he said.

"On growth front, economic activity remains resilient. The growth outlook remains favourable. The MPC is of the view the current policy rate is appropriate. Going forward, the MPC will be guided by the evolving macroeconomic

conditions and the outlook based on data from the new series in charting the future course of monetary policy," he added.

Taking various factors into consideration, real GDP growth projections for Q1FY27 and Q2 are revised upwards to 6.9% and 7%, respectively. The risks are evenly balanced. "We are deferring the projections for the full year to the April policy as the new GDP series will be released later in the month," he

said.

Stating core inflation, barring potential volatility induced by prices of precious metals, is expected to be range-bound, he said geopolitical uncertainty coupled with volatility in energy prices and adverse weather events pose upside risks to inflation.

But the confluence of escalating geopolitical frictions and rising trade tensions is unravelling the existing world economic order, he said.

He said, going forward, the RBI will remain proactive in liquidity management and ensure sufficient liquidity in the banking system to meet the productive needs of the economy and facilitate monetary policy transmission.

"Liquidity management would be pre-emptive with sufficient allowance for unanticipated fluctuations in government balances, and forex intervention."

**MARKETS****MARKET WATCH**

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	83,500	0.32
US Dollar	90.65	-0.34
Brent oil	68.43	1.47

**NIFTY 50**

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2226.40	-10.20
Adani Ports	1550.70	-19.50
Apollo Hosp	7152.50	-30.50
Asian Paints	2401.10	-31.00
Axis Bank	1341.60	-11.00
Bajaj Auto	9518.50	-128.50
Bajaj Finance	981.70	-16.95
Bharat Elec	429.65	-3.25
Bharti Airtel	2038.40	-46.00
Cipla	1330.00	-3.30
Coal India	432.80	0.95
Dr Reddy's Lab	1241.20	-3.70
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	DE*
Eicher Motors	7177.50	-32.00
Etihad Ltd.	283.55	-3.30
Grasim Ind	2836.90	-27.00
HCL Tech	1593.70	-16.30
HDFC Bank	941.10	-8.60
ICICI Life	703.50	-17.20
Hindalco	942.55	-7.10
Hind Unilever	2424.20	-69.80
ICICI Bank	1406.10	-9.60
IntGlobeAvi	4909.40	-22.80
Infosys	1507.10	-13.10
ITC	325.80	15.60
Jio Financial Servic- es Ltd.	268.10	-1.85
JSW Steel	1236.20	-3.60
Kotak Bank	422.35	-13.60
L&T	4068.10	-4.80
M&M	3578.00	6.00
Maruti Suzuki	1499.00	-62.00
Max Healthcare	1039.85	-0.95
NestleIndia	1203.30	-0.20
ONGC	365.05	-1.95
PowerGrid Corp	292.75	-3.40
Reliance Ind	1450.80	-7.40
SBI Life	1996.70	-21.10
State Bank	1066.40	-7.10
Shriram Finance	1002.50	10.50
Sun Pharma	1695.10	-7.50
TataConsumerPro- duct	1159.30	3.40
Tata Steel	197.06	-0.70
TCS	2941.60	-49.90
Tech Mahindra	1619.90	-26.30
Titan	4141.00	-43.40
Tata Motors PV	369.50	-4.65
Trent Ltd.	4113.80	-17.50
UltraTech Cement	12722.00	-51.00
Wipro	230.72	-2.67

DE: Demerged Entity

**Day 2: silver extends losses**

Silver extended losses for the second day in futures trade as investors intensified profit-booking amid a firm U.S. dollar and easing geopolitical tensions.

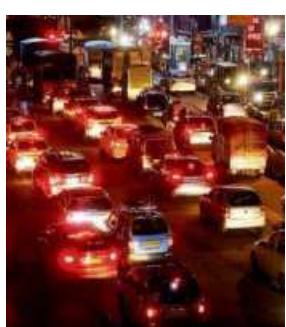
**India drops small car sops in new fuel emission rules**

**Reuters**  
NEW DELHI

India scrapped a planned concession for small cars in upcoming fuel-efficiency rules after automakers including Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra argued it would benefit only one company, a government document shows.

A September draft had proposed leniency for petrol cars weighing 909 kg (2,004 lb) or less – a carve-out widely seen as favouring Maruti Suzuki, which controls 95% of India's small-car market.

India's Power Ministry has now removed that exemption and tightened other parameters, increasing pressure on all automakers to ramp up electric



Vehicles are pictured at a toll post in Mumbai. REUTERS FILE

and hybrid car sales, as per the latest 41-page draft reviewed by *Reuters*.

**Efficiency gains**

The new rules curb overcompensation for vehicle weight, aim to level the field between light and heavy fleet manufacturers, and are designed to deliver

real-world efficiency gains, the document said.

They introduce "a substantially steeper reduction pathway" for emissions, it added. The Power Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

**EV, Hybrid boost**

Transport accounts for about 12% of India's energy use and is a major driver of petroleum imports and carbon emissions. Passenger vehicles make up nearly 90% of transport-related emissions, the document says.

Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms dictate permissible CO2 emissions across a manufacturer's fleet of passenger cars weighing less than 3,500 kg (7,716 lb).

**AI unveils new lounge at T3 Delhi Airport**

**Jagriti Chandra**  
NEW DELHI

Air India (AI) unveiled a new lounge for its First Class and Business Class passengers on international flights at Terminal 3 (T3) of Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport.

The lounge will open on February 16. Spread across 16,000 sq. ft., it can accommodate about 300.

The airline has plans to open lounges at San Francisco, New York and other international destinations.

"Along with new and retrofitted aircraft now joining the fleet and the new lounges, we hope what people are going to be experiencing while travelling Air India is worth the

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

Pursuant to Budget announcement, the boards of Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) informed the bourses they have in-principle approved a merger.

Separately, they also told exchanges details about the merger would be given after receiving requisite approvals.

In her Budget address, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed the restructuring of the power sector non-banking financial institutions (NBFCs), seeking to 'achieve scale and improve efficiency.'

DIPR/C/1974/2026

**OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL S.M.S.MEDICAL COLLEGE & CONTROLLER OF THE ATTACHED HOSPITALS, JAIPUR**

No/F/MC/Store/2025-26/12069-750

Dated: 27/01/2026

**Notice Inviting Bid**

E-Bid for Providing Hiring of Manpower Services at SMS medical college & Attached Hospital Jaipur, Rajasthan are invited from interested bidder's up to 17/02/26 At 4:00 PM. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.raj.nic.in>) of the state and SMS Medical College, Jaipur Department website.

UBN: SMS2526SLRC00623  
NIB NO: SMS2526A0344

PRINCIPAL & CONTROLLER

**SPORTS AUTHORITY OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

IGMC STADIUM, LABBIPET, BANDAR ROAD, VIJAYAWADA

Tenders are hereby invited from reputed and experienced companies for the following tenders.

Tender ID : 895658, 895656

Name of the work : Short tender for Procurement of Sports Kits and Dress to players and coaches.

Bid Starting date : 07.02.2026 Bid end date : 11.02.2026

Tender documents are available on e-procurement platform [tender.approcurement.gov.in](http://eproc.approcurement.gov.in). Tenders will be opened in the presence of company representatives who attend the evaluation. For further details contact : 0866-2499699.

DIPR 4804PP/CL, Dt: 06-02-2026

Sd/- Vice Chairman and Managing Director

**MBM UNIVERSITY, JODHPUR**

(Central Store)

No.: MBMU/OIC/2025-26/1418

Date :- 02/02/2026

**NOTICE INVITING BID**

Bids are invited from interested eligible and experienced vendors/suppliers for the supply/provision of the following items/services at MBM University, Jodhpur. All other particulars of the bid may be visited on the portal [sppp.rajasthan.gov.in](http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in), [eproc.rajasthan.gov.in](http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in) and [www.mbm.ac.in](http://www.mbm.ac.in).

1. Bids vide UBN: No: MBM2526WSO0095 Tender No.69/2025-26 for "Tender for Turnkey Execution of CCTV Cameras, facility in classrooms, laboratory rooms and campus Works for University Campus" in MBM University, Jodhpur with estimated amount ₹22,000 Lakh, ru

**PESHAWAR**

Pakistan security forces kill 24 militants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Pakistani security forces have killed 24 militants in two separate intelligence-based operations in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the military's media wing said on Friday. The military's media wing added that the counter-terrorism operations will continue at full pace to wipe out terrorism. PTI

**ADDIS ABABA**

African Union says M23 Congo airport attack may be 'terrorism'



The African Union said on Friday that a drone attack this week by the M23 armed group on a civilian airport in DR Congo, which it said had destroyed a "military drone command centre" may constitute an "act of terrorism". The attack marked an escalation in conflict in eastern DRC, where M23 has seized large swathes of territory. AFP

**WASHINGTON**

U.S. strikes another 'drug-trafficking boat' in Eastern Pacific, killing two



The U.S. military said on Thursday that it has carried out another deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean. It said the strike killed two persons. Thursday's attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats to 128 people. AP

**BEIRUT**

Lebanon, Syria sign deal to transfer 300 Syrian prisoners back home



Syria's Justice Minister Mazhar al-Wais and Lebanon's Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri signed an agreement in Beirut on Friday to transfer more than 300 Syrians from Lebanese prisons to continue serving their sentences in their home country. The signing came a week after Lebanon's Cabinet approved a treaty with Syria. AP

# U.S. urges new three-way nuclear weapons deal with Russia, China

U.S. official DiNanno slams New START for its 'fundamental flaws' and argues that China's nuclear arsenal lacks transparency and limitations; Trump rejects Putin's proposal to extend New START for one year; China and Russia resist U.S. proposals

**Agence France-Presse**

GENEVA

**T**he United States on Friday urged three-way talks with Russia and China to set new limits on nuclear weapons, after the last treaty between top nuclear powers Washington and Moscow expired.

Thomas DiNanno, the under secretary of state for arms control, told the UN Conference on Disarmament that the New START treaty, which was allowed to lapse on Thursday, had "fundamental flaws".

"Serial Russian violations, growth of more worldwide stockpiles and



The expiration of New START marks the first time in decades that the world finds itself without a treaty to curb nuclear weapons. AFP

flaws in New START's design and implementation gives the United States a clear imperative to call for a new architecture that addresses the threats of to-

day, not those of a bygone era," he told the conference at the United Nations' European headquarters in Geneva.

"As we sit here today,

China's entire nuclear arsenal has no limits, no transparency, no declarations, had no controls," he lamented.

He added that "the next era of arms control will require the participation of more than just Russia".

The expiration of New START, which restricted the U.S. and Russia to deploying 1,550 nuclear warheads each, marks the first time in decades that the world finds itself without a treaty to curb the positioning of the planet's most destructive weapons.

U.S. President Donald Trump did not accept a proposal from Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin

to keep New START's restrictions in place for another year, and called on Thursday for a "new, improved and modernised treaty".

China has already publicly rejected joining disarmament negotiations. China's ambassador Shen Jian reiterated that position on Friday, insisting that "China's nuclear capabilities are nowhere near the level of those of the U.S. or Russia".

Russia's ambassador Gennady Gatilov meanwhile insisted that any new nuclear talks should also include other nuclear-armed states such as France and Britain.

# Iran, U.S. hold nuclear talks in Oman after Trump threats

**Agence France-Presse**

MUSCAT

Iran on Friday said it expected to hold more negotiations with the United States, hailing a "positive atmosphere" during a day of indirect talks in Oman but warning against threats after Washington raised the spectre of new military action. With an American naval group led by an aircraft carrier in West Asian waters, U.S. and Iranian delegations held talks in Muscat mediated by the Gulf sultanate without publicly meeting face-to-face.

Shortly after the talks wrapped up, the U.S. announced new sanctions against shipping entities and vessels, aimed at curtailing Iran's oil exports. The talks were the first between the two foes since the U.S. joined Israel's war



Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff meet with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi in Muscat on Friday. REUTERS

with Iran in June 2025 with strikes on nuclear sites.

They also come just under a month after Iranian authorities launched a crackdown on protests that left thousands dead, according to rights groups.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who led Iran's delegation in Muscat, said talks "focused exclusively" on the Iranian nuclear programme which the West believes is aimed at making an atomic bomb but Tehran insists is peaceful.

The U.S. delegation, led by U.S. West Asia envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, had also wanted Tehran's backing for militant groups, its ballistic missile programme and treatment of protesters to also be on the agenda.

# Violence shadows Bangladesh elections as 127 million prepare to vote

**Rabiul Alam**

DHAKA

On January 28, supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami became embroiled in a dispute over front-row seating at a programme in Jhenaiagati upazila of Sherpur district, triggering a violent clash. At least 65 people were injured, and a Jamaat upazila secretary was killed. Police and army personnel were present at the scene but were unable to prevent the violence. Similar clashes have been reported across the country as Bangladesh heads towards national elections on February 12, the first since the dramatic ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024.

The 13th national elec-

tion, involving nearly 127 million voters, has raised hopes of a peaceful transition from the post-Hasina interim government to an elected administration. But violence has posed new challenges to the election process. At least 15 political leaders and activists have been killed in the 36 days since the Election Commission announced the election schedule on December 11, 2025.

**Growing unrest**  
For first-time voters like Taimur Mobin, a 22-year-old graduate from a public university in Dhaka, the growing unrest has dampened expectations. "After a mass uprising that promised the restoration of voting rights, this kind of violence is deeply discouraging," he said. "If it contin-

ues, many voters especially elderly people may avoid polling centres."

Human rights organisations say the scale of violence is alarming. According to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), at least 195 people were killed and 11,229 injured in political violence over the past 17 months. Nearly half of those incidents stemmed from internal conflicts within the BNP and its affiliated bodies, accounting for 121 deaths and 7,131 injuries.

Another rights group, Odhikar, reported an even higher toll, stating that 328 people were killed and 9,182 injured in political violence between August 9, 2024, and December 31, 2025.

Transparency Interna-

tional Bangladesh (TIB) warned that the risk of violence could extend beyond polling day. "We all hope there will not be a single killing or incident, but we cannot guarantee that," said TIB executive director Iftekharuzzaman. "Based on past experience, the risk may continue for several days after February

12." TIB records show that at least 600 incidents of political violence were reported nationwide between August 2024 and December 2025, resulting in 158 deaths. Mr. Iftekharuzzaman stressed that Bangladesh's history of violent elections should serve as a warning. "Lessons from

previous polls must be used to prevent violence this time," he said.

As polling day approaches, political parties continue to trade accusations. Jamaat-e-Islami has repeatedly alleged that its women activists are being attacked by BNP supporters, and accused the EC of playing a "passive role". Islami Andolan Bangladesh, another Islamist party, has claimed that its female campaigners were attacked by Jamaat supporters.

Independent candidates have not been spared. On February 5, at least 20 people, including an independent candidate in Chandpur-4 constituency, were injured in an attack allegedly carried out by BNP supporters. The BNP, in turn, has accused

Jamaat of exploiting religious sentiment and harassing its female activists.

Mr. Shahadat Shadhin, a political analyst and research scholar at South Asian University, said the situation reflects a failure of authority. "Election-related violence is increasing, but I do not see sufficient seriousness from the interim government," he said. "The Election Commission is constitutionally empowered during elections, yet no visible action has been taken. This vacuum of responsibility is extremely alarming."

**Protests in Dhaka**  
Adding to the volatility, Dhaka is witnessing major protests seemingly unrelated to electoral politics. On Friday, government employees staged a sit-in out-



side Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's residence demanding implementation of a new pay scale. Police dispersed the protest using batons, water cannons and sound grenades, injuring dozens. Another platform, Inqilab Moncho, also held demonstrations demanding a UN-supervised investigation into the killing of its spokesperson Osman Hadi.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Army on Thursday reaffirmed its full preparedness to help conduct the elections and referendum in a "fair, free and peaceful" manner. Its Military Operations Director Brig Gen Dewan Mohammad Monzur Hossain said troops are already conducting extensive field-level activities as part of all-out preparations.

# Kyiv behind Moscow shooting of army general, says Russia

**Agence France-Presse**

MOSCOW

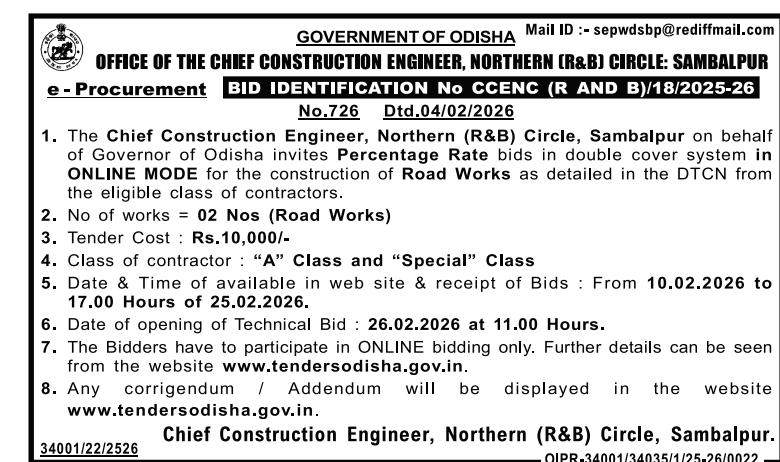
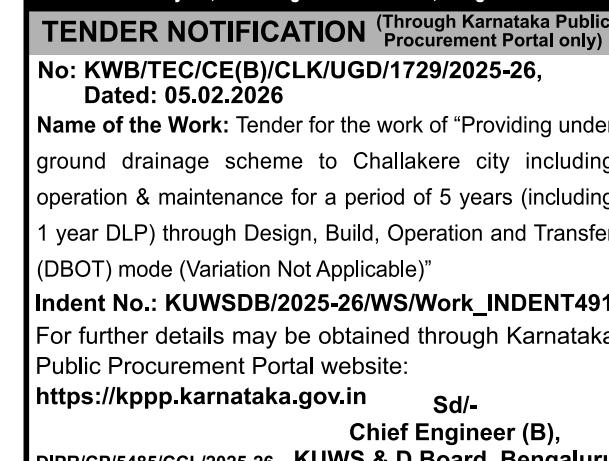
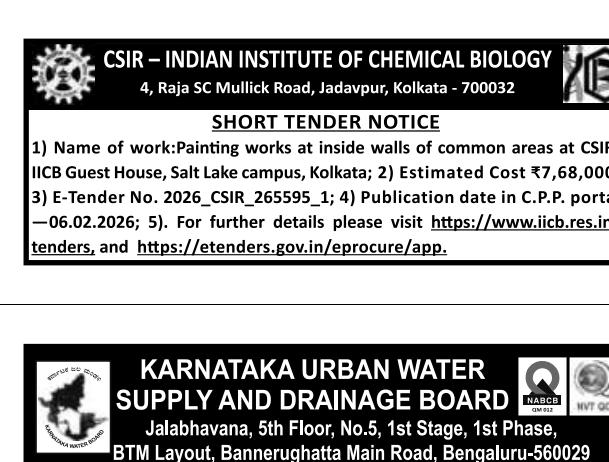
A top Russian military intelligence general was shot in a Moscow apartment building on Friday and hospitalised, Moscow said, in what it said was an assassination attempt orchestrated by Ukraine.

There was no comment from Kyiv, which has claimed responsibility for some of the several high-ranking military officials that have been killed since Moscow launched its full-scale offensive in February 2022.

Russian investigators said Vladimir Alekseyev – the deputy head of Moscow's GRU military intelligence

sanctioned in the West for his alleged role in cyberattacks and charges that he organised a nerve agent attack on a Russian defector in Britain – was shot by an "unidentified individual".

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused Ukraine of being behind the "terrorist act", accusing Kyiv of trying to "disrupt the negotiation process" searching for an end to the four-year war.



CM YK

M-CHE

**CLEAR THOUGHT**

Avoiding outside noise the best way, says Pakistan skipper Agha



Pakistan captain Salman Agha said the team will try to shut out the off-field noise surrounding its planned boycott of the India match and instead focus on winning the remaining group games to qualify for the T20 World Cup Super Eight. "And I think that's the best we can do. We can avoid all this and just focus on our game," he said.

**IN FOCUS**

Late-entrant Scotland out to make a mark against the West Indies



West Indies will be keen to begin its T20 World Cup campaign with a win against last-minute entrant Scotland in a Group-C match in Kolkata on Saturday. Scotland, having won its solitary World Cup meeting against West Indies in 2022, would love to maintain its upper hand despite the odds.

**UNPREDICTABLE**

Fortune could outweigh familiarity in a format like T20: Netravalkar



USA pacer Saurabh Netravalkar felt in a format as unpredictable as T20 cricket, fortune could outweigh familiarity. "The novelty factor would be true because they will have less data on us, but obviously they are far more skilful and experienced and they are one of the best teams in the world," he said ahead of the match against India.

**CHURNING**

Hazlewood ruled out; Madushan replaces Malinga in Lanka squad



In a major setback to an already depleted Australia, its premier pacer Josh Hazlewood was, on Friday, ruled out of the T20 World Cup after "running out of time" to recover from a hamstring injury. Meanwhile, fast bowler Pramod Madushan has replaced injured pacer Eshan Malinga in the Sri Lanka squad.

# The time has come for cricket's rapid-fire round

The backdrop of the 10th edition of the tournament has been soured with the removal of Bangladesh and Pakistan's decision to boycott the contest against India in Colombo

**T20 WORLD CUP**

**K.C. Vijaya Kumar**

MUMBAI

Under the skies over Colombo, Kolkata and Mumbai, a championship will step into its 10th edition on Saturday. The ICC Twenty20 World Cup's latest chapter will find its opening pages through three contests being staged at far-flung cities.

Pakistan will take on Netherlands at Colombo, West Indies will lock horns with Scotland at Kolkata, and from 7 p.m., India will face off against the United States of America at Mumbai. Over a month, 20 teams will criss-cross India and to some extent Sri Lanka, as 55 games will be held, including the final on March 8.

**Robust fixture**  
A tournament that had its tentative maiden foray in 2007, one that M.S. Dhoni's men owned in style, is now a robust fixture in the ICC calendar. Defending champion India obviously has an edge but playing at home does not exactly promise the cup as Rohit Sharma's men learnt it the hard way during the 2023 50-over World Cup final at Ahmedabad. It is a thin line that splits hope and heartbreak.

Still, the Men in Blue, relishing a prosperous run in T20Is, will fancy their chances of being on the victor's podium. Besides focusing on the field, off it, captain Suryakumar Yadav

Over a month, 20 teams will criss-cross India and to some extent Sri Lanka, as 55 games will be held, including the final on March 8

has the onerous task of dealing with queries focusing on international diplomacy.

The backdrop has been soured with the removal of Bangladesh and Pakistan's current decision of boycotting the contest against India in Colombo.

**Never been a monopoly**  
The championship that has never been a monopoly of any team, however, has remained elusive for South Africa and New Zealand. Skippers Aiden Markram and Mitchell Santner have a trophy-gap to plug. Markram came agonisingly close before India pulled ahead in the 2024 final at Bridgetown.

**Lending hope**  
Interestingly both South Africa and New Zealand prevailed in Tests in India, results that should bolster confidence even if T20Is and Tests are diverse formats.

**Fresh legacy**  
The latest edition also marks the charge of a new generation as stars like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Steve Smith and Kane Williamson are missing through a combination of retirements and omissions. Men like Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma can script a fresh legacy.

Australia under Mitchell Marsh, may look a touch undercooked and yet there is no discounting a side

that has the pedigree of rising to every challenge thrown at it. Allan Border's Aussies did that precisely in the 1987 50-over World Cup held in India and Pakistan. The seeds of a dominant Australia, cutting across formats, were sown then, and the conveyor belt continues to chug.

England, Sri Lanka and the West Indies, all former champions, are seeking a fresh start. A format that can at times seem like a lottery riding on pulsating runs and fast dismissals, always lends hope. Miracles are just around the corner and history reveals that. "Carlos Brathwaite, remember the name," exclaimed Ian Bishop, as his West Indian junior hammered four sixes to wrest the cup for the men from the Caribbean at Eden Gardens in 2016.

**As cricket gets obsessed with its shortest format over the next few months due to the World Cup and the Indian Premier League, the ICC will have a hard balancing act ahead in giving Tests and ODIs, their due.**

At the bustling Wankhede Stadium here, last-minute touches were dispensed as the venue geared up for India's first match. Inside, batters muscled the ball high into the skies, setting the tone for some frenetic weeks.

## Shortest format's biggest showpiece

As 20 teams from across the globe take centrestage at the ICC T20 World Cup, a look at some significant numbers and records from the nine editions

### ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP INDIA & SRI LANKA 2026



#### THE HIGHS

MOST TITLES WON  
**India, West Indies and England (2 each)**

MOST APPEARANCES IN A FINAL  
**India, Pakistan, England and Sri Lanka (3 each)**

HIGHEST TOTAL  
**260/6 (Sri Lanka vs. Kenya, Johannesburg, 2007)**

BIGGEST VICTORY MARGIN BY RUNS  
**172 (Sri Lanka vs. Kenya, Johannesburg, 2007)**



MOST RUNS  
**Kohli (India, 1292 in 33 innings)**

MOST WICKETS  
**Shakib (Bangladesh, 50 wickets in 41 innings)**

MOST DISMISSELS (WICKETKEEPER)  
**Dhoni (India, 32 in 32 innings - 21 catches, 11 stumpings)**

MOST CATCHES (FIELDER)  
**Warner (Australia, 25 in 41 innings)**

#### THE TOPPERS



MOST RUNS IN AN EDITION  
**Kohli (319, 2014)**

MOST WICKETS IN AN EDITION  
**Arshdeep (India, 2024) and Farooqi (Afghanistan, 2024) - 17**

HIGHEST SCORE  
**Brendon McCullum (123 off 58b, NZ vs. Ban, Pallekele, 2012)**

BEST BOWLING  
**Ajantha Mendis (4-2-8-6, SL vs. Zim, Hambantota, 2012)**

MOST CENTURIES  
**Gayle (2 - one each in 2007 and 2016)**

MOST 50-PLUS SCORES  
**Kohli (15)**

FASTEAST CENTURY  
**Gayle (47b, WI vs. England, Mumbai, 2016)**

FASTEAST HALF-CENTURY  
**Yuvraj (12b, India vs. England, Durban, 2007)**

MOST FOUR-FOURS  
**Nortje (SA), Rashid (Afg), Ajmal (Pak) and Shakib (Ban) - three each**

MOST ECONOMICAL SPELL  
**Ferguson (4-4-0-3, NZ vs. Papua New Guinea, Tarouba, 2024)**

Source: ESPNCRICINFO & ICC

Compiled by S. SHRIVATHSAN

#### T20 WORLD CUPS AT A GLANCE

No team has ever won the title at home

No team has successfully defended its crown in the tournament

1 The India-Pakistan group-stage clash in Durban in 2007 witnessed the only Bowl Out in the history of the competition. India went on to win 3-0

1 Zimbabwe's Brendan Taylor, 40, is the only player who featured in the inaugural event to be picked for this edition

2 Rohit (Ind) and Shakib (Ban) were the only players to figure in all nine editions

2 Oman has the tournament's oldest players in its squad — Aamir Kaleem (44) and Mohammad Nadeem (43)

3 Group D will have three top-10 ranked teams — New Zealand (4), South Africa (5) and Afghanistan (10) — unlike any other pool

5 Scotland will make its fifth successive appearance in the marquee event after having initially missed the cut

# Playing on home soil brings motivation'

**Amol Karhadkar**

MUMBAI

Suryakumar Yadav has developed a knack for cracking jokes during his media interactions as India's T20I captain. While that trait was on display on Friday, there was also a sense that the next four weeks could prove defining in the late bloomer's remarkable career.

"Playing on home soil is always exciting. I felt that when we played the ODI World Cup in 2023. Crowd coming in numbers, people having a chat around when you are travelling to the airport, so it's a good thing," Suryakumar said at the Wankhede Stadium, ahead of India's Men's T20 World Cup opening fixture against the USA on Saturday.

"It gives you motivation all the time. At the same time, it brings a lot of responsibility as you are getting to lead such a wonderful side, that too in India, starting at Wankhede. So the boys are very excited to take the field tomorrow [Saturday]. I am sure there

#### Today's matches



LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR



**Can't wait:** Suryakumar says his boys are excited to take the field. EMMANUEL YOGINI

will be a lot of excitement." India will face the USA 19 months after last coming up against a squad comprising largely of sub-continentals expatriates. In

Mumbai teammates set to line up against India.

"They have gone now to the land of dollars, but I see it from a good perspective. It's good that people are getting an opportunity. Even though they are playing from other countries, it's a good opportunity for them," Suryakumar said. "I have played a lot of cricket with them. But right now, we are having fun with our own cricket."

The India captain also hinted that Ishan Kishan, who opened the innings during Wednesday's warm-up match against South Africa, is likely to continue at the top of the order alongside Abhishek Sharma.

# India's top-order is explosive



## Siraj replaces injured Harshit

### Sports Bureau

India pacer Harshit Rana was on Friday ruled out of the T20 World Cup owing to a knee injury, with Mohammed Siraj being named as his replacement.

Harshit had sustained a knee injury during the warm-up match against South Africa. Following consultations with a specialist and subsequent scans, the BCCI medical team deemed him unfit to participate in the tournament.

The India squad: Suryakumar Yadav (Capt.), Axar Patel, Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Rinku Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarthy, Washington Sundar, and Mohammed Siraj.

First Class cricket in India and then migrated to the USA. Some of them have played alongside India players and know them quite well. That said, there won't be any let-up on the field from either side.

The PowerPlay generally gives an indication of which way the innings is going, though there are plenty of times when teams have recovered after a horrible start. India's opening duo Abhishek Sharma and Ishan Kishan has been getting the team off to a flying start. With skipper Suryakumar Yadav back to his innovative best and Tilak Varma returning to full fitness, the top-order looks explosive. They will be challenged by Saurabh Netravalkar at the start and then Harmeet Singh. Both know the Wankhede pitch quite well and would be aware that there is little margin for error.

Their batters will be up against Jasprit Bumrah, currently the best bowler in all formats of the game. In the just-concluded series against New Zealand, he was used as a first-change bowler in the fifth over. Just like how the batting order has to be flexible, there shouldn't be rigidity about the bowling order. The T20 format allows even unfancied teams to change the tempo of the game in the blink of an eye. The USA will be hoping they can do it and start the tournament with a bang.

(Professional Management Group)



1. Euromonitor International Ltd. custom research on ceiling fan brands unit sales in 2024

## IN BRIEF



## Nitu, Preeti, and Jadumani storm into the semifinals

Former world champion Nitu Ghanghas, Asian Games bronze medallist Preeti Pawar and Jadumani Singh entered the semifinals at the Boxam Elite International in La Nucia, Spain.

**The results:** Women: **51kg:** Nitu Ghanghas bt McKenzie Wright (Can) 5-0, Chuthamat Raksat (Tha) bt Kusum 5-0. **54kg:** Preeti Pawar bt Maria Gonzalez (Esp) abandoned Rd3, Poomam bt Natnicha Chongprongklang (Tha) 5-0. **60kg:** Priya bt Laura Galano (Esp) 5-0. **65kg:** Pranjal bt Viktorie Jilkova (Cze) 5-0, Kajal bt Akbar Ichshanov (Kaz) 4-1. **Men: 55kg:** Jadumani bt Peng Cha-Feng (Tpe) 5-0, Ellis Trowbridge (Eng) bt Pawan Bartwal 3-2. **60kg:** Mohammed Hussamuddin bt Ali Dahly (Ukr) 5-0, Sachin bt Aider Abduraimov (Ukr) 3-2. **65kg:** Elvin Aliev (Ukr) bt Abhinash Jamwal 4-1. **75kg:** Akash bt Jose Luis Canero (Esp) 4-1. **80kg:** Isaac Okoh (Eng) bt Harsh Choudhary 5-0. **90kg:** Nurassyl Assylkhan (Kaz) 5-0.

## Adarsh clinches high jump bronze in China

Adarsh Ram Jothi Shankar clinched the men's high jump bronze at the 12th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships that got underway in Tianjin on Friday. He produced a best jump of 2.19m. Praveen Chithravel (16.22m) finished fourth in the men's triple jump.

## End of the road for India in Asian team badminton

Indian women's title defence ended after a 0-3 loss to a second-string China, while the men's side suffered a 1-3 defeat to Korea in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Team Championships in Qingdao, China, on Friday.

**The results (quarterfinals): Women:** China bt India 3-0 (Gao Fang Jie bt Tanvi Sharma 21-9, 21-9; Jia Yi Fan & Zhang Shu Xian bt Gayatri Gopi Chand & Treesa Jolly 24-22, 21-18; Xu Wen Jing bt Rakshita Ramraj 21-14, 15-21, 21-17). **Men:** Korea bt India 3-1 (Tae Bin Yoo bt Ayush Shetty 18-21, 21-14, 26-24; Song Hyun Cho & Kim Won Ho bt Chirag Shetty & Hariharan Amsakaran 21-11, 21-13; Ji Hoon Choi lost to Kidambi Srikanth 15-21, 16-21; Yong Jin & Dong Ju Ki bt Pruthvi K. Roy & Sai Pratheek K. 21-11, 21-16).

## Rudrankksh and Arjun finish 1-2 in 10m air rifle

Rudrankksh Patil and Arjun Babuta secured the gold and silver medals, respectively, in the 10m air rifle men's event at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range here on Friday as India continued to shine in the Asian Rifle / Pistol Championship. Himanshu Dhillon, Ansh Dabas and Naren Pranav V.S. swept the podium in the junior men's air rifle event. The mixed team pairs of Mukesh Nelavalli and Vanshika Chaudhary, and Girish Gupta and Shiksha Saran secured gold in the 10m air pistol junior and youth mixed team events respectively to kick off India's medal haul for the day.

## Koyel steals the limelight with five new records

Promising lifter Koyel Bar rewrote five records, including three in youth and two in junior, as she aggregated 185kg to claim women's 53kg youth and junior crowns at the National weightlifting championships in Madinagar on Friday.

**The results (winners only): Women: 53kg: Elite:** Gyaneshwari Yadav snatch 83kg, clean and jerk 103kg, total 186kg; **junior and youth:** Koyel Bar (WB) 83kg, 102kg, 185kg.

## LIVE TELECAST

**Ranji Trophy:** JioHotstar, 9.30 a.m.  
**Men's T20 World Cup:** Star Sports 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 11 a.m., 3 p.m. & India vs USA, 7 p.m.

**Premier League:** SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 6, 8.30 & 11 p.m.

## ENGAGEMENTS

**Cricket:** TNCA league, III-B, AG's Office vs Madras Aryan Club (Wahe Guru 'A'); Hunters XI vs SNJ RC (Tagore); Prem vs Sir M.C.T.M. Old Boys SA (Venkateswara); Garnet vs Singam Puli (SSN); Aruna vs Fox Trotters (Gojan, Turf 'A'); Triplicane SC vs IOB (Jones Krish, Turf), 9 a.m.; IV-B, TSR MSC vs Tiger (Wahe Guru 'B'), 9.30 a.m.; V-B, Free Lancers vs Shivaji (Gojan, Matt); Sridhar vs Youngsters (Magna 'B'); Kovai Knights vs Grove (Union); Chennai P&T Audit vs Companions (PBEL City), 9.30 a.m.; VI-A, Eccentrics vs Jai Hind (SMK Fomra); Chennai Corporation OA vs Pegasus (Engg.), 8 a.m.; VI-B, Minerva vs TFUCC (SMK Fomra 'B'); Ashok Leyland vs MFL (St. Bede's 'A'); Kohinoor XI vs Anna University SB (Engg.), 1 p.m.; Dhaanish Ahmed CoE inter-collegiate tournament for women, final, college premises, Vanchuvanchery, Padappai, 7.30 a.m.; Freyer-Thiruvallur DCA Women's League, Sudha Shah XI vs Niranjan XI (DRBCCC Hindu 'C'); Fowziah Khalil XI vs Lissy XI (DRBCCC Hindu 'A'); Susan Pallikal XI vs Thirush Kamini XI (DRBCCC Hindu 'D'), all at 9 a.m.

# Nagal meets Den Ouden in opening rubber; Dhakshineswar plays de Jong

Balaji to partner Yuki in doubles as India takes on the Netherlands for a place in the Qualifiers 2nd Round to be held in September

## DAVIS CUP

N. Sudarshan  
BENGALURU

The last two times the lush green Cubbon Park welcomed the Davis Cup, the draw ceremony was held at the majestic Vidhana Soudha, the iconic seat of the Karnataka State Legislature.

On Friday, when the draw for India's Qualifiers 1st Round fixture against Netherlands was conducted, it was at a modest, but neat, make-shift structure within the S.M. Krishna Tennis Stadium complex.

It was perhaps the apt build-up for Saturday's action. The Dutch are not known to be great admirers of flamboyance, for



**Battlelines drawn:** The Dutch team of Arends, Pel, Houkes, Den Ouden, de Jong and captain Haarhuis with Indian skipper Rajpal, Nagal, Karan, Dhakshineswar, Yuki and Balaji at the draw ceremony on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

their society swears by the mantra *Doe Normaal* (just be normal). India too is stepping into the contest gingerly, waiting with bated breath to see how its frontline singles player Sumit Nagal holds up after

three weeks of injury rehab. At stake is a place in September's Qualifiers 2nd Round, the last stage before the season-ending, eight-team Davis Cup Finals.

On paper, the visitors

sixth in the world while India is 33rd. The top-two Dutch singles players here, Jesper de Jong and Guy Den Ouden, are ranked 88 and 162 respectively, compared to Nagal's 281 and Dhakshineswar's 465.

But the charm of the Davis Cup is that pedigree and status have limited currency. India's own 3-1 win against Switzerland last year is evidence, as the lanky Dhakshineswar beat a player ranked more than 280 places above him.

Also, Nagal was a career-high 68 in mid-2024 and has a good understanding of the Garden City's fast, high-altitude conditions.

Interestingly, the 28-year-old has never played the opening match in any of his eight Cup appearances. A win against Den Ouden in the first rubber on Saturday can set up the tie for India.

For Sunday's doubles, captain Rohit Rajpal, citing better preparedness, has chosen Sriram Balaji instead of Rithvik Bolipalli to partner World No. 20 Yuki Bhambri.

But India has lost the doubles point in all three of its recent outings against European opposition – to Switzerland, Sweden and Denmark. A snapping of the streak will be timely.

## Tagger knocks out Semenistaja, meets Fangran in the semifinals

## MUMBAI OPEN

Tarun Shastry  
MUMBAI

In a contest between two champion players – Latvia's Darja Semenistaja, the 2024 tournament winner here, and Austria's Lilli Tagger – it was the 17-year-old who came through.

The 2025 French Open junior champion, seeded seventh, rallied to defeat second seed Semenistaja 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 in a last eight clash in the L&T Mumbai Open 125K Series at the Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association here on Friday.

The 23-year-old Latvian made a strong opening, asserting control in the first set with a high percentage on serve and well-placed winners from the baseline. She unsettled Tagger with



Tagger.

court-stretching groundstrokes and forehand volleys, forcing the teenager into long rallies.

One of the standout moments came in the sixth game, a marathon exchange featuring extended rallies before Tagger eventually held serve with a blistering forehand winner down the line to level at 3-3. Semenistaja, however, drew on her experience and broke serve in the tenth game to take the opening set 6-4.

Tagger found her rhythm in the second set, lifting both her intensity and precision. The Austrian served with authority and began to control rallies with a 'Federer-esque' backhand and effective net play to claim the set 6-4.

and precision. The Austrian served with authority and began to control rallies with a 'Federer-esque' backhand and effective net play to claim the set 6-4.

The decider was one-way traffic. With the humid conditions taking a visible toll on Semenistaja, Tagger dictated proceedings, breaking early and maintaining her dominance from the baseline to close out the match 6-2 and seal her place in the last four.

**Other results: Singles (quarterfinals):** Mananchaya Sawangkaew (Tha) bt Tatiana Prozorova (Rus) 6-1, 6-4; Lanlana Tararudee (Tha) bt Leolia Jeanjean (Fra) 4-6, 6-3, 6-2; Fangran Tian (Chn) bt Mei Yamaguchi (Jpn) 6-2, 2-6, 6-2.

**Doubles (semifinal):** Nicole Fossa Huergo (Arg) & Mananchaya Sawangkaew (Tha) bt Hiroko Kuwata (Jpn) & Park So-hyun (Kor) bt (Tha) 6-4, 6-7(4), [10-5].

## I want to make 'uncle' Lillee proud: Italy pacer Draca

## T20WC

S. Prasanna Venkatesan  
CHENNAI

Italy's Australia-bred pacer Thomas Draca will run in this T20 World Cup with history swinging against his chest – a chain once worn by Dennis Lillee. To others, it's just a chain. To him, it's inheritance. He calls Lillee family.

"Dennis has actually given me his World Series chain. It's got his Test cap and his signature on it. He gave me that for my 21st birthday. In this World Cup, I'll be wearing it, and I want to do him proud. I wouldn't be here without him," said the 25-year-old after his team's 112-run win over the UAE in a warm-up match here on Friday.

Their bond began over a drink. "My dad grew up



Draca. INSTAGRAM@MIEMIRATES

watching Dennis, but they bonded over wine. Dennis asked if I played, offered a session, and from that day, we have had an unbelievably

ble bond. I call him my uncle," Draca said.

What Lillee gave him was method. "His philosophy is just to work hard and be very fit." When Draca suffered a stress fracture, the diagnosis was blunt. "Dennis said: 'You're not running enough. You have to train like a sprinter.'"

The stories stuck. "Dennis told a funny story. In the team hotel, the boys would go downstairs for a drink and hear 'thud, thud, thud'. He'd be running in his corridor," Draca said.

Draca lives by that. "After this interview, I'm going for a run. The boys think I'm crazy." He doesn't. Because when he runs in now – faster, stronger, and unbroken – Lillee runs with him. In philosophy. In habit. And soon, in chain.

## TAMIL NADU ROUND-UP



**Triumphant:** The Jaya Arts and Science team that claimed the CSK-Tiruvallur DCA inter-collegiate tournament.

**TN restricts Tripura**  
Left-arm spinner Sachin Rathi's six for 32 enabled Tamil Nadu to restrict Tripura to 168 on the first day of their Col. C.K. Nayudu Trophy men's u-23 Elite-C sixth round league match in Dindigul on Friday.

**The scores:** Tripura 68 in 60.4 overs (Santu Sarkar 84, Sachin Rathi 6/32) vs. TN 90/2 in 29 overs (V.P. Amith Sathvik 64 batting).

**J&K beats TN**  
Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) defeated Tamil Nadu by seven wickets in the BCCI senior women's One Day Trophy Elite 'D' first round match in Guwahati on Friday.

**The scores:** TN 237/6 in 50 overs (Arshi Choudhary 80, Roshini Rajasekaran 41, N. S. Subhaharan 67) lost to J & K 239/3 in 49.1 overs (Bawandeep Kaur 35, Chitra Singh Jamwal 71, Shambavi Rajput 85 n.o., Rubia Syed 38 n.o.).

**Richard Jones (Mar Gregorios, nine wickets).**

**Mayank Dhruva stars with century**  
S. Mayank Dhruva's unbeaten century was instrumental in Don Bosco's 65-run win over Ramachandra in the Vidya Mandir-Sportstar-Sanmar u-14 invitational cricket tournament held here.

**The scores:** St. John's 76/8 in 20 overs lost to Heartfulness 79/2 in 16.3 overs (I. Jumail Mutlaq 52 n.o.).

PSBB Siruseri 112/0 in 20 overs (B. Anirudh 38 n.o., Adarsh Arun 51 n.o.) lost to Santhome 113/9 in 20 overs (S.P. Bhavan Sal 56 n.o., S. Ajitesh 3/18).

Don Bosco 159/1 in 20 overs (S. Mayank Dhruva 100 n.o., R. Hema Harish 35 n.o.) bt Ramachandra 94/7 in 20 overs (Varun Karthik 32).

Nellai Nadar 80/6 in 20 overs (Johan Devadass 43 n.o., S. Kamalesh 32) lost to St. Bede's 94/7 in 20 overs (Nayef Ahmed 56, S. Judian Benhur 46 n.o.).

**Special prizes: Highest run-getter:** S. Sricharan (SRIHER, 151 runs); **Highest wicket-taker:** V. Mathew (Syed Desigan 34 n.o., R. Jadan Jonah 11-6).

**Its Jeppiaar versus Guru Nanak**  
Jeppiaar University will

**David 36 n.o.).**  
PSBB (K.K. Nagar) 149/8 in 20 overs (Sidharth Yogesh 41, S. Namadoss 38) bt Chettinad Vidyashram 102/6 in 20 overs. Sir Mutha 88/5 in 20 overs (Vidhyad Adithya 45) lost to St. Bede's AIHSS 89/1 in 12.5 overs (M.K. Raghab 31 n.o., R. Jadan Jonah 50 n.o.).

**SKA triumphs via Super Over**

SKA defeated St. John's in Super Over in the final of the XL 1 Super Sports u-14 cricket held here.

**The scores:** St. John's 183/7 in 30 overs (Aswin Srikant 30, Nitin Vidush 52 n.o.) tied with SKA 183/5 in 30 overs (P. Tharun 75, Bernis Joemar 32). **Super Over:** SKA 8 for one in one over bt St. John's 5/2 in one over.

**Player of the match:** Bernis Joemar (SKA). **Best batsman:** P. Tharun (SKA); **Best bowler:** S. Anirudh (St. John's); **Best all-rounder:** Kailash (WGCA).

**Its Jeppiaar versus Guru Nanak**  
Jeppiaar University will

meet Guru Nanak in the final of the Dhaanish Ahmed College of Engineering inter-college cricket tournament for women held here.

# Karnataka takes upper hand after Mumbai's batting debacle

None of the host batters, barring Herwadkar, show resilience on a surface with uneven bounce and a tinge of green; Kaverappa, Prasidh and Shreyas take three wickets each

## RANJI TROPHY

**Shayan Acharya**  
MUMBAI

Mumbai opted to bat, hoping to make optimum use of home conditions. But a batting debacle and some disciplined bowling by Karnataka saw the 42-time champion folding up for a paltry 120 in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here.

As Venkatesh Prasad, the Karnataka State Cricket Association president, watched the proceedings at the MCA-BKC ground on Friday, the seasoned Mayank Agarwal ensured that the team ended the day at 110 for two.

Mayank Agarwal (54 batting, 81b, 8x4, 1x6) and K.L. Rahul added 50 for the opening wicket. Both looked to capitalise on the start before Rahul was caught at covers by Tanush Kotian off a Mohit Avasthi delivery.

Things slowed down thereafter as captain Devdutt Padikkal couldn't extend his stay beyond 27 balls, caught behind off Suryansh Shedge.

However, with Karun Nair surviving a review, there were no further slip-ups.

None of the Mumbai batters, barring Akhil Herwadkar (60, 138b, 9x4), showed resilience on a surface that had a tinge of green and offered uneven bounce.



**Gotcha!** Prasidh celebrates after ending Akash's stay. EMMANUEL YOGINI

With Sarfaraz Khan ruled out due to a viral fever, Mumbai's batting was heavily reliant on Yashavali Jaiswal and Siddhesh Lad. But when it mattered the most, none delivered.

While Jaiswal looked edgy before being caught behind off a moving Vidyaadhar Patil delivery, Vidwath Kaverappa tightened the noose further by dismissing Musheer Khan and Lad in quick succession. As the Karnataka fast bowlers breathed fire, a jittery Musheer offered a regulation catch to Rahul at first slip.

Herwadkar, who batted for 255 minutes, made most of a reprieve to bring up his second fifty of the season, and aimed to rebuild with Shedge, before the latter was caught behind off Prasidh Krishna.

Prasidh came close to a hat-trick, dismissing Akash Anand and Shams Mulani off successive deliveries. However, his fiery spell put Mumbai on the mat.

**The scores: Mumbai – 1st innings:** Yashavali Jaiswal c Kruthik b Vidyaadhar 5, Akhil Herwadkar lbw b Shreyas 60, Musheer Khan c Rahul b Kaverappa 1, Siddhesh Lad c Smaran b Kaverappa 12, Suryansh Shedge c Kruthik b Prasidh 10, Akash Anand c Mayank b Prasidh 2, Shams Mulani c Padikkal b Prasidh 0, Shardul Thakur c Shreyas 6.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-9, 2-12, 3-39, 4-70, 5-78, 6-78, 7-107, 8-115, 9-119.

**Karnataka bowling:** Kaverappa 14-3-38-3, Vidyaadhar 14-3-36-1, Prasidh 14-5-21-3, Shreyas 4-1-1-4-3, Shikhar 2-0-8-0.

**Karnataka – 1st innings:** K.L. Rahul c Kotian b Avasthi 28, Mayank Agarwal (batting) 54, Devdutt Padikkal c Akash b Shedge 17, Karun Nair (batting) 3; Extras (lb-7, nb-1); 8; Total (for two wkts. in 26 overs): 110.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-50, 2-88.

**Mumbai bowling:** Shardul 4-0-38-0, Avasthi 9-2-21-1, Deshpande 5-2-13-0, Shedge 4-0-16-1, Mulani 4-0-15-0.



Prasidh and Mayank.  
EMMANUEL YOGINI

## A good toss to lose, says Prasidh

**Shayan Acharya**  
MUMBAI

Mumbai's decision to bat on a surface with uneven bounce raised a few eyebrows, but Prasidh Krishna believes that it was a 'good toss to lose' for Karnataka.

With Vidyaadhar Patil and Vidwath Kaverappa, who reached the 100 wicket milestone in First Class cricket, striking early, Mumbai was reduced to 39 for three, before Prasidh joined the party with three wickets.

"Honestly, it was a good toss to lose, that's what we said. We were also tending towards bowling, but they (the think-tank) were discussing batting first," Prasidh said.

Usually, Prasidh starts the proceedings for Karnataka with the new ball, but that did not happen on Friday as the team management decided to bring him into the attack later.

"Credit goes to Vidya and Vidwath for the way they started. That let me come in and get my time in to hold the line and understand what we want to do. It was a collective effort as all of us bowled well together," he said, adding: "(Coming in later) just gives you that extra leeway to alter your line and length and that's what we did. The catching also was very good".

## RANJI TROPHY QUARTERFINAL SCORES - DAY 1

**At Mumbai:** Mumbai 120 in 48.1 overs (Akhil Herwadkar 60, Vidwath Kaverappa 3/38, Prasidh Krishna 3/21, Shreyas Gopal 3/4) vs. Karnataka 110/2 in 26 overs (Mayank Agarwal 54 batting).

**Toss:** Mumbai.

**At Kalyani:** Andhra 264/6 in 80

overs (K.S. Bharat 47, Shaik Rasheed 46, Ricky Bhui 83, Mukesh Kumar 3/50) vs. Bengal. **Toss:** Bengal.

**At Indore:** J & K 194 in 67 overs (Shubham Khajuria 60, Yudvir Singh 41, Kuldeep Sen 5/66, Kumar Kartikeya 3/26) vs. **Toss:** Uttarakhand.

Madhya Pradesh 28/0 in 10 overs. **Toss:** Madhya Pradesh.

**At Jamshedpur:** Jharkhand 235 in 85 overs (Virat Singh 47, Aditya Singh 83, Janmejay Joshi 4/46, Aditya Rawat 3/39, Mayank Mishra 3/50) vs. Uttarakhand 4/0 in one over. **Toss:** Uttarakhand.

## S.N. BOSE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR BASIC SCIENCES

Block-JD, Sector-III, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700 106  
(An Autonomous Institute Under Department of Science and Technology, Government of India), website: www.bose.res.in

Ref: SNB/Advt./25-26/018

7<sup>th</sup> February, 2026

Direct Applications and/or nominations from Indian Nationals are invited for the post of DIRECTOR, S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences in Pay Level: 17 in 7<sup>th</sup> CPC (Basic pay - ₹ 2,25,000/-) with allowances as per Central Government Rules.

The Centre has research activities on Physical, Chemical, and Mathematical Sciences in Theoretical, Computational, and Experimental areas. The Centre undertakes cutting-edge research in chosen areas of basic sciences, including areas of application potentials, and is currently engaged also in translation research activities. In order to strengthen the R&D based human capacity, the Centre runs Ph.D. (post M.Sc.), Integrated Ph. D (post B.Sc.), and post-doctoral Research programmes. (Details of current research activities are available on the website: http://www.bose.res.in).

The Director will have the overall administrative control of the Centre and will provide high-level leadership to the Centre in identification of research programmes and projects of national and international relevance in various specialized fields of research undertaken by the Centre.

### Mode of Recruitment

Direct Recruitment, By Deputation, including short-term contract, Re-employment

**Tenure:** 3 to 5 years or on attaining the age of superannuation as per extant Government instructions (60 years at present), whichever is earlier.

**Age:** Not exceeding 56 years. The crucial date for determining the age limit shall be 01.01.2026.

**Essential Qualifications:** Doctorate in any branch of science, especially Physics, Chemistry, or Mathematics.

### Essential Experience for Direct Recruitment

a. At least 25 years of research experience in industrial and academic institutions and/or Science and Technology organizations or as faculty/scientist of recognized national/international universities/research institutes/Corporate R&D Labs etc, out of which at least 6 years should be in a senior position managing a Research Group, chairing Committees outside the institute or in managerial/administrative capacity for science & technology programmes, planning and development, budget & finance, coordination and such organizational matters.

b. R&D experience in any branch of science, especially Physics, Chemistry, or Mathematics

### Eligibility criteria for Recruitment on Deputation/contract

Scientists or Technologists working in the Central/State Governments/Universities/Recognized Research Institutions/Semi-Government, Statutory or Autonomous Organizations in India,

(a) (i) holding an analogous post; or

(ii) with 1 year regular service in the post carrying pay in the Pay Level 16 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC [Pay band of ₹ 75500-80000 Grade (HAG+)] or equivalent (6<sup>th</sup> CPC)]; or

(iii) 3 years regular service in the post carrying pay in the Pay Level 15 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC [Pay band of ₹ 67000-79000 (HAG) or equivalent (6<sup>th</sup> CPC)]; or

(iv) 7 years regular service in the post carrying pay in the Pay Level 14 as per 7<sup>th</sup> CPC [Pay band of ₹ 37400-67000 + Grade Pay of ₹ 10,000/- or equivalent (6<sup>th</sup> CPC)]; and

(b) Possessing the essential educational qualifications mentioned above.

### Application/Nomination Process

Applications/ nominations should be sent by post to "Registrar, S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Block JD, Sector III, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700106", to reach this address within 30 days from the date of publication of the advertisement.

The last date of receipt of this applications from candidates (including nominations) in Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim, Ladakh (UT), Lahaul and Spiti District, and Pangai Sub Division of Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep will be 45 days from the date of publication of this advertisement.

The envelope containing the application must be superscribed with "Application for the post of Director, SBNBCS, Kolkata". A copy of the application should be emailed to the Registrar, SBNBCS at registrar@bose.res.in, and the same email should also be sent to the Chairman, SBNBCS at gd.yadav@ictmumbai.edu.in.

Details and formats of the application to be downloaded from the websites: http://www.bose.res.in and http://dst.gov.in.

Registrar  
S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences

## WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Kota Division, West Central Railway inviting e-Auction for the contract of Advertisement on station circulating area premise (Ooh), Advertisement on station premise (RDN-NON Digital), Mis-Static-Services and Mobile Assets have been invited. For more information visit website www.reps.gov.in (e-Auction). (Sd)  
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West Central Railway, KOTA  
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एक कदम सर्वज्ञता की ओर

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Open e-Tender Notice No. TRD/OT/13/Br/Fd/2026

E-tenders are invited from reputed contractors having proven experience, electrical license and sound financial standing supported by the valid documents for the work as per details given below:-

**SL. No. : 1. Name of work with location :** Replacement of old bridge OHE mast with new OHE mast along with pile foundation in GC line in DDU Division., SL. No. : 2, Approx. Cost of the work : ₹ 12,75,67,998.87, SL. No. : 3. Earnest Money / Bid Security to be deposited : ₹ 787800.00, SL. No. : 4. Last date and time for submission of tender : Upto 27.02.2026 at 15:00 hrs., SL. No. : 5. Website particulars from where the details of e-tender can be obtained: www.reps.gov.in.

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The tender documents will be available in the Government website https://tenders.gov.in to enable the tenders to view and download of the e-tender document through online at free of cost and submission of tenders shall be done only through online.

**Note :** (i) It is the responsibility of the tenderer to check any Corrigendum issued for any correction (or) modification uploaded subsequently in website, the same shall be taken into account while submitting tender. (ii) The Tender Authority doesn't take any responsibility for the delay / non submission of tender/non-reconciliation of online payment caused due to non-availability of internet connection, network traffic/holidays or any other reasons. (iii) Tender may be cancelled at any stage by competent authority. (iv) Cost of EMD will be paid through online mode only and EMD cost as prescribed in the tender document.

Superintending Engineer, WRD., Upper Palar Basin Circle, Vellore-6

DPR/ 800 /TENDER/2026

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**Stealing the show**

		Smriti (RCB)	Devine (GG)	
		ORANGE CAP	PURPLE CAP	
Inns	Runs	HS	SR	100s/50s
Smriti (RCB)	9	377	96	153.25
Harmanpreet (MI)	8	342	82*	150.66
Sciver-Brunt (MI)	7	321	100*	151.41
				1/3
Inns	Wkts	BB	Econ	4W/5W
Devine (GG)	9	17	4/37	8.28
Nandani (DC)	10	17	5/33	8.31
de Klerk (RCB)	9	16	4/22	7.84
				2/0

## Smriti battled flu in the WPL final, says Malolan

Vivek Krishnan  
VADODARA

In the wee hours of Friday, as Royal Challengers Bengaluru basked in the afterglow of a second Women's Premier League title, Smriti Mandhana picked out Lauren Bell and Georgia Voll for special praise at the post-final presentation. She also expressed gratitude to the franchise's fans for their unwavering support. The 29-year-old, true to her self-effacing nature, didn't play up her own contribution. Perhaps she doesn't need to, when she is so adept at letting her bat do the talking.

The quality of her knock – she struck 87 off 41 balls – was top-notch in any given scenario. That she produced such brilliance in a chase of 204 on the big night made it even more remarkable, especially given the revelation by head coach Malolan Rangarajan that she had a high fever on the eve of the game.

"She saved one of her

best innings for the final. Smriti played this game with a massive flu. She was seriously unwell with high fever. But for one second also, she didn't show it. So, that's the person Smriti is," Malolan said.

Smriti stitched together a record partnership of 165 with Voll for the second wicket on Thursday.

Voll was overlooked in favour of spinner Linsey Smith for the first three games of the season, but even with RCB winning, the think-tank chose to adapt and change the combination in order to be one step ahead. The Australian vindicated that move with her innings of 79 in the final. "Linsey was primarily a PowerPlay option for us with the ball along with Bell. We were saying at that time, could we bring in another batter to unlock our batting even more? So, adaptability and changing with the conditions and situation was key. That tough call on Linsey had to be taken," he said.

Suryavanshi registered the highest individual score by any batter in an ICC tournament final. He put on 142 runs in just 19 overs with his skipper Ayush Mhatre, who departed following a 51-ball 53 (7x4, 2x6) after bringing up his half-century.

Suryavanshi was named Player-of-the-Tournament for scoring 439 runs with three half-centuries and a ton.

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Another one in the kitty: The Class of 2026 brought home India's sixth under-19 title. GETTY IMAGES

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Aaron George c Mayes b Green 9 (11b, 2x4), Vaibhav Suryavanshi c Rew b Lumsden 175 (80b, 15x4, 15x6), Ayush Mhatre c Mayes b Green 53 (51b, 7x4, 2x6), Vedant Trivedi c Mayes b Minto 32 (36b, 3x4), Vihaan Malhotra c Dawkins b Minto 30 (36b, 2x4), Abhigyan Kundu c Albert b Morgan 40 (31b, 6x4, 1x6), R.S. Ambris b Minto 18 (24b, 2x4), Kanishk Chouhan (not out) 37 (20b, 3x4, 1x6), Khilan Patel c Moores b Morgan 3 (4b), Henil Patel run out 5 (7b), Deepesh Devendran (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (lb-1, w-8); Total (for nine wkts. in 50 overs): 411.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-20 (George, 3.6 overs), 2-162 (Mhatre, 18.6), 3-251 (Suryavanshi, 25.3), 4-302

ENGLAND BOWLING

Morgan 9-0-74-2, Green 5-0-49-2, Lumsden 8-0-81-1, Minto 8-0-63-3, Farhan 10-0-77-0, Albert 10-0-66-0.

ENGLAND

Ben Dawkins c Khilan b Mhatre 66 (56b, 7x4, 2x6), Joseph Moores b Ambris 17 (16b, 4x4), Ben Moores c Henil b Khilan 45 (28b, 7x4, 2x6), Thomas Rew c Mhatre b Kanishk 31 (18b, 4x4, 1x6), Caleb Falconer c Khilan b Kanishk 115 (67b, 9x4, 7x6), Ralphi Albert run out 0 (2b), Farhan Ahmed c Kundu b Deepesh 1 (2b), Sebastian Morgan c & b Deepesh 0 (2b), James Minto c sub (Enaan) b Ambris 28 (41b, 1x4), Manny

FALL OF WICKETS

1-19 (Moores, 4.5 overs), 2-93 (Mayes, 12.6), 3-142 (Rew, 17.6), 4-174 (Dawkins, 20.4), 5-174 (Albert, 21.0), 6-177 (Farhan, 21.4), 7-177 (Morgan, 21.6), 8-269 (Minto, 35.2), 9-281 (Lumsden, 37.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Ambris 9-1-56-3, Henil 4-2-28-0, Deepesh 6-0-64-2, Khilan 8-0-66-1, Kanishk 8.2-0-63-2, Mhatre 5-0-31-1.

Toss: India.

Player-of-the-match & tournament: Suryavanshi.

India won by 100 runs to emerge the champion.

ment, India had lost to Pakistan in the u-19 Asia Cup final, and Sharath felt it served as a wake-up call. "That loss shook them. You learn more from failure, and the way the boys responded was impressive," Sharath said.

The u-19 WC final win was Headlined by Vaibhav Suryavanshi's 175, and the chairman described him as a superstar in the making. "To do what he did on the biggest stage was sensational," Sharath said, while also praising Ayush Mhatre's leadership.

While Sharath could not play for India despite having a stellar domestic career, he has made a mark as a selector. "I know the value of the India cap, and I am thankful to the BCCI for allowing me to contribute to Indian cricket," said Sharath, who was part of the senior selection committee for arranging several tours to aid their development.

Prior to the tourna-

ment, India under-19 boys regained the junior World Cup after four years, there was a common thread in the colts' last two triumphs – former Tamil Nadu cricketer S. Sharath.

The 53-year-old had served as the chairman of the junior selection committee in 2022, too, and returned to the role late last year.

"It was a superb effort from the boys, with everyone contributing," said an elated Sharath in a chat with *The Hindu*. "We have some exciting prospects in this team who can do great things for India."

On the plans that were charted out for the youngsters, Sharath credited V.V.S. Laxman, who heads BCCI's Centre of Excellence, and his colleagues in the committee for arranging several tours to aid their development.

Prior to the tourna-



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# Can't have any excuses in India; important to score whenever you bat

Padikkal has made heaps of runs in domestic cricket, but has just four international caps to show for his efforts. Yet, his drive to excel is unaffected. In this conversation, the 25-year-old talks about his batting evolution, the challenges of adapting to three formats, up-skilling in a cramped calendar, dealing with the competition for places, and his near- and long-term goals



## INTERVIEW

**Devdutt Padikkal****N. Sudarshan**

**R**uns in Indian domestic cricket are not inflation-proof. There are so many good batters, and such is the competition to get into the national team, that just one big pile of runs doesn't always cut it.

No one knows this better than Devdutt Padikkal. The 25-year-old averages an astonishing 82.23 in List-A cricket – including the 2025-26 Vijay Hazare Trophy where he scored 725 runs at 90.62 in Karnataka's semifinal run – but is yet to play an ODI.

In 2023-24, he made 812 First Class runs at 81.20, with a half-century in his debut Test against England in Dharamshala, but has played for India just once more (Australia, Perth, November 2024). Interestingly, his international bow was in T20Is in 2021, when he played two fixtures in Sri Lanka as part of a second-string team.

Yet, Padikkal's drive to excel remains intact. Apart from the recent Vijay Hazare exploits, he had an impactful IPL in 2025, scoring 247 runs at a strike-rate of 150.60 as Royal Challengers Bengaluru lifted its maiden crown.

Last weekend in the Ranji Trophy versus Punjab, in his first outing as Karnataka captain, he played a match-winning knock (120 n.o., 85b, 6x4, 5x6) as his side chased down a 250-run target in 28 overs to qualify for the knockouts. Padikkal spoke to *The Hindu* after the pulsating contest. Excerpts:

**How do you sum up your season so far?**

It's been great, I've enjoyed my batting. Whenever possible, I've tried to contribute to the side. At the end of the day, it was important for me to win



I'm at a really good place right now... You can't be second-guessing yourself. That's something that I have learnt in the last few years that I've been playing at the highest level

those trophies that we played in. Unfortunately, that's not happened so far. That's something that I'm disappointed about but hopefully can make it right in the Ranji Trophy.

**How have you grown as a batter?**

I'm at a really good place right now. I want to score runs every time I go out and play, and I'm also constantly trying to improve. Even in these four innings that I've played in the Ranji Trophy so far [vs. Madhya Pradesh and Punjab], I've felt that there are things that I need to improve. Especially playing spin, considering what we've been going through as an Indian side. So it was important that I came back and worked on those things, and I'm happy that I was able to show that [vs. Punjab].

**You are an all-format batter, but the formats are changing so drastically. How do you make adjustments?**

To be honest, it's not that easy. I've tried to mentally make that switch. But turnaround time being less makes it very hard. At the same time, we can't have any excuses in India. It's important to score runs whenever you go out to bat, and that's the mindset I have.

**You had an impressive IPL 2025. Not many runs, but they came at a high strike-rate. Was that you evolving?**

Definitely. That was a big confidence boost. The previous couple of IPL seasons weren't great for me. And IPL being one of the premier tournaments, confidence from a good IPL definitely carries through to the rest of your season. So I was happy that all the work I put in came in handy during the IPL season as well as after that.

**You also bat at different positions for India, Karnataka and RCB. How do you go about that?**

Batting at multiple positions is something that you have to adapt to in the current era. When you bat in different formats, you learn to bat in different positions as well. Some of the shots you saw [vs. Punjab], I probably wouldn't have played them if I was just opening all my career. It was something that I developed because I was batting in the middle-overs, etc.

**Modern-day cricket is high-risk and demanding. How do you deal with failure?**

You have to back yourself. You can't be second-guessing yourself. That's something that I have learnt in the last few years that I've been playing at the highest level. You have to back your skills and the work you've put in. You have to trust your instincts to take over once you're on the field.

**But in this jam-packed calendar, how do you find time to work on specific skills and adjustments you may have to make to continuously grow?**

The most time you get is the seven hours of sleep in your room [laughs]. Honestly, there isn't much time to sit back and think. You have to learn to make those adjustments in your mind and hope they translate onto the pitch. You don't have hours and hours at the practice grounds. It's important that you train your mind in such a way that you are able to make that adjustment once you think about it.

**What have you learnt from being around the national set-up and the IPL?**

Definitely the hunger and drive that top players have to win games. How much value each win has, how much it means to take the side through and be that guy who stands tall at the end... what happened [vs. Punjab] may not have happened five or six years ago when I wasn't part of that set-up. That's something that I've picked up, and

hopefully I can continue to emulate.

**When you look at the batting depth that the country has, does it intimidate or motivate you?**

I won't lie. It used to intimidate me five or six years back. I used to think that it's really hard to make it to the Indian side. You have to do so much more. But there comes a time when you need to just enjoy cricket. It's not about getting picked for India or being selected in some team or the other. It's just about enjoying the game that you've always loved. And the moment you start doing that, the rest of the things fall into place.

**You have only four international caps. Does that disappoint you?**

Obviously, I want to get as many opportunities as possible. But like you already mentioned the competition that exists in India... it's not easy to get a longer run. You have to work hard. You have to show that you belong. And that's what I'm trying to do. Every day I come out to bat, I'm trying to score. Hopefully I'll get that long run.

**What is the next iteration of Devdutt Padikkal?**

I have to keep getting better. As a cricketer, you work on one thing, and the next day you realise something else has gone down. It's just very natural. You can't always have every base in check and you have to make compromises. And I have to find that balance and continue to make sure that my game is in such a place that I can be consistent.

**What are your near- and long-term targets?**

Immediate target is to win the Ranji Trophy. That's something I've always wanted to do. Long-term target is to win everything that I play.

**STACKING UP**

ATP Men's Top 15				
#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Carlos Alcaraz	22	13,650	19
2	Jannik Sinner	24	10,300	18
3	Novak Djokovic	38	5,280	19
4	Alexander Zverev	28	4,605	24
5	Lorenzo Musetti	23	4,405	23
6	Alex de Minaur	26	4,080	23
7	Taylor Fritz	28	3,940	23
8	Felix Auger-Aliassime	25	3,725	26
9	Ben Shelton	23	3,600	23
10	Alexander Bublik	28	3,235	28
11	Daniil Medvedev	29	3,060	25
12	Casper Ruud	27	2,945	22
13	Jack Draper	24	2,790	17
14	Andrey Rublev	28	2,600	25
15	A. Davidovich Fokina	26	2,535	26

Top Indians ►  
Sumit Nagal  
Rank 281 ▾ No change

Aryan Shah  
Rank 402 ▾ 2 spots

**WTA Women's Top 15**

#	Player	Age	Points	Events
1	Aryna Sabalenka	27	10,990	20
2	Iga Swiatek	24	7,978	20
3	Elena Rybakina	26	7,610	23
4	Amanda Anisimova	24	6,680	21
5	Coco Gauff	21	6,423	20
6	Jessica Pegula	31	6,103	23
7	Mirra Andreeva	18	4,731	20
8	Jasmine Paolini	30	4,267	19
9	Belinda Bencic	28	3,342	20
10	Elina Svitolina	31	3,205	16
11	Katerina Aleksandrova	21	3,293	25
12	Linda Noskova	21	2,761	24
13	Victoria Mboko	19	2,606	21
14	Naomi Osaka	28	2,366	19
15	Madison Keys	30	2,351	19

Top Indians ►  
Sahaja Yamalapalli  
Rank 425 ▾ 55 spots

Vaidehee Chaudhari  
Rank 476 ▾ 6 spots

**English Premier League Standings**

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	24	16	5	3	46	17	29	53
2	Man. City	24	14	5	5	49	23	26	47
3	Aston Villa	24	14	4	6	35	26	9	46
4	Man. United	24	11	8	5	44	36	8	41
5	Chelsea	24	11	7	6	42	27	15	40
6	Liverpool	24	11	6	7	39	33	6	39
7	Brentford	24	11	3	10	36	32	4	36
8	Sunderland	24	9	9	6	27	26	1	36
9	Fulham	24	10	4	10	34	35	-1	34
10	Everton	24	9	7	8	26	27	-1	34
11	Newcastle	24	9	6	9	33	33	0	33
12	Bournemouth	24	8	9	7	40	43	-3	33
13	Brighton	24	7	10	8	34	32	2	31
14	Tottenham	24	7	8	9	35	33	2	29
15	Crystal Palace	24	7	8	9	25	29	-4	29
16	Leeds United	24	6	8	10	31	42	-11	26
17	N. Forest	24	7	5	12	24	35	-11	26
18	West Ham	24	5	5	14	29	48	-19	20
19	Burnley	24	3	6	15	25	47	-22	15
20	Wolves	24	1	5	18	15	45	-30	8

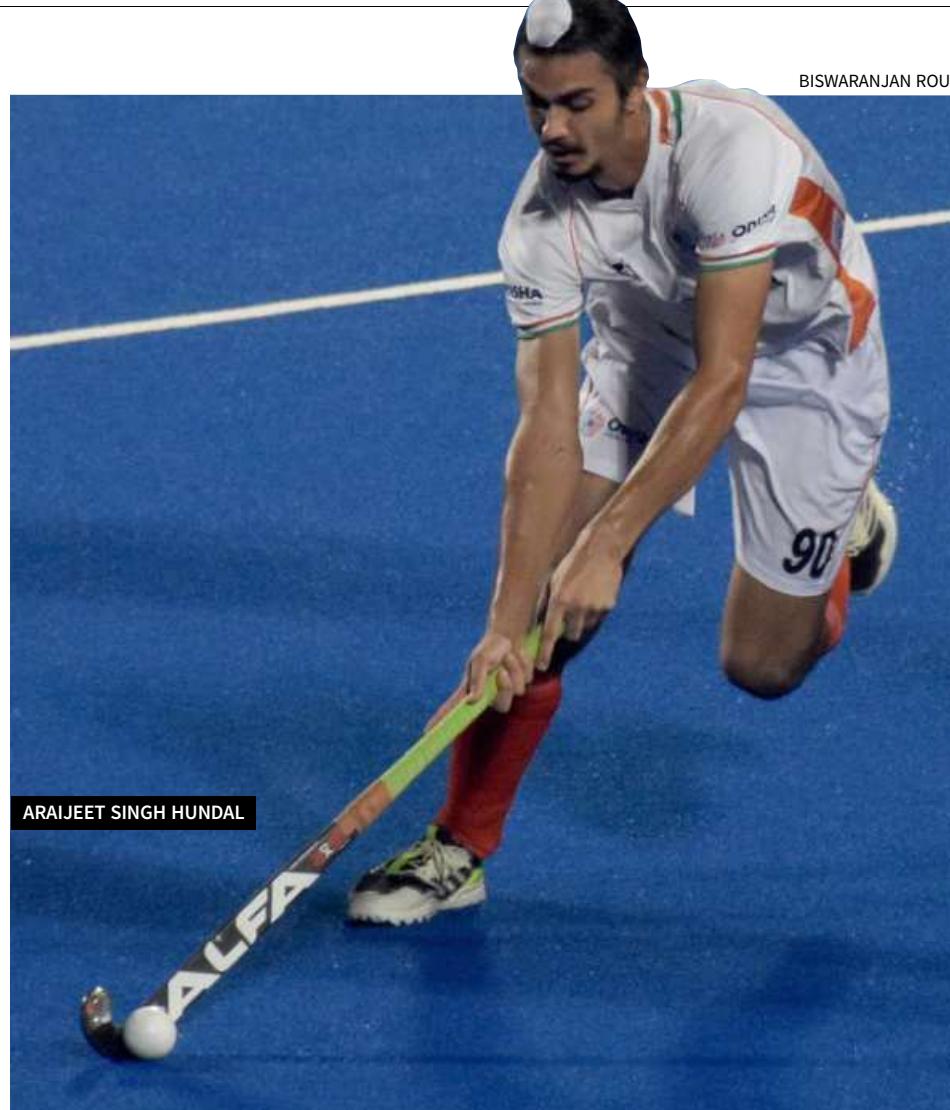
**Spanish LaLiga Standings**

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Barcelona	22	18	1	3	60	23		

R. RAGU



PRINCEDEEP SINGH



ARAJEET SINGH HUNDAL

BISWARANJAN ROUT



Amandeep [Lakra] thrived because of his coach's trust, executed the plans well. He shoots well between the goalkeeper and the post-man, and it is difficult to stop

HARENDRA SINGH  
Former India coach

a great asset for Toofans. Having spent time in Peillat's shadow in the HIL's previous edition, he got a bigger role this time, as the German withdrew due to an injury. He grabbed the opportunity. With nine goals, the uncapped Indian was fourth on the list of leading goal-scorers, featuring several overseas stars. A focused and cool defencer, the 23-year-old was rightly named the 'Player of the tournament'.

Toofans coach Pasha Gademan was delighted with Lakra's success. "He knows really well what he can do. We worked on his technique in the beginning a little bit. Maybe he benefited from it. After a while, he was very conscious about it, and was calm. He knew what he wanted to do."

"The ball comes very low on the stick with him. A lot of decisions come from collaboration. But also many times, he made the decision of where to flick it right."

Gademan also underlined Lakra's role as a defencer. "Last year, Amandeep got three to four minutes per quarter to play. This year, we just played him for 60 minutes and he got his performance right."

Harendra added, "Amandeep thrived because of his coach's trust, executed the plans well. He shoots well between the goalkeeper and the post-man, and it is difficult to stop."

Twenty-one-year-old Manipuri defencer Talem Priyobrata Singh, who was chosen the 'Up-and-coming player of the tournament', made an impression with his fearless and level-headed performance.

Although Arshdeep, Ekka and Talem narrowly missed the cut for the 33 core probables, they are future prospects Fulton will be closely monitoring.

Among those included were linkmen Rajinder Singh, Rabichandra Singh Moirangthem and Manmeet Singh and forwards Angad Bir Singh, Aditya Lalage and Maninder Singh, all of whom made their presence felt at the HIL.

In the post-P.R. Sreejesh era, with India's first choice custodian Krishan Pathak 'rested' for the FIH Pro League, Princedeep Singh, who was adjudged 'Goalkeeper of the tournament', and H.S. Mohith shone at the HIL to make it to the National camp.

While all the bright boys are unlikely to make it to the Indian side, they will get their shot in due course. Since Fulton lays importance on both the World Cup (August 14-30), a quadrennial showpiece event, and the Asian Games (September 19-October 4), a qualifying competition for LA28, he is not in favour of fielding two different teams in these elite competitions.

But the head coach does not mind rotating the experienced and the youth to keep a big bunch of players ready for any eventuality. He may give some of the newer faces exposure in events of lesser importance.

#### 'Crazy' schedule

"We have an India-A squad that's functioning. A lot of the under-21 players would go into that. Then you have a tour to New Zealand and the Asian Champions Trophy [ACT] towards the end [of the year]. It's crazy to have the World Cup, the Asian Games, the ACT all [within a short period]," said Fulton.

Nevertheless, a challenging schedule may prove a blessing in disguise, as it will provide the promising lot plenty of opportunities to rise to the occasion during a crucial changeover phase in the run-up to the 2028 Olympics.

## Change of phase: opportunity knocks for India's young hockey talent

The men's team needs an injection of fresh blood in the run-up to the 2028 Olympics. The packed calendar in 2026 may prove a blessing in disguise — head coach Craig Fulton can use it as a base to experiment, giving lesser-known faces exposure, and trigger a smooth transition

Y.B. Sarangi

**N**otwithstanding the absence of hockey in the upcoming Glasgow Commonwealth Games programme, 2026, studied with the World Cup and the Asian Games, presents a packed calendar to the Indian men's hockey team.

The challenge extends beyond the current year: several experienced players, who were a part of the bronze-winning Paris 2024 team, may not be at peak form and fitness during Los Angeles 2028.

#### Infusion of youth

Such a situation warrants the infusion of younger talent into the side so that they can get into the groove in time to perform the elite India duty well. Considering that, 2026 will serve as the base year during which head coach Craig Fulton can experiment and trigger a transition before entering serious preparatory mode a year before the 2028 Olympics.

With the twin challenges of facing a busy calendar and effecting a smooth change, Fulton trained his eyes on the recently concluded Hockey India League (HIL) in Chennai, Ranchi and Bhubaneswar to spot as many up-and-coming players as he could.

The effort was reflected in the Indian squad of 33 core probables for the home leg of the FIH Pro League scheduled in Rourkela from February 10. Several younger players, who either have not



Hundels [Arajeet Singh Hundal], post his injury, is coming back to some kind of form, which is nice. I also like [Anmol] Ekka. He has really shown he can fill a role

CRAIG FULTON  
India head coach

made their debut or have played only a few top-level matches, found their places.

Looking forward to rotating young and experienced players as he builds the team for LA28, Fulton offered his views on the youngsters who caught his attention in the HIL.

"Arshdeep [Singh]'s coming good. Hundels [Arajeet Singh Hundal], post his injury from under-21s, is coming back to some kind of form, which is nice. You have got a lot of guys playing smaller roles within a big team, but they're still doing their role well," said Fulton.

"I also like [Anmol] Ekka. He has come good. In this tournament, he has really shown he can fill a role. And [Amandeep] Lakra as well. He was playing behind [Gonzalo] Peillat last season in terms of flicking. Now he has got the full responsibility to flick. He has done a good job and he has put it on target. They've got rebounds, he has scored goals."

Hyderabad Toofans' 21-year-old Amritsar boy Arshdeep, a member of the bronze-winning Indian team at the Junior World Cup in Tamil Nadu, has the skill-set typically found in crafty Indian and Pakistani players of yesteryear. He is a sharp

operator inside the circle. "Give him some space, he will take advantage of that. He uses the backhand well and is quick. You can't plan for such a player," said former India coach Harendra Singh, who guided Ranchi Royals to the HIL final.

Royals forward Hundal, a strapping 22-year-old, has donned India colours. Another player from Amritsar district, he recovered from a shoulder injury, which prevented him from playing in the Junior World Cup last year, to make his mark with spectacular goals off powerful shots. He is also known for his drag-flick skills.

Two youngsters from Sundargarh's tribal belt sparked as well.

Twenty-year-old defender Ekka, a product of the Bhubaneswar-based Odisha Naval Tata Hockey High Performance Centre, caught everyone's attention in the HIL.

His composed, proactive performance gave the Royals backline assurance.

#### Classic defencer

"Anmol is a classic defencer with one-on-one tackling skills. He gelled well with the European

players and posed a threat to the foreign [forwards]. But his drag-flick is underused. He is good at distribution and has an excellent aerial ball. Like Harmanpreet, he looks cool while defending," said Harendra.

Lakra, an effortless drag-flicker, proved to be

## GAME THEORY

### Queens of the 2020s

At the 2026 Australian Open, Elena Rybakina won her second Grand Slam title of the 2020s (and her career) while Aryna Sabalenka lost the fourth of her eight Major final appearances this decade. We look at the women's singles players with the most Major triumphs in the 2020s and their share of titles in the 24 Grand Slam events that have been held so far this decade (2020 Wimbledon was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic).

WOMEN'S SINGLES CHAMPIONS:  
GRAND SLAM EVENTS IN THE 2020S

Player	Major titles	Major finals	% of the decade's Majors won
Iga Swiatek	6	6	25.00%
Aryna Sabalenka	4	8	16.67%
Naomi Osaka	2	2	8.33%
Ashleigh Barty	2	2	8.33%
Barbora Krejcikova	2	2	8.33%
Coco Gauff	2	3	8.33%
Elena Rybakina	2	3	8.33%
Sofia Kenin	1	2	4.17%
Emma Raducanu	1	1	4.17%
Marketa Vondrousova	1	1	4.17%
Madison Keys	1	1	4.17%



SOURCE: WTA TOUR

## PICTURE THIS



### Driving all day

The 24 Hours of Daytona is an endurance race held in the last weekend of January or the first weekend of February, making it the first major automobile race of the year in North America.

Known as the Rolex 24 at Daytona for sponsorship

reasons, the annual event is run at Florida's Daytona International Speedway, on a 5.73-km combined layout that uses most of the circuit's tri-oval and an infield road course.

So, unlike the 24 Hours of Le Mans, the Daytona race is conducted entirely over a

closed course within the speedway arena, without the use of any public streets.

Considered the pinnacle of sports car racing in North America — it attracts top manufacturers, teams and drivers — Daytona is a part of the informal endurance Triple Crown, along with Le Mans and

the 12 Hours of Sebring.

Endurance racing tests the durability of equipment and the stamina of participants. Having to drive an entire day pushes drivers, mechanics, marshals and even fans physically and psychologically. Porsche has the most overall victories of any manufacturer at Daytona (23).