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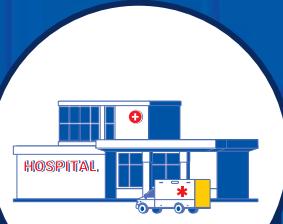
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Chief Minister, Punjab



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## தமிழ்நாடு மாணவர்கள் தரணியை வென்றிட 10,00,000 மறக்கணினிகள் வழங்கும் திட்டம்

தமிழ்நாட்டின் வளர்ச்சிப் யெனத்தில் ஒருவரையும் பின்தங்க விடமாட்டோம் !!



BELDANGA VIOLENCE

SC seeks clarity from NIA on invoking UAPA

NEWS » PAGE 10



TAX DEVOLUTION

No reduction in States' shares, says Nirmala

NEWS » PAGE 11



PRESIDENTIAL DELEGATION

Lula to visit India with 260 Brazilian firms

WORLD » PAGE 14

## Centre plans guidelines for books by defence personnel

Defence Ministry held a meeting to frame them for both serving and retired personnel, says official; to lay down a framework to be followed before any manuscript is cleared for publication

Saurabh Trivedi  
NEW DELHI

Amid the controversy surrounding the unpublished memoir *Four Stars of Destiny*, of former Army chief General M.M. Naravane (retired), the Defence Ministry is working on detailed guidelines for serving and retired armed forces personnel who wish to publish books in future.

The proposed guidelines will spell out the process to be followed before any manuscript is cleared for publication.

A senior defence official confirmed that a meeting was held recently to frame a new set of rules, during which a detailed presentation was made. The upcoming framework is expected to incorporate provisions of existing ser-

### Fresh framework

The upcoming guidelines are expected to incorporate provisions of existing service rules as well as the Official Secrets Act (OSA)

- At present, there is no single consolidated law specifically governing book-writing by retired Army officers
- The OSA makes disclosure of classified information, sensitive operational details, or any material prejudicial to national security a criminal offence
- The Act continues to apply to an officer for life, even after retirement

Tricky words: LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with a copy of the unpublished memoir of former Army chief M.M. Naravane. PTI

vice rules as well as the Official Secrets Act (OSA).

At present, there is no single consolidated law specifically governing book-writing by retired Army officers. Instead, different legal and service frameworks apply to serving personnel and retirees. In

both cases, national security and protection of classified information remain the primary red lines.

There are no specific service rules barring ex-servicemen or retired Army officers from authoring or publishing books. However, the freedom oper-

ates within a legal grey area. The OSA continues to apply for life, even after retirement, making it a criminal offence to disclose classified information, sensitive operational details, or any material prejudicial to national security.

While retired personnel are no longer governed by the Army Act or Army rules in matters of publication, statutory laws remain applicable. If a manuscript contains operational or sensitive details, authors are expected to submit it to the Ministry for clearance.

The relevant department then verifies and cross-checks the content before granting approval.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10  
FIR OVER MEMOIR  
» PAGE 10

## U.S. drops references added to statement on deal with India

Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

The U.S. on Wednesday backtracked on changes it made to the India-U.S. joint statement and the White House factsheet on the India-U.S. framework for the interim agreement on trade, removing references to 'pulses', 'agricultural products', 'digital service tax' and Indian 'commitments' on investing \$500 billion.

The references, which were not in the original joint statement, had led to questions being raised in New Delhi.

Opposition leaders asked the government to clarify its position after officials had categorically said that sensitive agricultural items were not included in the deal and that India had "intended" but not given a binding commitment to investing \$500 billion in American pro-

### Taking back

The references had raised concerns after not being present in the original India-U.S. joint statement

- Dropped references:  
■ Pulses  
■ Agricultural products  
■ Digital service tax  
■ 'Commitments' on investing \$500 billion

ducts over a period of five years. "India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all U.S. industrial goods and a wide range of U.S. food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products," the corrected factsheet read.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

## NEARBY



SC adjourns hearing in poll case against CM

NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing in an appeal filed by Saidai Duraisamy, who had accused Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and the DMK of indulging in corrupt practices ahead of the 2011 Assembly election from the Kolathur constituency, citing a lack of clarity in the presentation of material particulars in his pleadings. » PAGE 6

METROPLUS » 4 PAGES

## Power sharing won't work in T.N., says CM

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

"Definitely. We are doing very well."

**Relations with Congress**  
When asked about his relationship with the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, the Chief Minister said, "As for Rahul, he considers me his brother beyond politics. I, too, consider him my brother."

When asked which party he considered the DMK's primary political opponent, Mr. Stalin asserted that no alliance could defeat the bloc led by the DMK.

"We expect to win 200 seats. We hope to win more than that," Mr. Stalin said.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 6

## High turnout expected as Bangladesh votes today

Agence France-Presse  
DHAKA

A day before its first polls since the 2024 uprising, Bangladesh's Election Commission said on Wednesday that it expected a strong voter turnout.

Many young people had been effectively deprived of the freedom to vote for their choice during ousted Premier Sheikh Hasina's iron-fisted rule, commission official Abul Fazal Muhammad Sanaullah told presspersons.

"We see euphoria among the people," he said ahead of Thursday's vote.

SABOTAGE ALLEGATION  
» PAGE 14

## Tamil Brahmi inscriptions discovered in Egypt shed light on ancient trade links

N. Sai Charan  
CHENNAI

A path-breaking finding has shed new light on trade links between ancient Tamilagam, other parts of India, and the Roman Empire. Two researchers have identified close to 30 inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit and Sanskrit at tombs in the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. These inscriptions are said to belong to the period between the 1st and 3rd Centuries CE.

The inscriptions were identified during a study in 2024 and 2025 by Charlotte Schmid, Professor at the French School of Asian Studies (EFE) in Paris, and Ingó Strauch, Professor at the



A Tamil Brahmi inscription with the name Cikai Korrān in one of the tombs at the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The team documented them across six tombs in the Theban Necropolis. They followed in the footsteps of French scholar Jules Baillet, who surveyed the Valley of the Kings in 1926 and published more than 2,000 Greek graffiti marks.

Presenting their findings in a paper titled "From the Valley of the Kings to India: Indian Inscriptions in Egypt" at the ongoing Inter-

national Conference on Tamil Epigraphy, the scholars said the individuals who made these inscriptions came from the north-western, western and southern regions of the Indian subcontinent, with those from the latter forming the majority.

Visitors had left brief inscriptions and graffiti by carving their names on the walls of corridors and rooms, marking their presence in the tombs, the researchers said, adding that these sets of inscriptions appear inside the tombs alongside larger bodies of graffiti in other languages, primarily Greek.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 10

**CONVERSION CONCLAVE 2026**  
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Groundbreakings & Inaugurations

12<sup>th</sup> February 2026, | ITC Grand Chola, Chennai.

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**Thiru. M.K. STALIN**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

	Projects Signed since 2021	Conversions so far	Conversion during Conclave-2026
Projects	1,179	867	123 + 2 New*
Investment	₹12.37 Lakh Cr.	₹7.91 Lakh Cr.	₹74,267 Cr.
Employment	36.52 Lakhs	17.84 Lakhs	1.48 Lakhs

\* 71 Groundbreakings | 52 Inaugurations | 2 MoUs

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DIPR/175/DISPLAY/2026

Indiprnews Indipr Indipr TN DIPR www.dipr.tn.gov.in

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M.CHE

# Kadalukku Oru Kaditham: when the sea waits for letters from public

## ECO WATCH

**Dennis S. Jesudasan**  
CHENNAI

On the service road along Marina beach, where Kamajar Salai's traffic fades into the rhythm of rolling waves, a small branch library and an environmental NGO have opened an unusual channel of communication with the sea.

In partnership with the Environmentalist Founda-

tion of India (EFI), the Directorate of Public Libraries (DPL) has set up an 'Ocean Station' – part reading corner – part outreach centre – for marine awareness. At its heart, stands a modest post box, bearing an invitation that feels almost radical in the digital age: "Kadalukku Oru Kaditham" (A Letter to the Sea).

The idea is romantic in the old sense of the word: believing that the sea can listen. But the intention,

It is a way of engaging

says EFI founder Arun Krishnamurthy, is deeper. "In a city like Chennai, once you stand on the beach, it becomes serene, almost spiritual. You lose yourself. People naturally talk to the ocean, try to connect with it. That ocean connect is deep within us. We are just giving an opportunity for people to express that," he says. For the organisers, the post box is also a creative engagement tool.

with people in a very creative way because they also know that the sea does not respond, says B. Chandra-



**Connecting with nature:** A view of the library set up by the Directorate of Public Libraries at Marina beach. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

people to communicate. If they were to say something to the sea what would they say. In a way, it is also an attempt at making people connect with nature," Mr. Chandramohan explains.

In eight months, only four letters have been posted. Yet each letter is seen as a quiet testament to people opening up—often anonymously—in a public space. The Ocean Station itself is the result of a collaborative effort: EFI approached the District Li-

brary Officer, the government reconstructed the old building, and EFI mobilised resources to fill the campus with material on marine life, ocean wealth and conservation. Today, the library has become a hub for EFI's ocean-awareness activities.

V. Thennavan, who stumbled upon the library during a recent visit to the Marina, recalls visiting a small aquarium in the area as a child. "This is a nice idea, especially when writ-

ing is declining. The library not only makes people read; this post box encourages them to write. Penning thoughts and feelings helps people immensely. I have personally benefited from writing a diary," he says.

Behind the modest library building, the Bay of Bengal stretches endlessly—eternal, unreadable, and patient. And somewhere between the waves and the wind, the sea waits, quietly, for the next letter.

## Man held for smuggling silver bars

**CHENNAI:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) at Chennai Egmore arrested a man for allegedly smuggling silver bars worth ₹61.50 lakh and unaccounted cash worth

₹2.50 lakh during an inspection at the railway station. He was identified as Sanjay Arunkumar, 40. The seized items were handed over to Income Tax Department.

TAMIL NADU GREEN ENERGY CORPORATION LIMITED Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)		
Specification No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Name of Work
SPECH No-HE-2520	CE / HYDRO	E-Tender for renovation / rectification of damaged hydro generation units 1 and 2 (2 x 1.25 MW) of PVSHEP - 4 due to flood including supply, erection, testing and commissioning of electro-mechanical equipment and both the units of the Power House as per site conditions in Tirunelveli Generation Circle.
SPECH No-HE-2521	CE / HYDRO	E-Tender for refurbishing of stator core and complete re-insulation of stator coils with Class F insulation, re-insulation of defective rotor pole coils with Class H insulation, supply of new stator bars, allied mechanical works including realignment, dynamic balancing and commissioning of the Unit-1 (100 MW) Generator at Kadamparai Power House.

For Details of Work / Procurement / Due date of Submission / Opening / Viewing and downloading of E-Tenders Please visit Websites from <https://tnitenders.gov.in/> and [niccep/app](https://tnitenders.gov.in/niccep/app) for submission of bids.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT THANJAVUR (H), CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE CIRCLE TENDER NOTICE		
Tender Notice No.45 / 2025-2026/ HDO / Dated: 10.02.2026		
For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online under Two Cover System will be received up to 23.02.2026, 12.00 hours (server time) by the Superintending Engineer (H), C&M, Thanjavur Circle for NHAI, Puducherry Deposit Work One work (TNJ-108) Pertaining to Mayiladuthurai (H) C&M Division.		
Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD (EMD through online payment Gateway of the Portal only) availability of tender document and all other details are available from 12.02.2026 onwards in the Government website <a href="https://tnitenders.gov.in">https://tnitenders.gov.in</a> . If any Changes / Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.		
DIPR/866/TENDER/2026		
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H), C&M CIRCLE, THANJAVUR		

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU DIRECTORATE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION		
Urban Administrative Building, 11TH Floor, Raja Annamalaiapuram, MRC Nagar, Chennai-600 028 Phone (044) 29864457 Website: <a href="https://tnurbanbase.in">https://tnurbanbase.in</a>		
<b>REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST</b>		
The Directorate of Municipal Administration, Chennai-28 invites application from the eligible candidates for the following posts to work on contract basis for a period of one year in Project Management Unit constituted under World Bank assisted Tamil Nadu Climate Resilient Urban Development Program (TNCRUDP) in the Directorate of Municipal Administration Raja Annamalaiapuram, MRC Nagar, Chennai-600 028.		
1. Procurement and Financial Management Specialist - 1 post 2. Urban Development Specialist - 1 Post		
Application and instructions can be downloaded from the website <a href="https://tnurbanbase.tn.gov.in/whats New">https://tnurbanbase.tn.gov.in/whats New</a> (Please check in "what's New" in the website)		
Last date of receipt of application is 20.02.2026.		
Directorate of Municipal Administration, Chennai - 600 028.		
DIPR/939/TENDER/2026		

Tamil Nadu Power Generation Corporation Ltd Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)		
Specification No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Name of the Work
289	SE / P&A / NCTPS-2	Supply and erection of Upgraded version of existing rectifier unit for steam II in ECP
437	SE / Mech. Maint - II / TTPS	Unit-I - Capital overhaul of 210 MW LMW TG set and Re RLA study on Turbine components
223	CE / MTPS-II	General Cleaning and Preventive maintenance works in Air Pre Heaters Lub Oil Station 365 days
176	SE / P&A / MTPS-I	Design Supply Erection Commissioning of Automatic fire detection and quench sys for Convector 11A 11B
226	CE / MTPS-II	Daily Maintenance and Preventive Breakdown maintenance works in Bottom Ash Handling System
225	CE / MTPS-II	General cleaning Boiler 365 days
224	CE / MTPS-II	Cleaning of HFO HSD guns 365 days

For details of works / Procurement / Due date of submission / Opening, viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit websites: [www.tnpdcl.org](http://www.tnpdcl.org), [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in), [www.tntenders.gov.in](http://www.tntenders.gov.in) DIPR/960/Tender/2026

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE		
OPEN TENDER Batch No. - 17/2026 Dt. 10/02/2026		
E-Tender Notice for supply of materials "Participation in through" Web Portal of IREPS- <a href="http://www.reps.gov.in">www.reps.gov.in</a> . Offers are invited for supply of the following material. The closing time for the tender is at 14:00 Hrs. SL.No.: 01, Tender No.: 3926501. Short Description of item : Supply and modification of Brake Caliper Bushes in LHB Coaches, Make-FTTRIL only, Quantity : 35 Set, Publishing Date & Time : 09/02/26 11:36 Hrs, Tender Closing Date & Time : 09-MAR-26 14:00 Hrs.		
Participants are required to submit their offer only on-line through the web Portal of IREPS- <a href="http://www.reps.gov.in">www.reps.gov.in</a> before the closing date and time. Other details regarding Consignee and detailed description of stores are available in tender document in tender notice on the above portal.		
Sr. DMM/ECR/DHN PR/1774/DHN/STORE/T/25-26/28		

TAMILNADU CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION		
Office of the Regional Manager, Kancheepuram Region, Ph.No.044-27236650 / 9443520781 Email id: mscckpm@nic.in CIN: U15137TN1972SC006157		
<b>E-TENDER NOTICE</b>		
e-Tender No:T1/9927/2020/TNCSC/25-26 Dated:12.02.2026		
Online e-tender is invited for the "PURCHASE OF 100 mts of New CASUARINA Poles as per specifications.		
Complete e-tender document can be viewed and downloaded through <a href="https://tnitenders.gov.in/niccep/app">https://tnitenders.gov.in/niccep/app</a> from 12.02.2026 @ 3:00 P.M.		
The bidders have to participate online bidding only with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II or Class-III		
Last date & Time for Online Submission : up to 11.30 A.M on 26.02.2026		
Date & Time of Opening of Bid : up to 11.30 A.M on 27.02.2026		
Date & Time of Pre-Bid Meeting : up to 11.30 A.M on 17.02.2026 in the office of the Kancheepuram Region		
Earnest Money Deposit Rs.12,000/- (Rupees Twelve Thousand Only) Payment of EMD by online REIGIONAL MANAGER, TNCSC, KANCHEEPURAM REGION		
RO.No.011/1PRO/2026, Kancheepuram Asst. Signal & Telecom Engineer / ECR/Danapur PR/1764/DNR/S&T/T/25-26/32		

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE		
No. DNR/S&T/Sig/2026/2, Danapur, Dt. 07.02.2026		
Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom), East Central Railway, Danapur Division for and on behalf of the President of India invites tenders on web portal <a href="http://www.reps.gov.in">www.reps.gov.in</a> for the following work :		
Name of work with its location: Rehabilitation and restoration of S&T gear for safety in train operation at Fazalchak and Top Sarthua station in JTDM-DHWN section under Danapur division. Approximate cost of work: ₹1,95,48,386.94, Earnest Money: ₹2,47,800/-, Last Date & Time of Submission: Up to 15.00 hrs. on 02.03.2026, Opening of tender: 15.00 hrs. on 02.03.2026, Website particulars where detail of the work and criteria can be seen: <a href="http://www.reps.gov.in">www.reps.gov.in</a> , Address of the office from where details information can be obtained : Sr. Divn. Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, East Central Railway, Danapur. Note : Any corrigendum if required will be uploaded on above website before 14:00 hrs.		
Asst. Signal & Telecom Engineer / ECR/Danapur PR/1764/DNR/S&T/T/25-26/32		



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**Confederation of Danish Industry opens office**

**CHENNAI:** The Confederation of Danish Industry has launched a new office in the technology park located on Pallavaram-Thoraipakkam Radial Road. Lars Sandahl Sorensen, Global Chief Executive Officer of Confederation of Danish Industry, said the office would help Danish companies grow in the country.

Chennai Weather	max	min
Tiruvallur	30	17
Chennai Airport	29	20
Chennai City	28	21

**Chennai Airport Today**  
32°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be little warm. Night also will be pleasant. Dry weather to prevail.

**Chennai Airport Tomorrow**  
33°C The weather will be dry. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant.

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**THE HINDU**  
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# CMDA plans work to rectify deflection on skywalk at Kilambakkam bus terminus

The project consultant had flagged minor load deflection of the deck built from the MTC bus stop across one portion of GST Road; official says passenger lifts would be installed after the works

**STORIES FROM THE ROAD**

**Strengthening effort:** Deploying more weight above the deck slab has been proposed as a rectification measure. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

**T**he Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) would soon be taking up corrective works on the ₹79-crore skywalk project being executed at the Kalaignar Centenary Bus Terminus (KCBT) in Kilambakkam.

The project links the bus terminus with the newly constructed halt railway station across GST Road. Social media is rife with pictures showing the alleged threat posed by the structure to users.

A senior CMDA official said the first phase of installing the deck for the skywalk from the MTC bus

stop across one portion of GST Road has been completed. However, the consultant for the first phase, Centre for Urbanisation, Buildings and Environment (CUBE), an arm of IIT-Madras, had flagged minor load deflection issues.

As per a technical report, minor deflection above permissible levels

had been identified in the installed structure. To rectify the issue, CMDA has now engaged structural engineers from IIT-Madras, and as per their advice, deploying more weight above the deck slab has been proposed as a rectification measure.

However, due to delay in getting permissions on the congested GST

Road, the work was pending and would be taken up by the end of this week.

For the second stretch of the skywalk from the GST Road to a private land, which has been acquired, structural engineers of IIT-Madras were engaged as the design of the skywalk would be a little skewed.

"We do not see any structural issues in the second stretch for which all structural works of readying the deck have been completed and ready for installation," said the official.

Once the rectification works are completed, lifts on both sides would be installed for commuters to safely cross the congested road, he added.

Meanwhile, the Southern Railway has completed all civil works of paving the platforms at Kilambakkam halt station.



The participants were trained on basic first aid, rescue and relief measures to be followed during disasters. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## GCC trains members of women's self-help groups to become disaster champions

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

As part of efforts to train critical groups to be 'disaster champions' in the city during natural disasters, members of women's self-help groups attended a disaster risk reduction training session, organised by Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) in the Ambattur Zone office, on Wednesday.

The disaster management programme was conducted by GCC's Storm Water Drain (SWD) Department under the Integrated Urban Flood Management Project for the Chennai Kosasthalaiyar basin, with Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Institutional Strengthening and Reform Consultant (ISRC).

The self-help group federation members were instructed to keep essential documents, including Aadhaar cards, ration cards,

and voter identity cards in safe and easily accessible places during emergencies.

Manohar, an expert from Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority (TNSDMA), explained basic first aid, rescue and relief measures to be followed during disasters, and raised awareness on TN-Alert app.

Esther, a TNSDMA expert, said such groups must be a part of disaster management planning committees. "They are also taught to tackle agenda-based and gender-based violence post-disaster, which generally happens due to frustration from loss of life and livelihood, mainly among men," she added. Three weeks earlier, a similar disaster risk reduction training session was conducted for transpersons. During that interaction, problems such as homelessness and lack of access to hormone injections were reported.

**Timings****CHENNAI**

THURSDAY, FEB. 12		
RISE	06:33	SET 18:14
RISE	02:19	SET 13:45
FRIDAY, FEB. 13		
RISE	06:32	SET 18:14
RISE	03:11	SET 14:37
SATURDAY, FEB. 14		
RISE	06:32	SET 18:15
RISE	04:02	SET 15:32

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Sudhakara Sri R.K. Shriramkumar,

Musicologist. At 7.00 p.m. Vocal

concert by Delhi Sri P Sundarrajan,

Sri S. Varadarajan (Violin),

Srimushnam Sri V. Raju Rao (Mrudangam), Sri S. V. Ramani

(Ghatam). All are welcome.

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## Robotic beating heart bypass surgery introduced in city

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

Kauvery Hospital, has introduced a beating heart coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery programme using the fourth-

generation da-Vinci robotic surgical system.

The minimally invasive procedure allows surgeons to perform coronary bypass surgery through small keyhole incisions without stopping the heart or using

a heart-lung machine. This approach can reduce surgical trauma and supports faster recovery in patients with coronary artery disease. The programme is led by Arunkumar Krishnasamy, senior consultant cardiothoracic and robotic cardiac surgeon, along with a multidisciplinary team of cardiac anaesthesiologists, surgeons, perfusionists and critical care specialists.

Studies have shown that robotic-assisted off-pump CABG can reduce blood loss, post-operative pain, ICU stay, and the risk of wound-related complications, while improving recovery and cosmetic outcomes.

The self-help group federation members were instructed to keep essential documents, including Aadhaar cards, ration cards,

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## IN BRIEF



## Chennai scientist bags Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship

A Chennai-born scientist, Samathmika Ravi, has been awarded the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Postdoctoral Fellowship, one of European Union's most competitive research grants. She is an alumnus of Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute. She has built her research career at the intersection of genomics and crop science. Her fellowship project, Bytes4Beets, focuses on identifying climate-resilient traits in wild relatives of sugar beet, aiming to support breeding strategies that can withstand rising temperatures and environmental stress. The fellowship includes a research phase at the University of Western Australia, followed by a return phase at the University of Padova.

## Health Minister inaugurates metabolic clinic in Alwarpet

Health Minister Ma. Subramanian on Wednesday inaugurated Revivo Clinic for Obesity and Diabetes in Alwarpet, a specialised metabolic health facility aimed at addressing obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and related metabolic conditions. The centre aims to focus on treating the underlying drivers of metabolic disorders, including visceral fat accumulation, insulin resistance, and muscle health, rather than limiting care to blood sugar control alone. The clinic integrates diagnostics, medical supervision, and lifestyle-based interventions. Arvind Ashok, co-founder of Revivo, said the clinic seeks to bridge the gap between conventional hospital-based medical care and fitness-driven lifestyle interventions by providing integrated treatment under one system.

## BJP forms 7-member election management committee

To coordinate party-related activities for the upcoming Assembly election in the State, the Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP on Wednesday formed a seven-member election management committee under the chairmanship of its president Nair Nagenthiran. In a statement, Mr. Nagenthiran said former Union Minister and party's national executive committee member Pon. Radhakrishnan will serve as the organiser of the committee, while S.R. Sekhar, R.N. Jayarakash, M. Venugadesan, Mala Selvakumar, and S.R. Ramapriyan will function as co-organisers. This committee will spearhead election-related activities to ensure the victory of National Democratic Alliance (NDA), he said.

## Text &amp; Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* paper (epaper.thehindu.com) carry explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (February 12, Thursday), the following articles are available:

■ Have States gained from the 16th FC? [newsth.live/financecommissexp](#)

■ Budget gives science missions big numbers but core funding gaps persist [newsth.live/fundinggaps](#)

You can use your smartphone's built-in features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

CPCL and *The Hindu* In School conduct quiz for government school students

The winner and runners-up of the quiz programme conducted by Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited and *The Hindu* In School for government school students in Chennai.

## The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

As part of Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited's (CPCL) Diamond Jubilee celebrations, *The Hindu* In School partnered with the company for the second consecutive year to conduct a quiz programme for government school students under CPCL's CSR initiative, encouraging learning beyond the classroom.

The first prize was awarded to S. Subash, a Class IX student from Chennai Higher Secondary School, T.H. Road, Old Washermenpet. The second prize was secured by M. Sohail Ahmed, a student of Class IX from Chennai Urdu High School, Old Washermen-

pet. The third prize was won by M. Sobitha, a student of Class VII from Jai-gopal Garodia Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Choolaimedu.

Nearly 8,000 students took part in the preliminary rounds conducted

across 40 government schools in and around North Chennai.

**Cash prizes awarded**

## Final safety audit begins for CMRL's phase II stretch from Poonamallee to Vadapalani

The CMRS and his team checked the working of escalators, elevators, Passenger Information Display System, Platform Screen Doors, fire alarm system, among other facilities along this stretch

## TRACK TALES

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

The final and the most important safety audit began for Chennai Metro Rail's phase II project stretch from Poonamallee to Vadapalani on Wednesday before the launch of train services later this month.

Around 9.30 a.m., the Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety (CMRS), southern circle, Anant Madhukar Chowdhary, and his team of officials commenced the inspection from the Poonamallee Bypass Metro Rail station.

He and his team examined all the facilities in the stations along this stretch. Later, they will conduct the speed trials of the train. The stretch will open for passenger services only after CMRS' approval.

The Poonamallee-Vadapalani stretch of the phase



**Finishing stages:** Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety Anant Madhukar Chowdhary inspected the viaduct and stations from Poonamallee Bypass to Kattupakkam on Wednesday.

II project comprises a part of corridor 4 from Poonamallee to Light House. But, not all stations between Poonamallee and Vadapalani will be ready when the train services start this month. Poonamallee Bypass, Poonamallee, Mulaitthottam, Karayanchavadi, Kumananchavadi, Kattupakkam, Iyappanthangal, Thelliayaragaram, Porur Bypass, Porur Junction, and Vadapalani will be inspected on Thursday.

The CMRS and his team checked the working of escalators, elevators, Passenger Information Display System, Platform Screen Doors, fire alarm system among others, a source said.

"He also checked the alignment of the track in the stations, in the curves of the alignment and the crossover section of the viaduct. This aside, he also verified the measurements of the platform, its width, overhead electrical equipment's height and its other parameters," another source said. These aspects will be checked in the remaining stations on Thursday. Here, the CMRS and his team will examine the signalling system and check if various systems are integrated perfectly and whether the train runs without any glitch and if it is safe for passengers to travel.

Initially, the speed trials were scheduled to be held on February 13. But it is not clear whether it may happen this week or may get pushed to the next week. "An Independent Safety Assessment certificate has to come and we are expecting it shortly. Once we submit it to CMRS, he will hold speed trials," he added.

The CMRS and his team checked the working of escalators, elevators, Passenger Information Display System, Platform Screen Doors, fire alarm system among others, a source said.



Loco pilot K. Nadarajan receiving a certificate of appreciation from Divisional Railway Manager Shailendra Singh in Chennai.

## Southern Railway rewards loco pilot for saving trackman's life

**S. Vijay Kumar**  
CHENNAI

Southern Railway has rewarded a loco pilot whose timely action averted a potential run over situation involving a trackman on duty.

According to railway sources, the incident occurred on December 4, 2025 when Train 12970 Jai-pur-Coimbatore Super Fast Express was running at full speed after crossing Katpadi.

Loco pilot K. Nadarajan saw a man standing in the middle of the track some 300 metres ahead, not responding to the blaring horn. It turned out he was a trackman (patrol man) who was on duty to ensure safety of the track. He was looking at a goods train passing on the adjacent track and could not hear the sound of the fast approaching express train.

Sensing trouble, the loco pilot decided to apply emergency brakes. The train was running at 110 kmph. "He seemed engrossed in the sound and movement of the goods train passing on the adjacent track and could not hear the horn of the approaching train. Realising a potential run over situation, I applied the emergency brakes and brought the train to a halt just short of the standing man," Mr. Nadarajan said on Wednesday.

According to railway sources, it is the discretion of the loco pilot to apply emergency brakes to avoid run over situations. "It depends on the distance and speed to stop a train. Where there is a possibility to save a life by applying emergency brakes every loco pilot will do so without any hesitation," a railway official said.

On Tuesday, Shailendra Singh, the Divisional Railway Manager of Southern Railway's Chennai Division, presented a certificate of appreciation to Mr. Nadarajan.

## Senior oncologist gets health care excellence award

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

The Dr. K.V. Thiruvengadam Health Care Excellence Award - 2026 was

presented to S.G. Ramanan, senior medical oncologist, Apollo Cancer Hospital, and managing trustee, Cancare Foundation, in recognition of his outstanding

contributions to cancer care.

The Rotary Club of Madras East and Kauvery Hospital jointly organised a function in which Dr. Ra-

manan was honoured.

The award was presented by K. Narayanasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University.

## Three arrested for running illegal hair transplant clinic

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Three men were arrested on Tuesday for allegedly running a hair transplant clinic in Anna Nagar without proper registration under the Tamil Nadu Medical Institutions (Regulation) Act and for employing unqualified staff.

As per preliminary investigation, the accused, along with the untrained personnel, had performed many hair transplant procedures on clients in the past 10 months.

Anna Nagar police registered a case following an inspection conducted by a team led by Meenakshi Sundari, Joint Director (Law) of the Directorate of Medical and Rural Health Services, Chennai, and based on her complaint.

The arrested were identified as Jagvir Singh, 33, Hardeep Singh, 24, and Jaffer Siddique, 27. Siddique administered anaesthesia to patients.

The suspects operated the clinic in the name of "Mr. Hair Clinic" on Third Avenue.

## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH

P. RAMIAH (92), Retired Chief of Bureau, *The Hindu*, Bengaluru passed away on 10-02-2026.

Address : No.295/121, 7th Main, 16th Cross, Sadashivnagar, Bengaluru 560080. Contact: 9448431049

## SAD DEMISE



Smt. Vimla Anandaram (w/o late Padma Bhushan S. Anandaram (IPS, DGP Retd), Passed away on Feb 11, 2026 surrounded by loved ones.

She will be deeply missed by her family - Malini, Srikanth, Ashok, Shanthi K. Vinayak, Anumita and Suraj.

Contact: 9444386892

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

## NINTH ANNIVERSARY

In loving memory of SANDHYA ASHOK

18.03.1964 - 12.02.2026

Fondly remembered by Sorrowing Family Members

Contact: 98950 38955 / 99728 82372

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

## 26th ANNIVERSARY

In FOND REMEMBRANCE

28.01.1977 - 12.02.2003

Fondly remembered by Sorrowing Family Members

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## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

## SECOND YEAR ANNIVERSARY

In Loving Memory of

Mrs. MINNIE RAJESWARI FREDRICK

To Heaven 12.02.2024

Inspiring Mother, Grandmother and Best Friend Founder IIBAT

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever - Psalm 23:6

It shall be the fundamental duty of every person "to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform."

Article 51A (h) - The Constitution of India

Your life was a blessing, Your memory a treasure. You are loved beyond words & missed beyond measure.

Anita Mathew, Arun, Anita, Aditya, Akhil

## IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES

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## IN MEMORIAM

## WE MISS YOU



Lt. Col. Jacob Koshy

20-9-33 to 12-2-12

God looked around His garden And found an empty place He then looked down upon this Earth And saw your tired face. He put his arms around you And lifted you to rest God's garden must be beautiful He always takes the best.

Koshy family, Management, Staff & Students, SPARTAN GROUP OF SCHOOLS.

## DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

## TWENTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY



Smt. M. Rajamaniam Ammal

W/o. Late Sri M. Mariappa Pillai

Ex - Partner

SOLAIMALAI CORPORATION

Customs Broker, Chennai

## Post-Silver-Garnet

(33) Anniversary



Mary Mathew

Nee A.N. Mary

12.02.1993

Remembering unceasingly, the spiritually prosperous and dearly exemplary life of our beloved sister Menna, till we meet again.

Forever in our hearts

Elma & family;

Praveen & Thampi;

Thomas (Soorie) & family;

Neel & family;

Saji, Reji, Viji & family

## The Hindu In School and CPCL conduct quiz for government school students



The winner and runners-up of the quiz programme conducted by Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited and



**From Page One****Power sharing won't work in T.N., says CM**

When asked to describe his relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union government, Mr. Stalin recalled a statement made by late DMK leader and former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi: "Urmaikku kural koduppon, uravukku kai koduppon. (We will lend a voice to rights, and extend a hand for relationships). That is the policy."

**Lists achievements**

Earlier, during a speech, Mr. Stalin listed the achievements of his government in the past five years, and said the DMK was always working for the welfare of the people. "Even the Union government that has been intentionally disturbing the DMK government could not deny this," he said.

Many States were visiting Tamil Nadu to study the welfare programmes being implemented here, Mr. Stalin said, adding, "People believe that the future of Tamil Nadu would be better only if the DMK government continues. We are working hard only to live up to the confidence they have in us."

**'Injustice to Tamil Nadu'**

Contending that the people of Tamil Nadu were observing how the BJP-led Union government was creating crises for the DMK government, Mr. Stalin claimed that the Centre was meting out injustice to Tamil Nadu in several matters, ranging from the devolution of funds to special programmes and railway projects.

"What did they do for Tamil Nadu in this [Union] Budget? We are placing demands only with the hope that they would do good things for Tamil Nadu. But they gave us zero in this Budget. The people will also give a zero to the NDA [in the upcoming election]," Mr. Stalin said.

The BJP was looking to spread hatred and create confusion only to benefit from these, Mr. Stalin alleged.

"They intend to destroy all the ideals of democracy. The democratic forces should not allow them to do that. We will certainly get the funds and the justice due to Tamil Nadu. The fascist politics of the BJP will not work in the State," he added.

**Stresses unity among alliance parties**

Later, addressing partymen in a training programme at Thiruvananthapuram on the East Coast Road in Chennai, Mr. Stalin stressed that unity among alliance parties alone could ensure victory in all the 234 Assembly constituencies.

He said: "The target cannot be achieved without unity. So, we have to work along with alliance parties with the spirit of unity. If we do this, we can get 234 constituencies."

Calling upon partymen to work hard for the DMK's victory in the Assembly election, he said: "Please leave to me the issues regarding alliance." Referring to the initiatives his government has undertaken, Mr. Stalin said only because of such initiatives, Tamil Nadu stood number one in the country in various sectors.

Recalling his *Oraniyil Tamil Nadu* campaign, through which 1.14 crore families joined the party, he said: "All these votes should come to the DMK and alliance parties." The DMK women's wing workers are set to commence their campaign across the State, the Chief Minister added.

Mr. Stalin called upon every member of the party to meet at least 100 voters at least five times before the election.

"Be it micro-management or macro-management, the DMK is the hero in the electoral scene. We have the organisational structure that no other party in India has," Mr. Stalin said.

**Vedanta moves HC as TNPCB rejects proposal for 'Green Copper' plant**

**Mohamed Imranullah S.**  
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) has refused to issue a 'Consent to Operate' (CTO) to multinational business conglomerate Vedanta Limited for establishing a 'Green Copper' plant on the Thoothukudi Sterlite plant premises, which has remained non-functional since 2018. The company has, therefore, approached the Madras High Court with a plea to quash the rejection order.

Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G. Arul Murugan on Wednesday directed Additional Advocate General (AAG) J. Ravindran to get instructions by February 26 regarding the constitution of an expert committee to study the possibility of permitting the 'Green Copper' facility. Vedanta submitted an application to the TNPCB on January 9, seeking the CTO, but the Board rejected it on January 27.

Assailing the rejection order, senior counsel Satish Parasaran, assisted by Rahul Balaji, contended that the application had been rejected in an arbitrary manner without providing advance notice or an opportunity for hearing to his client. "This reflects a pre-determined and prejudicial approach towards the petitioner and therefore, the rejection order is ex-facie arbitrary, illegal, and untenable," he argued.

To ensure a fair adjudication of Vedanta's applications/proposal for establishing the facility, the counsel urged the Bench to order the constitution of a court-monitored multidisciplinary expert committee, comprising representatives of the State government and the Centre, along with independent experts in relevant fields, to examine the proposal independently, comprehensively, and scientifically.

Until the disposal of its main writ petition, Vedanta also sought an interim

direction to the TNPCB to permit the petitioner to have limited and conditional access to the Sterlite Copper facility in Thoothukudi so that it could carry out preparatory and operational activities for the scientific assessment. The interim activities could also be supervised, monitored, and controlled by a court-appointed committee, it said.

On the other hand, opposing the writ petition filed by Vedanta, the AAG said: "They are trying to pour old wine into a new bottle and call it Green Copper." He said the company ought to have gone on statutory appeal against the board's order instead of filing a writ petition. He also said protection of the environment was more important than the economic aspects, which the company was stressing upon.

However, Mr. Parasaran said only a panel comprising experts from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Central Pollution Control Board,

and other such bodies would be able to give independent thought to the proposal. "If the experts say that the industry should perish, let it perish. But if they say it can be revived, let it be revived. Let the TNPCB not approach the issue with a stone wall."

**Vedanta's affidavit**  
In its affidavit, Vedanta contended that the TNPCB's rejection order does not reflect any genuine statutory evaluation of the 'Green Copper' proposal, but rests on a fundamentally 'flawed' premise that past regulatory actions and earlier judicial proceedings foreclose even the consideration of a re-engineered and environmentally superior facility.

The company claimed that the TNPCB had failed to take note of the national as well as global demand for copper, its status as a strategic resource, and the growing trend of resource nationalism.

*Read the full story on newsth.live/GreenCopper*

**SC adjourns hearing in case against Stalin's 2011 poll win**

It found a lack of structure in presentation of material particulars in Saidai Duraisamy's pleadings accusing M.K. Stalin of corruption ahead of the 2011 Assembly poll from the Kolathur constituency

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing in an appeal filed by Saidai Duraisamy, who has accused Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and the ruling DMK party of indulging in corrupt practices ahead of the 2011 Assembly election from the Kolathur constituency, citing a lack of clarity and structure in the presentation of material particulars in his pleadings.

A Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Vijay Bishnoi postponed the hearing in the case of Mr. Duraisamy, who has alleged that the party used its functionaries and money to lure voters through innovative ways that amount to corrupt practice under Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act.

The Madras High Court had dismissed the allegations raised by Mr. Duraisamy for lack of conclusive evidence in 2017.

Hearing the appeal, the Bench said it was unable to analyse the findings in the judgment. It said Mr. Duraisamy's side, led by se-



The court has cleared its board of cases for two days next week to hear this case.

nior advocate Dama Sesha-dri Naidu, had been asked to prepare brief pleadings, a chart of the documents relied on, materials connected to the findings, among others. "Nothing like this has been provided," the Bench said. At one point, Justice Maheshwari, visibly upset, said: "This is not the only case in India."

The court cleared its board of cases for two days next week to hear the case. Mr. Stalin and other respondents are being represented by senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Mukul Rohatgi, N.R. Elango Shanmughasundaram, and Amit Anand Tiwari.

The election law required a case alleging corrupt practice under Sec-

tion 123 of the RP Act to be proved beyond reasonable doubt as such allegations, if found true, would result in criminal proceedings. Mere "preponderance of probabilities" would not suffice to make a case of electoral corruption.

The court, during the hearing, said it cannot possibly "presume" consent of a candidate to a corrupt practice under Section 123. The express consent has to be proved by the petitioner. At one point, the Bench, exasperated with the case, said "if you have difficulty in proving it, we will throw it out".

Section 83 of the RP Act mandated that an election petition should contain a concise statement of the material facts on which the petitioner relied on. The provision required the petition to "set forth full particulars of any corrupt practice that the petitioner alleges, including as full a statement as possible of the names of the parties alleged to have committed such corrupt practice and the date and place of the commission of each such practice".

Mr. Duraisamy had said the DMK party had used the "Thirumangalam For-

mula" to provide money to the voters in a novel way through community feedings, courier service, currency in newspapers, and slips to purchase consumer items. A goods vehicle had been caught with boxes of currency.

The High Court had come to an "irresistible conclusion that there was no categorical averment that the 1st respondent (Mr. Stalin) had given his consent to his party functionaries to bribe the voters and self-help group members with a view to attract a misdeed of 'corrupt practice'". It said Mr. Stalin could not be held "vicariously liable" for the alleged act of his party functionaries.

"With regard to the allegation of money distribution by the 1st respondent's party by adopting Thirumangalam Formula in a novel way of community feedings, courier service, currency in newspaper, Arathi Plate contributions and slips to the voters to purchase consumer items etc., this court points out that there is no convincing, satisfactory and acceptable proof produced on the side of the petitioner," the High Court had said.

**State planning panel moots public sector innovation policy**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's sustained efforts to institutionalise public sector innovation and strengthen welfare-oriented governance have received international recognition through an ongoing collaboration between the Government of Tamil Nadu, the UNICEF Office of Innovation, and the OECD, the release said.

On January 5 this year, the collaboration was formalised in the presence of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and SPC Chairman M.K. Stalin and Deputy Chief Minister and *ex-officio* SPC Vice-Chairman Udhayanidhi Stalin.

A Letter of Intent was exchanged between the SPC and the UNICEF. "Tamil Nadu has achieved a significant milestone as the world's first sub-national government to enter into a strategic partnership with international agencies that mainstream innovation across many countries, it said.

A delegation of the SPC visited the OECD headquarters in Paris on January 21 and 22 for structured consultations with senior officials and subject experts. The SPC was also invited to participate in the UNICEF's COMPASS Programme at the UNICEF Innovation Office in Stockholm on January 26 and 27.

**People will decide whether T.N. will have coalition govt'**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MADRASI/CHENNAI



B. Manickam Tagore

of the 234 Assembly seats. However, the DMK government completed its full term with the support of 34 Congress MLAs, 18 PMK MLAs, and nine CPI(M) MLAs.

In a post on X, Congress functionary Praveen Chakravarty said, "Why hide behind some made-up uniqueness about Tamil Nadu

to not want to share power, when every other State in India is fine with it? People of Tamil Nadu, like their fellow Indians, have no problem with coalition governments." He also told the media that a share in power was very important for the growth of the Congress party in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K. Selvaperunthagai dismissed as "speculation" that there were issues between the Congress and the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu over power-sharing.

**'Will hold talks'**

He said the Congress's national leadership and Mr. Stalin would hold negotiations and decide on this matter.

"Every political party

has its own views with respect to elections. Congress party leaders have expressed their views [on power-sharing]. The Chief Minister has expressed his views, the DMK's views, and the convention [with respect to power-sharing] being followed in Tamil Nadu," Mr. Selvaperunthagai told mediapersons in Chennai.

"Leaders of the All India Congress Committee and the Chief Minister will hold talks and take a call. Just because some leaders expressed their opinions on this, many have been expecting problems in the alliance. There will not be any such issues," he said.

Referring to the stand-off between the DMK and the Congress over power-sharing, BJP State presi-

dent Nainar Nagenthiran said in Madurai that this only indicated that their alliance was weakening.

He found fault with the media for "harping on weak alliance" of the NDA for long. "Why are you not asking Chief Minister M.K. Stalin about the weakening of the DMK-led alliance?" he asked.

Mr. Nagenthiran told reporters that the Congress was only finding a reason to leave the Secular Democratic Alliance led by the DMK. "Why should Congress MP B. Manickam Tagore rake up the 2006 political situation now? This only showed that there was confusion in the DMK-led alliance," he said.

Mr. Nagenthiran also said that the BJP had neither asked the AIADMK for

Cabinet berths nor had the AIADMK said "no" to it. The BJP had made it clear that the NDA would form the government and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami would be the Chief Minister.

When asked about the efforts put in to bring back AMMK into the NDA fold, he said the AMMK joined the NDA with the sole objective of defeating the DMK.

However, on whether late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's confidante V.K. Sasikala would join hands with the NDA to avoid splitting of anti-DMK votes, Mr. Nagenthiran said "Wait for more political changes." He, however, said "I am not talking with the DMDK for

**Epigraphy plays vital role in tracing socio-political history, says Minister**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI



Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu addressing a gathering at the International Conference on Tamil Epigraphy held at Museum Theatre at Egmore in Chennai on Wednesday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

ical reconstruction. With over one lakh inscriptions documented across South India, Tamil Nadu alone accounts for approximately 30,000 inscriptions, providing an unbroken chronological record from the 6th century BCE to the colonial period, he said.

This vast body of evidence allows historians to continually reassess and refine our understanding of the region's long and complex cultural evolution. To ensure the preservation and continuity of

Erode, and Tiruppur. The theme-based epigraphy project uses modern digital technologies to record inscriptions based on specific themes such as trade guilds and hero stones, he said.

Mr. Thennarasu also launched a website on the graffiti signs of Tamil Nadu and books such as two volumes of *Inscribed Potsherds of Tamil Nadu: Graffiti and Tamil, Traditional Water Management: Sluice Technology in Tamil Nadu*, six volumes of *Tamil Nadu Kalvettugal* from Chengalpattu, Villupuram, Tiruvalur, Vellore, and Salem districts, and the conference proceedings.

K. Manivasan, Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism and Culture); T. Udhayanidhi, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) and Commissioner of Archaeology; R. Balakrishnan, Chairman, International Institute of Tamil Studies; and Professor K. Rajan, Academic and Research Adviser, TNSDA, were among those present.

INBRIEF



Kerala govt. sabotaging Central projects: Suresh Gopi

Union Minister Suresh Gopi has launched a scathing attack on the Kerala government, alleging a systematic effort to derail various Central development projects across the State. He said the State's "uncooperative" attitude has led to the loss of massive investments. Regarding the establishment of an AIIMS in Kerala, he reiterated his long-standing preference for Alappuzha. However, he warned that if the State failed to allot suitable land as per Central norms, the project could be moved to Thrissur.

Five arrested in Hyderabad for fake online loan racket

Five men were arrested by the Cyber Crimes Wing of the Hyderabad police for running an online loan racket that duped victims by impersonating officials of Mudra and other loan services, through fake websites and social media advertisements. The accused are all natives of Warangal. Police said the five along with other absconding associates cheated innocent people on the pretext of sanctioning loans without interest or upfront payments.

Telangana civic polls see 73% turnout; counting tomorrow

Polling for elections to the urban local bodies in Telangana, covering 113 municipalities and seven municipal corporations, passed off peacefully on Wednesday. Votes will be counted on Friday, with results expected the same day. According to the State Election Commission sources, 73.01% of votes were polled. The Gram Panchayat (rural local bodies) elections held in December 2025 recorded a voter turnout of over 85%.

Grand welcome



**Victory parade:** Newly elected Thiruvananthapuram Mayor V.V. Rajesh and BJP councillors being welcomed at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Four A.P. Ministers get threat letters from suspected Maoists

Rajulapudi Srinivas  
VIJAYAWADA

Four Ministers in Andhra Pradesh have received threat letters, purportedly from the CPI(Maoist), the banned Left wing extremist party, warning them of dire consequences.

Those who got the letters are Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad, Minister for Mines and Geology Kollu Ravindra (both from the TDP), Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh (Jana Sena Party), and Health Minister Y. Satya Kumar Yadav (BJP).

**Police step up security for the Ministers and at the Assembly where Budget session is on**

Following this, the police stepped up security arrangements for the four Ministers and at the Legislative Assembly, where the Budget session is under way.

Mr. Durgesh lodged a complaint with the Thullur police on Wednesday. "The police have launched an investigation," said Guntur Range Inspector-General

al of Police Sarvasrestha Tripathi. CCTV footages are being scanned.

Guntur district Superintendent of Police Valuk Jindal told *The Hindu* that the Ministers received the letters by post on Tuesday.

"The letters carried a mobile number. It was found that the number was registered in the name of a sarpanch in Khammam district of Telangana," Mr. Jindal said.

"We suspect it to be the handiwork of some pranksters. However, we are investigating the issue from all angles," he said.

# Court flags 'inconsistencies' in Ayyappa meet audit report

HC seeks explanation from Travancore Devaswom Board and inputs from govt. officials; move comes amid allegations of irregularities in accounts of the event, tax payments and tender norms

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday sought an explanation from the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) about the alleged inconsistencies in the conduct of the Global Ayyappa Sangamam held at Sabarimala in September 2025.

The event had been organised by the TDB in association with the Left Democratic Front government.

A Bench of justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V. and K.V. Jayakumar noted that the monetary value of certain items, such as *aravana*, *appam*, *vibhuti*, *kumkum* and sandalwood, given to devotees and participants at the event had not been accounted for in the book of



The Global Ayyappa Sangamam was aimed at showcasing Sabarimala as a global pilgrim centre. LEJU KAMAL

accounts. The court directed that the relevant inputs be obtained from the Kerala State Audit department.

An independent auditor's report said the TDB was responsible for the preparation of the financial statements relating to the event. The report highlighted certain 'inconsistencies' that the TDB ought to explain before the court, the Bench said.

**Interim order**  
The court had through an interim order given the go-ahead for the event and issued a set of directives aimed at maintaining the sanctity of the temple and

the environment, and ensuring financial transparency. The order said detailed and transparent accounts should be maintained regarding the cost estimates for the event, including for travel and accommodation, and the contributions from sponsors. The accounts were to be further audited.

The court directive comes amidst alleged inconsistencies in the GST and other tax payments. Although ₹5 crore was the estimated expenditure for the event, over ₹6 crore was spent, the report says.

The observations of the Bench came on a plea initiated by the court on its own based on the audit report. The hearing on the plea will be held after 10 days. (With PTI inputs)

## ED summons former TDB secretary, intermediary in Sabarimala gold case

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has issued notices to former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) secretary S. Jayasree and Kalpesh, an alleged intermediary, in the Sabarimala gold theft case. They have been asked to appear for interrogation at the Kochi office of the ED next week.

The ED has also summoned actor Jayaram for interrogation next week over his alleged association and suspected financial transactions with the prime accused in the case, Unnikrishnan Potti. This was following circulation of videos showing the actor participating in a puja organised in Chennai in 2019 by Mr. Potti with the artefacts taken from the

temple for gold plating. Ms. Jayasree had allegedly made corrections in the minutes of TDB documents, and Mr. Kalpesh had handed over gold from Smart Creations, a Chennai-based firm where the gold plating of the temple artefacts was carried out, to the Bellary-based gold merchant Govardhan.

Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court-appointed spe-

cial investigation team (SIT) probing the case has approached the Supreme Court opposing the anticipatory bail plea of Ms. Jayasree. While denying a similar plea, the High Court had observed that Ms. Jayasree's role is "well made out" prima facie.

The Kochi ED unit had filed the case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act last month.

## Transwomen, unemployed women in Kerala to get monthly aid

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday officially launched the State government's Sthree Suraksha Scheme to provide a monthly assistance of ₹1,000 to unemployed women as well as transwomen. The first month's payment was transferred on Monday afternoon to 10,18,042 beneficiaries in the poll-bound State.

Women aged 35 to 60, who are economically backward and not drawing benefits from other social welfare pension schemes, and transwomen, will now start receiving ₹1,000 per month. The scheme is part of a range of populist welfare measures announced by Mr. Vijayan in October last year.

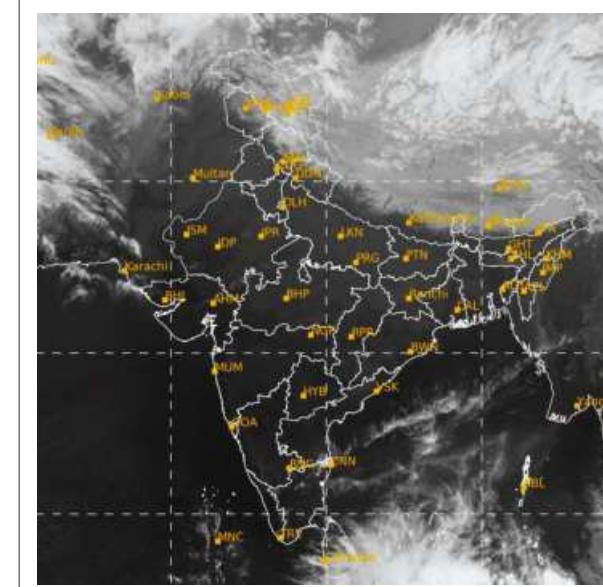
Calling it a decisive step in the creation of a women-friendly Kerala, Mr. Vijayan said the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government had proved once again that promises were meant to be implemented.

"Financial dependency often silences women. This intervention is to put an end to that silence and to assure them that the State stands with them," he said at the launch at Malayinkeezhu in the capital.

"Many other initiatives such as the Pink Police wing were initiated in the past decade. Women safety is not just an election promise for us, but an uncompromising policy. Some economists might say that these initiatives are wrong. But we think the fruits of development should reach every section of society," he said.

## 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 Thursday:** Dense fog likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh. Squally weather with wind speed 35 to 45 kmph gusting to 55 kmph likely to prevail over some parts of southwest Bay of Bengal adjoining to the Equatorial Indian Ocean

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	29.2	11.5	Kozhikode	—	35.5	24.5
Ahmedabad	—	31.7	15.8	Kurnool	—	33.0	19.1
Alizawl	—	27.5	8.2	Lucknow	—	26.7	12.1
Allahabad	—	29.2	11.5	Madurai	—	32.8	20.1
Bengaluru	—	27.7	15.4	Mangaluru	—	34.4	21.8
Bhopal	—	30.2	13.6	Mumbai	—	33.6	19.2
Bhubaneswar	—	32.7	16.4	Mysuru	—	29.8	16.0
Chandigarh	—	25.4	9.4	New Delhi	—	27.5	13.2
Chennai	—	28.5	11.6	Patna	—	26.5	13.6
Coimbatore	—	31.3	19.2	Port Blair	—	31.5	26.0
Dehradun	—	27.0	15.4	Puducherry	—	29.7	20.4
Gangtok	—	17.1	8.4	Pune	—	33.5	19.2
Goa	—	34.4	20.8	Raipur	—	32.8	16.0
Guwahati	—	29.8	13.7	Ranchi	—	27.2	10.0
Hubballi	—	32.0	16.0	Shillong	—	20.6	8.0
Hyderabad	—	29.8	17.2	Shimla	—	18.2	8.6
Imphal	—	27.1	6.3	Srinagar	—	9.5	2.8
Jaipur	—	28.8	16.9	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.0	22.4
Kochi	—	32.2	24.8	Tiruchi	—	30.7	20.4
Kohima	—	20.2	8.6	Vijayawada	—	30.5	20.0
Kolkata	—	29.7	14.6	Visakhapatnam	—	30.3	19.6

(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	.36	.54	.74	.11	.141	Good
Bengaluru	.6	.31	.15	.180	.131	Good
Chennai	.8	.5	.52	.151	.337	Good
Delhi	.9	.268	.91	.349	.367	Good
Hyderabad	.5	.10	.60	.11	.115	Good
Kolkata	.9	.125	.39	.280	.175	Good
Lucknow	.11	.44	.41	.236	.161	Good
Mumbai	.35	.94	.41	.152	.133	Good
Pune	—	.95	.60	.260	.219	Good
Visakhapatnam	.9	.81	.14	.129	.164	Good

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 388 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Pampore, Jammu & Kashmir recorded a healthy AQI score of 23.

**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>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles and leads to smoggy conditions with visibility reduced.

**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 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

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## Reining in a bigot

Assam's CM's rhetoric is to divert attention from governance deficits

**A**ssam is among the States scheduled to hold Assembly elections in the months ahead. The northeastern State is also one of India's laggards in many critical socio-economic markers – its HDI, per capita income, gainful industrial employment numbers, and enrolment rates in higher education are lower than the national average, while it has many poor health indicators. Any political leadership of such a State would face a clear and fundamental choice in governance. One path would be to identify systemic lacunae and bridge gaps in health, education, income and employment for every citizen, earning the goodwill of the electorate and seeking continuation in office on the strength of performance. The alternative path is more insidious – the creation of bogeymen through imaginary enemies and the stereotyping of entire communities. By doing so, demagogues seek to bypass the hard work of governance, inciting the electorate through polarisation and ensuring that political discourse remains mired in communal division. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of the BJP has chosen the latter path, deploying incendiary rhetoric that targets the Bengali-origin Muslim community, framing it as a "demographic threat" and a "matter of life and death" for the indigenous population, and escalating to what can be described as calls for economic persecution – urging citizens to underpay Muslim rickshaw-pullers so that "they suffer" and "leave Assam". He has accused the community of "fertilizer jihad", blamed them for urban floods, and coined a lexicon of manufactured hatreds, all of it in pursuit of what H.L. Mencken once described as the cynical art of politics "to keep the populace alarmed... by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary".

In the CPI(M)/CPI's petition filed in the Supreme Court, Mr. Sarma's statements have been documented to demonstrate not isolated political rhetoric but a sustained pattern of communal targeting that is politically distasteful and constitutionally unlawful. As the petition rightly argues, his statements deserve scrutiny from two lenses. First, the constitutional framework that concerns the Chief Minister's oath of office, fundamental rights of all citizens and the Preamble's guarantees of secularism and fraternity. Second, that these statements are liable to prosecution on offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Representation of the People Act. The Court has through its cumulative effect doctrine, in *Amish Devgan and Tehseen Poonawalla*, suggested that a CM's speeches carry the weight of the State's authority which makes communally polarising language in them even more damaging as it is used by someone who controls the police apparatus. The Court should not dismiss it as an election-eve political manoeuvre, and recognise it for what it is – a test of whether its own directions on hate speech carry any meaning when the offender holds the highest office in a State.

## Young and Nabin

The Bharatiya Janata Party is effecting a generational change in its leadership

**N**itin Nabin, born in 1980 and the youngest person to become the National Working President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was elected unopposed. Mr. Nabin is not closely linked to the party's ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS); at present, his legitimacy largely arises from the faith reposed in him by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. His selection is linked to Mr. Shah's plans for the next general election, but larger considerations at play cannot be ignored. As aennial, Mr. Nabin is leading the largest party in one of the world's youngest countries. He began his political career through the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), and steadily rose through the BJP ranks. Elected five times as a Member of the Bihar Legislative Assembly from the Bankipur constituency in Patna, Mr. Nabin was also a State Minister. He held organisational positions in the BJP, overseeing its work in Chhattisgarh and Sikkim. He made a difference in both States and also won the confidence of party workers. A Kayastha from Bihar, he is known to be collegial. Within the deeply contested caste landscape of BJP strongholds, his social location and demeanour would be considered benign, which works to his advantage.

The BJP has been effecting a demographic transition in its leadership, and Mr. Nabin's elevation marks a high point in that process. Mr. Nabin is from the Hindi heartland, where the BJP is already strong. Managing the strength of the party in its current strongholds while making it more acceptable to the peripheral regions of the country will have to be his priority. The party's strategy of Hindu consolidation has not only saturated but is also creating a legion of unguided actors. The BJP is riding a tiger on the issue of communal politics, and Mr. Nabin has the unenviable challenge of disengaging from it. He was chosen President after several months of negotiations between the RSS and the BJP leadership, in which the BJP got the upper hand. The relationship between the RSS and the BJP requires delicate handling. The new President, like his predecessor, would follow the cue of Mr. Shah in organisational affairs, but he is still expected to maintain an aura of autonomy. He will be required to share credit for any success but own responsibility for any slip-up. As a young leader who potentially has several decades more of active politics ahead, Mr. Nabin must reassure his senior colleagues but cannot afford to end up becoming inconsequential in the process.

# Judicial drift in the Special Intensive Revision hearings

**I**n the first week of February 2026, in an unprecedented event, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, appeared before the Supreme Court of India in the ongoing hearings around the conduct of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls, which has been taking place in multiple States across India.

The Chief Minister's arguments were focused on certain procedural infirmities that were causing hardship to the residents of her State. Her intervention led to the Court passing a slew of directions on February 9, ostensibly seeking to mitigate some of these hardships. However, in the course of the hearing, the Court also made a statement: that no impediment to the SIR would be allowed across any of the States.

**Core constitutional challenge not decided**  
This statement is baffling, because in making it, the Court appears to have pre-judged the most fundamental issue before it – an issue that goes to the heart of the Court's own role as the primary organ of constitutional adjudication. Challenges to the SIR were first filed before the Court in July, when it was announced for the State of Bihar.

Among other things, these petitions questioned the constitutionality of the SIR itself. Months have passed, with SIRs announced in multiple States, and the challenges have multiplied. The Bihar election has come and gone (November 2025), with the Bihar SIR effectively having become a fait accompli. The Court has held multiple hearings, where it has, in effect, played the role of an administrator, passing directions on issues such as whether or not the Aadhaar card can be used as an identification document. However, the core constitutional challenge has not been decided, and as the Court's observations now show, the fait accompli seems to have become permanently enshrined, with any future judgment serving only to act as a retrospective validation of existing facts on the ground.

It is worth remembering that in a constitutional democracy, the Court's primary role is to ensure that other state organs comply with the Constitution, and not to transform itself into an administrator. However, the Court's conduct in the SIR case is not new: while the constitutionality of the Aadhaar programme was challenged in 2012, it was only in 2018 that a final judgment was passed, by which time Aadhaar



Gautam Bhatia  
is a Delhi-based lawyer

had effectively become a fait accompli, too big to be undone. In the intervening six years, the Court had passed various orders about where and how Aadhaar could be used or demanded, but had not touched the constitutional challenge before it. The repetition of this pattern in the SIR case reveals a normalisation of the Court moving away from its role as a constitutional court, and adopting the role of the administrator. This is unfortunate.

### There are significant issues

Indeed, the SIR process has raised certain significant constitutional issues. Many of these issues turned upon the question of power: while the Representation of the People Act (India's umbrella election law) authorises the Election Commission of India (ECI) to conduct a special revision for "any constituency or any part of a constituency", and for reasons to be recorded, there is a fundamental question about whether this very specific power is also a carte blanche authorisation to conduct State and nation-wide SIRs. The wording of the section seems to imply that its purpose is a targeted and focused exercise meant to correct for distortions that might creep in in certain specific places. By contrast, the present SIRs are dragnet, large-scale revisions of the rolls that, in effect, turn them into citizenship determining exercises. Added to this is the fact that electoral rolls already exist. Thus the ongoing SIRs amount to an exercise where the entire populations of States are called upon to freshly establish their citizenship and their right to vote, without any pre-existing cause for suspicion. The constitutional question then turns upon whether the ECI can simply operate on this mass presumption of non-citizenship, and force people to prove their rights from scratch.

In 1995, in *Lal Babu Hussein and Others vs Electoral Registration Officer and Others*, the Court had held that it could not. There again, the ECI had sought to effect large-scale removal of names from the voter rolls, acting on the suspicion that in certain constituencies there were many non-voters on the rolls. The Court struck down this exercise, and in the directions that it passed, made it clear that notices for removal from the rolls would have to be directed at specific individuals, and also a disclosure of the reason for suspicion that the individual in question was not a citizen of India.

As noted above, the present SIRs completely

invert that basic process. Instead of issuing notices to specific people that it reasonably suspects are non-voters, the ECI now requires everyone to come and prove that they are voters.

It is crucial to note that multiple reports have come in from various States about arbitrary deletions and of individuals having to run from pillar to post to prove that their citizenship does not exist in a vacuum. They are the product of this fundamental inversion of the state-citizen relationship. The other troubling impact of the SIR exercise is that the wholesale revision of voter rolls has brought into play the notorious Form 7, which allows any person to "object" to the inclusion of any other person in the electoral roll. There have already been widespread reports about the misuse of Form 7 to have people struck off the rolls, en masse, from multiple States.

### An accentuation of disparities

Finally – and this was something highlighted by the West Bengal Chief Minister as well – in a country with vast material inequalities, and disparities in access to the State, documentation requirements operate asymmetrically, and, in particular, impact the vulnerable and the marginalised (people at the intersection of the axes of caste, poverty and gender). Indian Courts have long articulated an equality jurisprudence that is cognisant of material and socio-political discrimination: a process that accentuates, rather than mitigates, these disparities, violates basic constitutional principles.

It should be obvious that these are not mere "administrative" glitches that can be corrected by administrative tweaks, in the manner in which the Court has been doing for the past eight months. Rather, the specific problems of voter deletions and disenfranchisement that are being brought to the Court on a regular basis are symptoms. They are downstream from the actual issue, which is the manner in which the ongoing SIRs invert the relationship between the state and the individual, and leave the latter effectively at the mercy of the former. This is a question that goes to the heart of the constitutional order. It cannot be remedied through a mere administrative fix. Rather, it must be addressed from the perspective of a constitutional framework that genuinely affirms the dignity and participatory rights of every individual, refusing to reduce persons to mere cogs in the machine of state and administrative efficiency.

## The CPI base revision exercise measures a slice of life

**I**nflation, one of the most closely watched macroeconomic indicators, is something that most people feel in daily life in their routine household expenses. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) captures this reality by tracking the prices of goods and services that households regularly consume, turning everyday experiences into an official measure of inflation. For the common man, the CPI is like a quiet mirror of daily life capturing, inter alia, the changing cost of basic needs such as food on the plate, rent for the roof over the head, and fuel for the journey to work.

**More than a simple number**  
Though it appears as a simple number, it speaks for households, guiding income and social security adjustments so that life's essentials remain within reach. CPI-based inflation is also the primary indicator for the Reserve Bank of India to help guide it in decisions such as interest rates and inflation control. Therefore, when the CPI reflects reality, policies respond better to what people are truly experiencing.

Inflation is not just about prices going up. It is about how these price changes affect household budgets. That is why making sure that the index reflects current consumption patterns is just as important as tracking the prices themselves. This is the context in which India's ongoing CPI base updation from the year 2012 to 2024 must be seen.

Since the last base revision, the economy has changed significantly, urbanisation has grown, services have expanded, digital platforms have changed buying habits, and household spending has diversified.

The CPI 2024 series has, therefore, been updated using the latest Household Consumption Expenditure Survey of 2023-24. As people's preferences and expenses changed over time, the importance (weightage) given to different goods and services in the CPI has also been adjusted.



Saurabh Garg  
is Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India

Items on which households now spend more have been given greater weight, with less weight for those that account for a smaller share of spending. This ensures that the CPI measures price changes that really affect household budgets. The consumption basket has also been updated to reflect emerging trends, such as growing spending on services, driven by rising incomes and changing lifestyles.

Updating the way that the CPI is calculated is just as important as updating what it measures. The revised CPI is more closely aligned with international standards while retaining features specific to India. This makes it easier to compare India's inflation with other countries. From the perspective of households, this matters because it helps policymakers understand how price changes in India fit into the global picture, without losing sight of what affects daily life.

Data collection for the CPI has been upgraded to keep pace with how people shop and spend. While traditional market surveys still track prices, particularly of food and other essentials, the 2024 framework has introduced that captures online prices for items such as telecom services, airfares, and certain other services.

### A wider database

The adoption of computer-assisted price collection in the new series has reduced manual errors and allowed real-time checks, improving the quality and timeliness of price data. Quality and timeliness of the CPI matter because these shape decisions that touch everyday life, such as how high loans are, how much savings earn, and how rising prices influence household budgets.

In the new base year, the CPI draws more on official data from government sources, railfares, postal charges, fuel prices, and items sold through the public distribution system. This means that these numbers are captured with greater precision by mitigating the chances of

errors and biases that can occur in market surveys. This integration of survey data, administrative records and digital price sources represents a marked improvement over earlier practices and provides a more reliable picture of how prices are changing.

The massive institutional effort behind a base revision exercise of this scale is also worth noting. It involves coordination across field offices, statistical divisions and national and international expert bodies.

The process involves extensive scrutiny of methodology, testing of alternatives and consultation with economists and domain specialists. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has engaged with expert groups, international organisations and stakeholders to ensure that the changes are transparent, easy to understand and methodologically sound.

Even with updates to the basket, weights, and data sources, the CPI keeps its core purpose, capturing how prices change from a household's point of view. This continuity matters because it lets us compare prices over time. In other words, the index is being improved without losing the connection to everyday life, so that it remains a reliable guide for policymakers.

### In context

The CPI reminds us that behind every statistic lies the lived experience of millions, and that numbers, ultimately, are about people. It quietly traces how prices shape daily life and inform policy decisions. Through the ongoing base revision exercise, MoSPI has ensured that the CPI continues to be accurate, up-to-date, and consistent over time, so that it remains not just a number, but a true mirror capturing the realities faced across the country.

The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Parliamentary proceedings

The episode around the pandemonium in Parliament arising from the Speaker of the Lok Sabha not allowing the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha to read extracts from an unpublished book and the subsequent move by Opposition MPs to submit a notice seeking a removal of the Speaker for allegedly conducting the business of the House (Inside pages, February 11) are unfortunate events. The Congress and other Opposition parties should have shown more maturity and sorted out the issue rather than resorting to such an extreme step. There

is also another issue – of the Deputy Speaker presiding over the proceedings. Unfortunately, for some inexplicable reason, the House has failed to elect a Deputy Speaker. Will the ruling National Democratic Alliance at least now take the initiative to fill up the post?

K.R. Jayaprakash Rao,  
Mysuru

The notice of a no-confidence motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker marks a significant moment of institutional friction. The allegations levelled against him suggest a breakdown in parliamentary neutrality

that is essential for a healthy democracy. Parallel to this, the controversy surrounding an unpublished book raises critical questions about transparency and censorship.

Aarchi Verma,  
Rajpura, Punjab

Serious national issues should not be reduced to personal insinuations against tall political leaders. Matters such as the unresolved border dispute with China and the India-U.S. trade deal require transparent and honest discussion in Parliament. Curtailing debate weakens democracy; engaging with it

strengthens governance.

M. Jayaram,  
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

The conduct of Members of Parliament on the floor of the House and outside is cause for concern. There is a flouting of decency and decorum, a violation of rules, shouting matches and

aggressive placard parades. No party is above blame. The day is not far off when MPs may indulge in fisticuffs.

S.V. Venkatakrishnan,  
Singapore

**Corrections & Clarifications**

In a report, "Opposition MPs submit notice seeking removal of LS Speaker" (Inside pages, February 11), a sentence was: "Under Article 94C of the Constitution, the Speaker can be removed from office by resolution passed by the House through a simple majority." The procedure to remove the Speaker is through effective majority, which is absolute majority of the effective strength of the House (total strength minus the number of vacant seats). Article 94(C) says: "may be removed from his office by a resolution of the House of the People by a majority of the then members of the House...."

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28576347/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

T20 World Cup match with India after parleys with International Cricket Council officials is like a political thriller played behind closed doors ("Sport" page, February 11). Backroom negotiations and the intervention of Sri Lanka Cricket along with financial implications and sanctions have resulted in Pakistan's 'U' turn. The price had become too high forcing Pakistan to recalibrate, and politics had to give way to commercial interests.

**Dr. Thomas Palocaren,**  
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

# The Constitution enters the sanctum

**T**wo recent judgments of the Madras High Court – one concerning the Thiruparkundram Deepathropo and the other relating to the rights of the Thenkalai sect to recite hymns at the Kanchipuram Varadaraja Perumal temple – have brought to the fore the role of the judiciary in adjudicating religious disputes. That these matters have reached the High Court is revealing on multiple levels. First, it tells us that courts have a constitutional role in deciding religious disputes. Second, it demolishes the argument that temples are private spaces where the court or the state cannot intervene. Given the growing number of such cases, the law around religion has taken centre stage like never before.

**Shift from civil rights disputes**  
Over a hundred years ago, it was civil courts that dealt with temple disputes. In a case pertaining to entry into the Kamudhi temple in Ramanathapuram, pitched battles around civil rights to enter temple premises were fought all the way up to the Privy Council in London. In *Sankaralinga Nadan and Ors vs Raja Rajeswara Dorai and Ors* (1908), the Privy Council was called upon to decide whether the Nadar community had a right to enter the Kamudhi temple. In the pre-constitutional era, such cases around temple entry and right to co-worship were primarily regarded as disputes concerning civil rights.

In 1927, the Madras Presidency government enacted the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act to govern temples and their endowments. A slew of legislative activity followed in the next two decades, which enabled setting up of local temple committees and the auditing of temple funds which enshrined the supervisory role of the Presidency government.

All this changed when the Constitution was adopted in 1950, which introduced fundamental rights to practise religion. The



**Manraj Shunmugasundaram**

DMK spokesperson and advocate practising before the Madras High Court



**Swetha Sethubaskaran**

Advocate practising before the Madras High Court

freedom of worship rights in Articles 25 and 26 to worship were made applicable to individuals as well as religious denominations. However, this freedom was tempered with the requirement that rights to practise or profess religion would be subject to public order, health, and morality. This allowed the state to further regulate worship when it offended public conscience or morality.

This period ushered in a critical shift in judicial thinking. From the earlier view that these matters were civil rights disputes, the courts began looking at them from the vantage of constitutional directives. By doing so, the judiciary asserted the rights of the individual to equality and religious freedom subject to public interest restrictions. This led to the blossoming of jurisprudence around temple entry, religious freedoms, and equality in the appointment of priests. It is now a matter of debate in constitutional courts as to if and how these rights should be limited.

Nevertheless, the southern States, which belonged to the erstwhile Madras Presidency, must be credited for bringing in this jurisprudence. It started with these States enacting legislation under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act for better temple governance. These legislation and regulations, consequently, invited judicial oversight, as writ courts were called to adjudicate upon whether State intervention respected the rights of the religious denominations while safeguarding the constitutional rights of others. This led to the development of temple-related jurisprudence over the last 70 years.

#### The test used by courts

In developing this jurisprudence, courts have undertaken an inquiry into whether religious practices conflict with constitutional principles. For example, where there is a restriction of the entry of certain people or where a customary practice is in conflict

with fundamental rights, such matters can be brought before constitutional courts. The constitutional court then undertakes the task of finding out whether such custom or practice is protected by the essential religious practice test. A creation of the Supreme Court, this test is to determine whether a particular custom or practice is essentially integral to the religion. Those not essentially religious were, interestingly, deemed to be "secular" and open to judicial guidance. Therefore, if a practice fails this test, then the court typically proceeds to issue directions in consonance with settled constitutional principles.

Despite criticism regarding its inconsistent interpretation in subsequent judgments, the courts have continued to use this test to bring a measure of objectivity to decisions by focusing on the core tenets of the religion itself. In *Indian Young Lawyers Association and Ors vs State of Kerala* (2018) (Sabarimala temple case), this approach underwent a significant consolidation when the Supreme Court held that even those practices considered essential to the religion cannot be shielded from judicial scrutiny if they are inconsistent with constitutional morality. Therefore, the law of the land is that religious freedoms are subject to constitutional morality, which in turn is founded on the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

The growing number of religious disputes before constitutional courts reflects not only ideological polarisation within and across faiths, but also the enduring role of the judiciary in ensuring that religious practices do not undermine constitutional principles. Judicial review of religious disputes, therefore, cannot be seen as an aberration but a continuation of a long-standing constitutional engagement – one that seeks to harmonise faith with the foundational principles of the Constitution.

# A battle over the title of Jatipita'

The Congress and BRS spar over KCR's role in the Statehood movement

#### STATE OF PLAY

**Ravi Reddy**

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**A**t the centre of a recent political controversy in Telangana is a symbolic but emotionally charged question: who deserves to be called *Jatipita*, or the Father of Telangana?

The immediate trigger for Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) leaders and cadres hailing party president and former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao (KCR) as *Jatipita* was the notice served on him by a Special Investigation Team, summoning him for questioning in connection with an alleged phone-tapping case during the BRS regime. The party saw this as an insult to their leader, who they claimed had single-handedly fought with the Centre and ensured the creation of Telangana in 2014. Calling him the architect of the State, they questioned how he could be treated like a criminal.

The repeated attempts by the BRS to bestow the title of *Jatipita* on Mr. Rao did not go down well with Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, who launched a scathing attack on the BRS chief. "KCR is not worthy of being called the Father of Telangana. He is only a self-proclaimed fatherly figure," he said. Accusing Mr. Rao of corruption and mismanagement, Mr. Reddy said that he "looted the State and plunged it into debt." The Chief Minister argued that if anyone deserved the title, it would be either Professor K. Jayashankar or Konda Laxman Bapuji, both of whom made genuine sacrifices for the cause of statehood.

Intellectuals who have closely observed the Telangana movement – from the early agitations in 1952 and 1969 to the final push led by Mr. Rao after formation of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) in 2001 – have a different perspective. Former Telangana Joint Action Committee Convener and ex-MLC M. Kodandaram, a professor who worked closely with Mr. Rao before their fallout, said that Prof. K. Jayashankar is widely regarded as the principal ideologue of the Telangana statehood movement. Jayashankar, a former Vice Chancellor of Kakatiya University, was active during the 1952 and 1969 Telangana movements. During the final stages of the movement, he was instrumental in bringing together all sections of society and offering clarity to the long-pending demand. "He had an ability to unify the people and articulate the cause, so he was often referred to as the ideologue of Telangana, though he himself never claimed that title," Prof. Kodandaram explained.

Others such as Bhupati Krishnamurthy from Warangal, Konda Laxman Bapuji, and Prof. Keshav Rao Jadhav also played significant roles in sustaining the movement.

Prof. Kodandaram noted that after the formation of Telangana, the narrative shifted. During the annual Deeksha Dasas, celebrated by BRS cadres to commemorate Mr. Rao's fast that pressured the Centre to announce statehood for Te-

langana, the party began calling him *Jatipita*.

On the other hand, former BRS MP B. Vinod Kumar has strongly defended the party's position. He argued that it is common in statehood movements to honour leaders with titles such as *Bapu* or *Jatipita*. He said that Mr. Rao deserves recognition as *Jatipita*, since his leadership was central to the formation of the State.

Drawing parallels with Jharkhand, Mr. Kumar pointed out that Shibu Soren, founder of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, is known as *Jatipita* of the State. Soren led the movement for decades, and though Jharkhand was carved out of Bihar by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance government, his role in sustaining the agitation earned him that recognition.

"The agitation for a separate Telangana had a violent past. During the 1969 movement, more than 360 people died in police firing. On the other hand, KCR's stewardship in the final phase of the statehood stir was largely non-violent," Mr. Kumar said.

While the BRS cadre may feel justified in honouring Mr. Rao with the title, history suggests that such recognition cannot be manufactured through party resolutions or political campaigns. Titles like *Jatipita* endure only when they are affirmed by a broad social consensus that transcends partisan loyalties. The current controversy appears less about history and more about present-day political positioning, with both the BRS and the Congress seeking to consolidate their support base ahead of the municipal elections. Ultimately, public memory will determine how Mr. Rao's legacy in the Telangana movement is defined, or who gets to be called *Jatipita*.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

**The Hindu**

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 12, 1976

### Attendance in offices: directive reiterated

#### FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 11: Following the special drive in Government offices to ensure punctuality by officials and the finding that there is still some absenteeism, the Department of Personnel in the Cabinet Secretariat has asked all the Ministries to take care that the earlier instructions about attendance in Government offices are fully complied with.

The Department of Personnel is heartened by the general improvement during the past few months in the "administrative ethos" of the country. Instructions are in fact being issued from time to time by the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding punctuality, promptness and integrity of Government servants. It is, however, considered essential that the improvement in administrative efficiency and the intensity of supervision should be maintained as a permanent feature of the administration.

It is brought to the notice of the staff once again that persons who hold supervisory posts will take all possible steps to ensure the integrity and devotion to duty of all Government servants under their control and authority. Smoking in the corridors by Class Four staff and playing cards outside Government offices and buildings after the lunch-hour by Government servants is declared undecorous practice "which detracts from the atmosphere of discipline".

### A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 12, 1926

### Transmitting musical composition by code

#### REUTER'S SPECIAL SERVICE

London, Feb. 11: Owing to the demand for popular songs and the necessity of lightning transmission of them to prevent smuggling between New York and London, a novel scheme for cabling melodies has been devised by the London music publishers. The method is based on an alphabetical code covering notes and time-beats which can be re-translated into music by means of a simple key. It appears that ships stewards and others recently smuggled into England new American numbers which were played publicly before they were published, while an enormous number of British tunes have still be orchestrated in America. These will now be cabled to professional orchestrators in New York.

# Taxpayer base more than doubled in the last decade

Expansion of the base has coincided with an improvement in tax administration efficiency

#### DATA POINT

**Chandrasekar K.**

**I**ndia's direct tax system has undergone a significant expansion over the last decade, marked by a sharp rise in the number of taxpayers as well as sustained improvements in administrative efficiency. Time-series data released by the Income-Tax Department indicate that this expansion has been broad-based and persistent, reflecting deeper formal participation rather than a short-lived compliance surge.

Between Assessment Year (AY) 2013-14 and AY2024-25, the total number of taxpayers, defined as persons who either filed a return of income or in whose case tax was deducted at source, increased from 5.26 crore to 12.13 crore.

This increase, which more than doubles the taxpayer base, represents a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 7.89% over 11 years, underscoring the sustained nature of the expansion. It marks one of the most important structural shifts in India's direct tax landscape since the wider adoption of the Permanent Account Number.

A disaggregated view of the data shows that individual taxpayers remain the primary drivers of this expansion. As illustrated in **Chart 1**, the number of individual taxpayers rose from 4.96 crore in AY2013-14 to 11.61 crore in AY2024-25, translating into a CAGR of about 8% over the period.

Growth was largely steady in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, with year-on-year increases mostly in the high single digits. The contraction visible in AY2020-21, when individual taxpayers declined by nearly 9%, coincides with the disruption caused by the pandemic. This was followed by strong recovery, with growth accelerating to double digits in the most recent assessment years, indicating renewed momentum.

The temporary rise in the cost of collection of direct taxes fell from 1.36% in FY 2000-01 to 0.41% in FY 2024-25 using unrounded values, and figures for AY2024-25 and FY2024-25 are provisional.

The writer is with the Indian Statistical Service. The views expressed are personal

tum in the expansion of the individual tax base.

While individuals dominate the tax system in scale, the expansion has not been confined to households alone. **Chart 2** shows the combined trend for non-individual taxpayers, comprising firms, companies, Hindu Undivided Families, Associations of Persons or Body of Individuals, local authorities, artificial juridical persons, and other residual PAN categories.

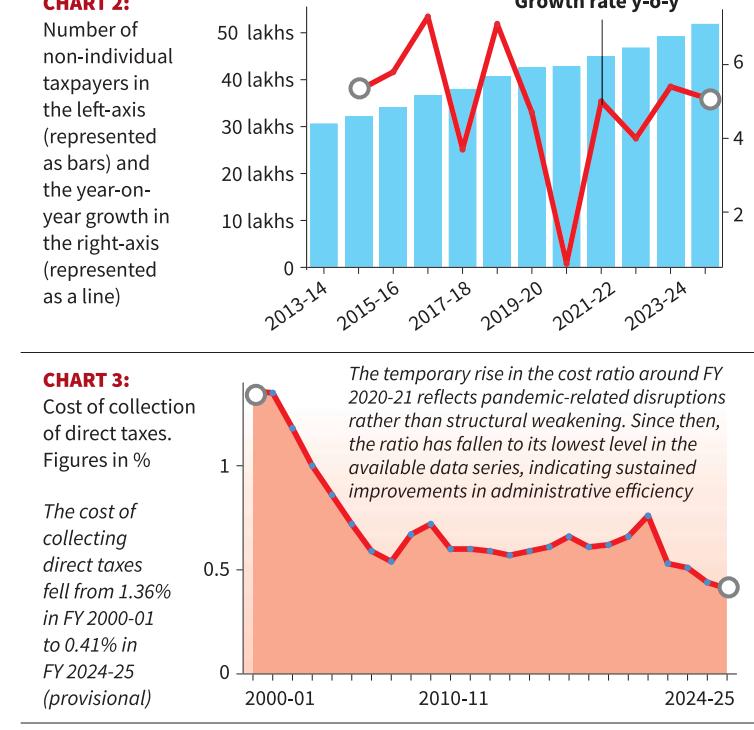
In absolute terms, the non-individual taxpayer base increased steadily from about 0.29 crore in AY2013-14 to nearly 0.48 crore by AY2024-25, corresponding to a CAGR of roughly 5% over the period.

Growth among non-individual taxpayers has been more moderate than among individuals, but also more stable. Year-on-year growth rates generally remained within the 4% to 7% range in the pre-pandemic years. The pandemic's impact is again evident in AY2020-21, when growth slowed sharply to below 1% before recovering gradually in subsequent years.

However, unlike individuals, the post-pandemic rebound among non-individuals has been measured, with growth stabilising at around 5% in recent assessment years. This pattern suggests that formalisation has progressed across organisational and business entities, albeit at a steadier pace than individuals.

**Cost of collection**

The expansion of the taxpayer base has coincided with a marked improvement in tax administration efficiency. As shown in **Chart 3**, the cost of collecting direct taxes fell from 1.36% in FY 2000-01 to 0.41% in FY 2024-25 using unrounded values, and figures for AY2024-25 and FY2024-25 are provisional.



**From Page One****Centre plans rules for books by defence staff**

For serving Army personnel, the rules are explicit and mandatory. Service rules and defence service regulations require prior written permission before undertaking any literary, political or remunerative activity outside official duties. Requests are routed through the chain of command and may require clearance up to Army Headquarters or the MoD, depending on the nature of the content.

Material relating to classified information, operational details, internal procedures, equipment capabilities, intelligence inputs, or issues affecting national security or foreign relations is strictly prohibited. Even fictional works may face restrictions if they closely resemble real operations or disclose identifiable details.

**Maturity, judgment**

Lt. Gen. (retd.) D.P. Pandey said, "When an Army person retires, he or she is as much a civilian as anyone else but the facet of Official Secrets Act remains. After retirement, it largely comes down to individual's maturity and judgment regarding what to write and how to present it. One should avoid writing on matters that are classified and not in open domain. However, retired personnel are free to express their personal opinions about politics and matters of national security. If any content falls under the Official Secrets Act, prior permission from the MoD is required."

He added that in his view, material that is already in the public domain can be written about. There is a laid-down process within the respective Services to grant permission for publication if a book mentions issues related to national interest. If any information published in a book is found to be incorrect or unlawful, there are legal provisions to deal with such infringements.

**U.S. drops references to statement on trade deal**

"India intends to buy more American products and purchase over \$500 billion of U.S. energy, information and communication technology, coal, and other products", a line which earlier also included "agricultural" products. The External Affairs Ministry did not respond to a question on whether the government or the Indian embassy had reached out to the U.S. government to request the changes. The U.S. did not issue any statement before amending the documents available online.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Trade Representative's office deleted another entry related to the India-U.S. deal. The social media post showed a map of India including in it Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin. This is in line with India's official map but runs counter to the U.S.'s official maps that show the two regions as "disputed territory". The post had led to questions being asked about whether the U.S. government was changing its position in India's favour. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri was asked about the map during a meeting of the parliamentary committee on external affairs on Tuesday.

**Inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi found in Egypt**

Within such settings, the Indian visitors seem to have followed an existing practice of leaving their names inside the tombs, they said.

The name *Cikai Korran* (pronounced 'Kotran') appears repeatedly. It was inscribed eight times across five tombs. The name was found near entrances and high on interior walls among other graffiti marks. In one tomb, it appears at a height of about four metres at the entrance, Mr. Strauch said. "The name *Cikai Korran* is revealing, as its first element may be connected to the Sanskrit *sikhā*, meaning tuft or crown. While this is not a common personal name, the second element, *korran*, is more distinctly Tamil. It carries strong war-like associations, as it derives from a root, *koram*, meaning victory and slaying. This root is echoed in the Chera warrior goddess *Korrai* and the term *korraian*, meaning king," Ms. Schmid said.

The name *korran* also came up in other finds in Egypt. It appears in *Korrapumān*, written on a sherd discovered at Berenike, a Red Sea port city, in 1995. The name also occurs in the Sangam corpus, where the Chera king *Pittākorrān*, praised in the *Puranaorū*, is sometimes directly addressed as *korran*, the scholars pointed out, adding that these parallel attestations in inscriptions from Pugalur, the ancient Chera capital, dated back to the 2nd or 3rd century C.E.

Two other individuals also left their names in Tamil Brahmi in these tombs. One inscription reads *Kopān varata kantan* (*Kopān* came and saw). The name *Kopān* has also been found at Amankovipatti in Tamil Nadu. Other Tamil names identified include *Catān* and *Kiran*. "When I first identified these inscriptions, I could not believe it. Because so many people have visited these tombs over the years and nobody has identified anything Indian. I asked Charlotte whether I was mistaken," Mr. Strauch said.

K. Rajan, academic and research adviser, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, said the findings are significant as they shed light on the trade links between ancient Tamilagam from the Malabar Coast and the Roman Empire. He said that earlier work in Egypt had focused on the Red Sea port city of Berenike, where excavations were conducted for several years and attention has now moved to the Nile river valley.

**IT Act, conspiracy charges in case over ex-Army chief book**

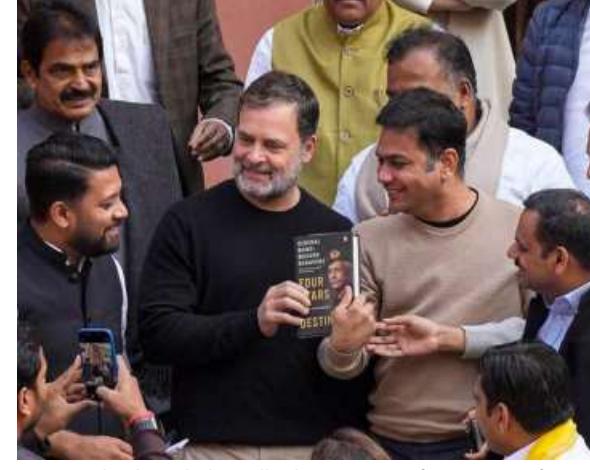
Delhi Police seek clarification from Penguin over circulation of the unpublished book on social media; they are investigating which version of the book Rahul was seen holding in the Lok Sabha

**Saurabh Trivedi**  
NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has registered a case under the Information Technology Act and provisions related to criminal conspiracy under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in connection with the alleged leak of content from the unpublished memoir, *Four Stars of Destiny*, of former Army chief General M.M. Naravane (retd.).

The police on Wednesday issued notice to Penguin Random House India seeking clarifications over the circulation of the unpublished book on social media.

Investigators are probing how the content entered the public domain



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi shows a copy of *Four Stars of Destiny* during the Budget Session of Parliament in New Delhi. PTI

when formal publication clearance had not been granted.

**Tracing source**

Preliminary inquiries have indicated that a PDF copy of a manuscript bearing the same title is available on multiple websites. Some online marketing platforms have displayed the book's cover, suggesting it is available for sale.

The police are verifying the authenticity of these materials and tracing their source.

**Internal leak**

Another senior officer confirmed that the publisher and General Naravane were aware of the manuscript's contents. Investigators are examining whether the material may have been accessed during the submission and editorial processes.

The police are investigating which version of the book Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen holding in the Lok Sabha and how he may have accessed it, if at all. The officer added that the probe could extend to multiple individuals, though no details have been disclosed regarding questioning so far due to the sensitive nature of the case.

Citing potential implications for national security and official secrets, Penguin Random House and associated platforms are likely to be examined as part of the ongoing probe.

mining whether the material may have been accessed during the submission and editorial processes. Given the number of personnel involved in publishing workflows, the possibility of an internal leak has not been ruled out, leading to the addition of criminal conspiracy charges.

The police are also investigating which version of the book Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was seen holding in the Lok Sabha and how he may have accessed it, if at all. The officer added that the probe could extend to multiple individuals, though no details have been disclosed regarding questioning so far due to the sensitive nature of the case.

Citing potential implications for national security and official secrets, Penguin Random House and associated platforms are likely to be examined as part of the ongoing probe.



Ritu Tawde

administration. I would like to assure you that service will be given more importance than politics." Her appointment as Mayor also breaks the 25-years-old rule of undivided Shiv Sena.

In the elections held on January 15 after four years, the BJP emerged as the single largest party with 89 corporators elected, while the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) won 29 seats, both together crossing the majority figure of 114 in the 227-member BMC house.

Following the results, the reservation lottery was drawn in which the Mumbai Mayor seat was re-served for woman.

**BJP's Ritu Tawde becomes Mumbai's 8th woman Mayor**

**Snehal Mutha**  
MUMBAI

Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Ritu Tawde took charge as the Mayor of Mumbai on Wednesday, with Sanjay Ghadi of the Shiv Sena as her deputy, in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) headquarters. Ms. Tawde is the city's eighth woman Mayor.

It was a smooth sailing for the BJP, which saw its corporator as the Mayor of the country's richest municipal corporation for the first time in 44 years.

Ms. Tawde, who became the 78th Mayor of Mumbai, said, "We are determined to implement effective schemes for women empowerment, employment opportunities for youth, care for senior citizens and for the poor and needy. Digital systems and AI will be used to provide corruption-free admini-



Sonam Wangchuk

**Cannot release Wangchuk on health grounds, + Centre tells SC**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday pointed to phrases made by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, where an assault on Saturday led to a localised Kuki-Naga conflict.

Nearly 40 houses were torched over the next three days, forcing many to flee to safer places.

Internet services, including broadband, continue to be suspended in the district.

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Internet services, including broadband, continue to be suspended in the district.

Appearing before a Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and P.B. Varale, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor-General K.M. Nataraj said the "health facade was manufactured and synthetic".

Mr. Nataraj said the activist, detained in the Jodhpur Central Jail, was "fit, hale and hearty" and had been medically examined 24 times already over the past five months of his confinement.

Mr. Wangchuk was detained under the NSA on September 26 last year, two days after violent protests demanding Statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh left four people dead and 90 injured.

The Bench, referring to the Centre citing Mr. Wangchuk's alleged references to Arab Spring as a reason leading to incitement of violence, said "everybody knows about Arab Spring".

"How do you link all this to what happened on September 24 [violence]? Are you saying people sitting with him on hunger strike heard him, got up and left to commit violence?" Justice Kumar asked.

**In first visit since ethnic conflict, Manipur CM reaches out to Kuki, Meitei people in Jiribam**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Wednesday visited Jiribam district and interacted with violence-scarred people from the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities as part of a peace-building mission.

The outreach at Jiribam, bordering the Barak Valley in southern Assam, was the first for the Chief Minister since divisive ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023, killing more than 260 people and displacing some 62,000.

Mr. Singh first met Meiteis staying at a higher secondary school and then interacted with Kuki-Zo-Hmars. He visited Jairal-



Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh interacts with inmates of a relief centre in Jiribam, Manipur on Wednesday. PTI

pokpi, a Kuki-Zo-Hmar village that witnessed widespread violence and arson in 2023.

The visit forms part of the State government's broader effort to foster dialogue and rebuild trust among affected communities.

ties, he said.

The Chief Minister urged inmates of the relief camps to work towards removing the trust deficit.

**'We are Indian first'**

"Jiribam is the gateway to Manipur and has the po-

tential to become a business hub. For the business to flourish, peace has to come first," he said.

"Let us consider the last two years were a nightmare, let us forget it and have the courage to move forward towards peace and development," Mr. Singh said at a Hmar village.

"First, we are Indian, and then we are Manipuri. We can be Manipuri Naga, Manipuri Kuki, and Manipuri Meitei. We need to rebuild the concept of Manipuri someone is trying to destroy," he said.

The Hmar villagers assured the government their support, and urged him to take care of the needs of the tribal village, particularly the school

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**Beldanga violence: was it fair to invoke UAPA, SC asks NIA**

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

**Every emotional outburst cannot be packaged as affecting economic security, says Justice Bagchi**

streets, blocking railway tracks and a National Highway for several hours. At least 12 people were injured in the clashes, and around 30 were arrested. "Every emotional outburst cannot be packaged as affecting economic security," Justice Bagchi said.

The Calcutta High Court had, on January 20, issued various directions on the basis of petitions filed by BJP leader Suvenu Adhikari and others, including leaving it open to the Centre to conduct probe by invoking Section 6(5) of the NIA Act.

On January 26, the Home Ministry directed the NIA to take up the probe of the case. The West Bengal government had moved the top court, arguing there was no material to attract Section 15 of the UAPA. They submitted that none of the scheduled offences under the UAPA were committed.

**Two-day tech summit to explore how enterprises can boost their resilience**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Government officials, academics, and industry leaders will come together at the The Hindu Group's Tech Summit 2026 on February 12 and 13 to deliberate on various issues at the intersection of technology and governance, building resilience in industry, and the challenges and opportunities from Artificial Intelligence.

Titled "Continuity Unbroken: Building the Architecture of Resilience in a Connected World", the summit's first day will focus on enterprise resilience and governance with key features being data privacy in biometric platforms, technology-led disaster recovery, evolution of next-generation governance and compliance frameworks, and cyberresilience in an AI-driven world. The second day will examine topics like AI-first digital transformation, integrated data security management, state perspectives on technology-driven economic growth, and the development

ment of industry-ready talent for an AI-driven future.

The event will be inaugurated by G. Viswanathan, founder and Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology. He will also deliver the keynote address. Raju Venesna, chairman and managing director, Sify Technologies, will deliver a special address.

The panel discussions will explore resilience not merely as risk mitigation but as a structural capability embedded within organisational DNA.

Dr. Viswanathan said that India had long excelled in theoretical knowledge but had often fallen short in practical knowledge. "A leading model we can draw

from is Germany," he said, adding that, in Germany, candidates seeking to teach in universities of applied sciences are required to have at least five years of professional experience. Stating that VIT was one of the first institutions to have mandated that a part of every course was to be delivered by industry experts, he pointed out that VIT had ensured that industry professionals and senior leaders actively participated at various levels, including the Academic Council and the curriculum design committee.

The summit is supported by Skylar Information Technologies, KBR, Tally, and Virtusa as associate partners; G Square as reality partner; MMA as industry partner; Startup Singam as ecosystem partner; Nexus as gift partner; and the Government of Karnataka as State partner.

The event will be live

streamed on

newsth.live/

THTSYT1

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CM-CHE

CH-CHE

# No reduction in States' share in tax devolution, FM asserts in Lok Sabha

Minister counters Opposition, says that resources that will be transferred to the States is estimated at ₹25.44 lakh crore; Constitution gives Centre authority to collect cesses and surcharges, she adds

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday dismissed allegations by Opposition members that the Centre was not transferring 41% of the divisible pool of taxes to the States, as mandated by the 15th Finance Commission, asserting that the required transfers were made every year.

The 15th Finance Commission had recommended that for 2020 to 2026, the Centre should transfer 41% of its divisible pool of taxes to the States, which the Centre had accepted.

"Often, we are accused of not transferring the 41% that the 15th Finance Commission has recommended," Ms. Sitharaman said in the Lok Sabha, during her reply to the debate on the Union Budget.

"I assure you, it is 41% that we have transferred to the States. We have not reduced any State's devolvable tax," she said.

The Union Finance Minister said the total resources to be transferred to the States, including the devolution and under Centrally sponsored schemes,

This Budget has been prepared as the first Budget in the second quarter of the 21st century... So, this Budget covers a lot of issues from 2026 to 2050

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN  
Union Finance Minister



was estimated at ₹25.44 lakh crore for 2026-27.

"This entails an increase of ₹2.7 lakh crore over 2025-26 and is ₹3.78 lakh crore more than the actuals of 2024-25," she said.

"The 16th Finance Commission analysed the States' share transferred by the Centre to the States from 2018-19 to 2022-23 and concluded that in each of these years, the devolution made by the Centre exactly matches the recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission," Ms. Sitharaman added.

**Devolution pool**

She said that it was the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) that audited the Centre's finances and decided what the net proceeds of the Centre were, after subtracting from the gross tax receipts the cess-

es and surcharges collected by the Centre.

"Out of that, have we transferred 41% of the divisible pool, that is what should be looked at, not the gross tax revenue," the senior BJP leader said. "The Constitution gives the Centre the authority to collect cesses and surcharges."

The Finance Minister sought to counter charges levelled by Opposition members that the Centre was shrinking the divisible pool of taxes by focusing more on cesses and surcharges, which the States cannot gain from.

"The cesses and surcharges are collected for a particular purpose such as health cess, education cess, road cess," Ms. Sitharaman said. "These do not benefit the Centre, they go to the States in terms of

building schools, hospitals, roads in the States."

**Medium-term Budget**

The Finance Minister explained why the Union Budget included several announcements that were aimed at the medium and long term.

"This Budget has been prepared as the first Budget in the second quarter of the 21st century," she said.

"So, this Budget covers a lot of issues from 2026 to 2050. We are also starting the new five-year cycle of the new Finance Commission and therefore the estimates are largely on the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission," she said.

"By doing these [longer term] announcements, which are leading us towards the medium and long term, we are also continuing our push in building infrastructure," she said.

"It is not just roads and National highways, we are also looking at waterways so that the cost of logistics can come down and States that are in the hinterland will have the advantage of moving goods faster at a lesser cost," she said.

# Opposition targets Centre over growing inequality and 'atmosphere of fear'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Opposition members in the Lok Sabha expressed their concern over low per capita income, growing inequality, and unemployment, while speaking on the Union Budget on Wednesday.

"No economy can grow in an atmosphere of fear and hatred," Congress MP K.C. Venugopal said, taking part in the debate on the Budget.

Mr. Venugopal said that as many as 80 churches had been attacked during the previous Christmas season, and referred to a controversial statement by a Chief Minister targeting a minority group in his State.

"No nation can prosper when communities are divided. Today, hate is becoming a normalised situation in the country. State-sponsored terror in the name of what is proudly called as bulldozer raj has become a political tool," he said.

Mr. Venugopal flagged the issue of Indian rupee crossing the 91 mark against the U.S. dollar, unemployment rate among urban youth reaching 18%, and the top 10% of the population controlling 58% of the country's resources. He also said the rights-based approach of the UPA, reflected in laws such as MGNREGA, RTI, and



House view: Lok Sabha proceedings under way during the Budget Session in New Delhi on Wednesday. SANSAD TV

Forest Rights' Act, were being diluted or taken away.

"The Finance Minister will proudly speak of growth and development. But behind these claims lies these harsh realities," he said.

BJP leader Anurag Thakur targeted the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

"The electoral losses have filled him with hatred. He hates parliamentary rules, he hates the Speaker, he hates constitutional institutions, he hates the Prime Minister and now he has started hating India," he said.

In the Rajya Sabha, Opposition members flagged concerns over growing income inequality. RJD MP Sanjay Yadav said that while India was now the world's fourth-largest economy, it ranked much lower on the per-capita income scale. CPI(M) MP V.

Sivadasan sought to counter the government's claims of India being a high-growth economy, arguing that wages for ASHA and anganwadi workers had not been revised for a decade.

Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale said, "The government likes to tell us we are the world's fourth-largest economy. But what it doesn't tell people is that in terms of per-capita GDP, our economy ranks 123rd."

He alleged that the Budget had become "personality-oriented" rather than policy-driven, and claimed that urban Indian youth now have lower purchasing power than young people in several conflict-hit countries.

Former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda said economic growth alone was insufficient, stressing that employment must be central to policymaking.

No plans for distinct legal recognition for denotified tribes: Centre

Abhinav Lakshman

NEW DELHI

The Union government is not considering any proposal for distinct legal and constitutional recognition of a category on a par with the SC/ST/OBC classifications for the denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes in India, the Tribal Affairs Ministry told the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

This comes even as these communities (formerly classified as "criminal" under the colonial-era Criminal Tribes Act, 1871) are organising to push for a "separate column" in the upcoming 2027 Census forms for themselves, in the hopes of building it up into a movement for a fresh classification for communities that were once labelled "criminal".

In a meeting held on January 30, officials of the Social Justice Ministry assured leaders of the community that they will be counted in the Census.

Replying to a question from MPs Manoj Kumar Jha (Rashtriya Janata Dal) and Sandesh Kumar P. (CPI) about the issue and the government's plans for such a new classification, the Ministry said it had consulted with the Social Justice Ministry, which said, "There is no such proposal or plan under consideration."

Amid heated debate, banter between Opposition and Chair

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

As the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, led a pitched attack on the government over the interim trade agreement with the U.S., the Lok Sabha witnessed a light-hearted exchange between the Congress leader and the Chair of the House, Jagdambika Pal.

When Mr. Gandhi sought to question the government over reports referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Ministers in some recently released documents in the U.S., Mr. Pal asked him to confine his remarks to matters related to the Union Budget on which the discussion was taking place.

Mr. Gandhi responded by reminding Mr. Pal that he had been earlier in the Congress to which the Bharatiya Janata Party MP said: "Had you listened to me, you would not have been sitting on that side of the House... I am here as a presiding officer," Mr. Pal shot back.

"But we like you, sir, and we know your heart is not there. We know your heart is here," Mr. Gandhi responded.

Mr. Pal joined the BJP in 2014. He has since then represented the Domariyaganj Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh for three consecutive terms, though he was first elected to the Lok Sabha from Domariyaganj in 2009 on Congress ticket.

Over the years, he has served three terms as an MLA, and has also been a Minister in the Uttarakhand government. Earlier in his political career, Mr. Pal was also president of the Uttarakhand Congress.

# NDA government has compromised India's energy security and future of farmers: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Making a point: Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi speaks in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. SANSAD TV

quick to respond, with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju asserting that the government would move a privilege motion against Mr. Gandhi.

**'Weaponise finances'** Mr. Gandhi said the government had allowed the U.S. to weaponise India's finances against itself. "You are handing our data over. How can you even make

these statements. Are you not ashamed of yourselves," he said.

He claimed that if the INDIA bloc had been negotiating with U.S. President Donald Trump, it would have said that the U.S. should treat India as an equal and not servants.

"The first thing we would say [to Mr. Trump] is that the most important asset in this equation is In-

dian data. If the U.S. wants to protect the dollar, it must recognise that Indian data is the biggest asset. Second thing, we would say to President Trump is that 'if you want access to it, then you will talk to us as an equal, not talk to us as if we are your servants,'" he said.

"We would have told Trump that India's energy security is non-negotiable and we are going to protect our energy security," he said. "The third thing, we would have told President Trump is that 'we understand you have agricultural voter base, you need to protect farmers, but we will also protect our farmers'."

"We will not be made equal to Pakistan. If President Trump decided that Pakistan Army chief will have breakfast with him, he will proceed with it. It will be taken up in the second part of the Budget Session. The first part of the session, which got underway on January 28, will go into recess on February 13.

While the Opposition's move is aimed at making a political point on the way the House has functioned, there is considerable interest in the process. Article 94 of the Constitution deals with the provisions regarding the removal of the Speaker.

**On Article 94C** The Opposition notice is under Article 94C, which states that the Speaker "may be removed from his office by a resolution of the House of the People by a

minimum of 14 days' notice to be given before a resolution seeking the removal of the Speaker can be taken up by the House, and under Article 96, the Speaker can respond to the notice for removal.

we will have something to say about it," he said.

The scene turned acrimonious when Mr. Gandhi sought to mention certain industrialists and BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, who was officiating as the Speaker, said that no names would go on record.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Mr. Gandhi should authenticate everything he spoke, to which the Congress leader agreed.

Later outside the House, Mr. Gandhi said: "I said I will authenticate. Department of Justice case files are there in which [Union Minister] Hardeep Singh Puri and [industrialist] Anil Ambani's names are there. There is a case on Adani ... there have been summons. There is direct pressure on the PM. Without pressure no PM can do it."

"We will file the necessary notice with the Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition did not make any useful substantive contribution to the Budget discussion but only made some wild allegations," Mr. Rijiju said, soon after Mr. Gandhi's speech got over.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister said the notice would be placed before the Chair seeking authentication of Mr. Gandhi's assertions. While Mr. Gandhi promised to authenticate what he had spoken, Mr. Rijiju said, "I know he cannot authenticate them because he lied. He lied in the House."

**Minister's clarification**

Addressing a press conference here, Mr. Puri said he had taken over as India's Ambassador to the United Nations in New York in 2009 and remained there for eight years. "There are references to possibly three or four meetings [with Jeffrey Epstein] in eight years," he said, adding that during that time he was a member of the International Peace Institute (IPI).

Issues such as granting Constitutional status to the National Commission for Minorities and the impact of the bilateral trade agreement with the United States on soya bean farmers in Madhya Pradesh were also raised during Zero Hour.

# NDA leaders to file notice against Rahul for remarks on Puri

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Terje Rød-Larsen, was someone who knew the infamous Epstein. As part of an IPI and ICM delegation, I met Epstein on a few occasions – three or at most four times," he said.

About an email dated November 13, 2014, released as part of Epstein Files, Mr. Puri said it was exchanged as his contacts introduced him to Reid Hoffman, the founder of LinkedIn. Then as a private citizen, he wrote to Mr. Hoffman about the immense opportunities India presented in the Internet-based economic activity.

**'Minimal interaction'** Stressing that his interaction was minimal, he quoted an email exchange between Larsen and Jeffrey Epstein dated December 25, 2015, in which Epstein referred to Mr. Puri as "two-faced". "What does it mean? The man [being referred to] is not okay..." Mr. Puri said. In that email exchange, Larsen had written to Epstein: "Have you heard the saying: when you meet an Indian and a snake, kill the Indian first?"

"The Epstein files are about wrongdoing and criminal offences. They contain charges that he had an island where he took people to indulge their sexual fantasies, including charges of paedophilia, and there are victims. My interaction had nothing to do with that," he added.

# Speaker directs Lok Sabha Secretariat to correct notice seeking his removal

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday asked the Lok Sabha Secretariat to correct shortcomings in the Opposition's notice seeking his removal from his Constitutional office, and proceed with the corrected notice.

The revised notice will be listed after the commencement of the second phase of the Budget Session. The second phase will be held between March 9 and April 2.

"Shortcomings were found in the notice submitted by Opposition MPs on Tuesday to remove Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla," a source in the Lok Sabha Se-

cretariat said. "The notice referred four times to events of February 2025, on the basis of which it could have been rejected under the rules," they added.

Mr. Birla directed the Secretariat to have the defec-

tory notice corrected and

then proceed with it. It will be taken up in the second part of the Budget Session.

The first part of the session, which got underway on January 28, will go into recess on February 13.

While the Opposition's move is aimed at making a political point on the way the House has functioned, there is considerable interest in the process. Article 94 of the Constitution deals with the provisions regarding the removal of the Speaker.

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Issues such as granting Constitutional status to the National Commission for Minorities and the impact of the bilateral trade agreement with the United States on soya bean farmers in Madhya Pradesh were also raised during Zero Hour.

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

During Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, members demanded proper memorial for Anushil Samiti revolutionaries on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, curbs on Korean mobile games, and right to recall elected representatives.

"The Constitution doesn't use the word effective majority but it's meant to convey

## IN BRIEF



## Soldier, civilian injured in two separate explosions in J&amp;K

A soldier and a civilian were injured in two separate explosions in J&K on Wednesday. Officials said an anti-personnel landmine went off forward post Faulad, close to the Line of Control (LoC), in Gulmarg Sector in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. One Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) was injured in the blast and was shifted to the Badamibagh Base hospital in Srinagar for treatment. In the Pir Panjal Valley's Poonch district, a rusted landmine went off and injured a civilian. Officials said Bilal Ahmad, 16, was loading sand into a tractor at Battar Nullah when the blast took place. The injured civilian was shifted to a hospital.

## SC agrees to list another plea against Assam Chief Minister

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to consider listing another plea filed by four persons seeking a direction against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over a series of alleged hate speeches targeting Muslims in the State. The fresh petition was filed by former professor Hiren Gohain, former DGP of Assam Harekrishna Deka, senior journalist Paresh Chandra Malakar, and senior advocate Santanu Borthakur. On Tuesday, a Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant had agreed to list for hearing separate pleas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and CPI leader Annie Raja seeking action against the Chief Minister. PTI

**Delhi HC asks Rapsodia to disclose sales information**

## The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

In an interim order in a suit filed by Indian designer Anupama Dayal against Argentinian brand Rapsodia alleging unauthorised duplication of her copyrighted works, the Delhi High Court has directed the company to disclose production, manufacturing, export and sales details of the alleged infringing products.

On February 6, the court asked the defendant to file, within six weeks, an affidavit setting out the total number of items produced for each alleged infringing work, the dates of manufacture, the place and name of the manufacturer, dates of export from India along with shipping documents, invoices and forwarder documents, and copies of purchase orders.

## Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Vice Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor on Wednesday described the Rafale fighter jet as the "hero" of Operation Sindoor, and said the Indian Air Force (IAF) was looking to induct more such multi-role fighter aircraft, with Rafale planes among the contenders.

"Rafale was definitely the hero during Operation Sindoor among other heroes. The Indian Air Force is looking forward to inducting more MRFA, which is going to be Rafale or any other aircraft under deliberations. A decision has yet to be taken. We are looking for newer generation aircraft [to add] into our inventory," he said.

On reports regarding alleged strikes on Pakistan's Kirana Hills during the operation, Air Marshal Kapoor said the IAF had tar-

# Vande Mataram to be played before National Anthem: govt.

Fresh set of guidelines issued to States and government bodies but no formal statement made by the Centre; it says when the National Song is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention

## The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Union government has said in a set of instructions to the States and government bodies that the National Song, *Vande Mataram*, should be sung or played before the National Anthem, *Jana Gana Mana*, when both the songs are played at an event.

The fresh set of guidelines were uploaded on the Union Home Ministry website on February 6, but no formal announcement or a statement was issued.

It states that whenever the official version of the National Song, around 3.1 minutes long, is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention. "However, when in the course of a newsreel or documentary, the National Song is played as a part of the film, it is not expected of the audience to stand as standing is bound to interrupt the exhibition of the film and would create disorder and confusion rather than add to the dignity of the National Song," it said.

The Ministry said the instructions were being issued for general informa-

## Setting the tone

Key guidelines for singing and playing the National Song

- *Vande Mataram* should be sung or played before the National Anthem when both are performed at an event

- The audience must stand at attention when the official version, around 3 minutes 10 seconds long, is sung or played

- Standing is not required if it is played as part of a newsreel or documentary



Proud moment: A tableau celebrating 150 years of *Vande Mataram* during the Republic Day Parade. PTI

- The official version shall be accompanied by mass singing during unfurling of the National Flag, cultural occasions, or ceremonial functions other than parades

tion and guidance on the official version of the song, the occasions on which it is to be played or sung, and about the need for paying respect to the song by observance of proper decorum on such occasions.

It said that *Vande Mataram*, written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, is known as the "National Song, which is to be sung on arrival and departure of the President at formal state functions and other functions organised by the government, immediately before and after the President addresses the nation

over All India Radio and television, on arrival and departure of the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor at formal state functions, when the National Flag is brought on parade, any other occasion for which special orders are issued by the Government of India".

## When a band plays it

"When the National Song is played by a band, the song will be preceded by a roll of drums to assist the audience to know that it is going to be played, unless there is some other specific indication that the Na-

tional Song is about to be played," the Ministry said.

The official version shall be played accompanied by mass singing on the unfurling of the National Flag, on cultural occasions or ceremonial functions other than parades. The mass singing could be arranged by having a choir of adequate size, suitably stationed, which would be trained to coordinate its singing with the band.

It may be sung on occasions which, though not strictly ceremonial, are nevertheless invested with significance because of the presence of Ministers and others, the Ministry said.

"It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of occasions on which the singing (as distinct from playing) of official version of the National Song can be permitted. But there is no objection to the singing of the National Song accompanied by mass singing so long as it is done with due respect as a salutation to the motherland and proper decorum is maintained," the Ministry said.

"In all schools, the day's work may begin with community singing of the National Song..." it added.

that "many airlines do", Chief Justice Kant remarked that grounding Dreamliners might effectively lead to grounding the airlines serving the country.



The tail of the Air India plane that crashed in Ahmedabad on June 12, 2025. VIJAY SONEJI

"There is a lot of anxiety and queries in the minds of pilots, close relatives [of those who died]... We are also eagerly waiting for the findings of the investigation. We also want to see what they have to say," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a Bench, addressed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the government.

## The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted three weeks for the completion of the investigation by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) into the Air India Flight 171 crash at the Ahmedabad airport, which killed 12 crew members and 229 passengers on June 12 last year.

"There is a lot of anxiety and queries in the minds of pilots, close relatives [of those who died]... We are also eagerly waiting for the findings of the investigation. We also want to see what they have to say," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a Bench, addressed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the government.

The court asked Mr. Mehta to place the AAIB report on record after the completion of the investigation.

During the hearing, Mr. Mehta said a detailed and international investigation was on, and asked for three weeks more.

At one point, addressing questions raised about the safety of the Boeing 787 Dreamliners, the CJI asked how many other airlines globally used the aircraft. On receiving a response

## 'Wait for report'

Senior advocate Gopal Sanakaranarayanan, appearing for 91-year-old Pushkarraj Sabharwal, along with advocates Prashant Bhushan and Neha Rathi, argued that a separate court of inquiry headed by a retired judge was the law and the norm in the aftermath of a major air accident.

The CJI responded that the "smallest air accident leads to disastrous consequences". The Bench stressed that it would wait for the AAIB to come out with its report.

# Calling Rafale a 'hero', Vice Chief of Air Staff seeks more fighter planes



Vayu Shakti, an upcoming IAF exercise, will be held at the Pokharan air-to-ground range in Rajasthan on February 27. PTI

get terror infrastructure and several military installations. "Whether we did something there or whether the explosion was caused by something else, we don't know. These videos were presented by their people; we did nothing beyond striking terror and military installations," he said. He was briefing journalists about Vayu Shakti, an upcoming IAF exercise to be held at the Pokharan

air-to-ground range near the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan on February 27. The biennial firepower demonstration will highlight the success of Operation Sindoor and the IAF's capability to rapidly punish the enemy and dominate the operational environment.

More than 120 air assets, including 77 fighter jets, will participate. The line-up includes Rafale,

Su-30MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar, and Tejas aircraft. Helicopters will also take part, including Apache, Chinook, light combat helicopter Prahar, and advanced light helicopter, along with transport aircraft such as C-130J, C-17, and C-295, which will make its debut at the event.

Wing Commander Ajit B. Wasane said that 277 weapons would be deployed during the exercise, which will last two hours and 35 minutes. Around 12,000 kg of explosives will be detonated across 43 events involving 23 targets.

Surface-to-air systems such as Akash and Spyder, short-range loitering munitions, and counter unmanned aerial systems will be showcased. The drill will feature integrated operations with the Army, including the deployment of M-777 howitzers, L-70 guns, and Special Forces.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan met with leaders of 10 leading start-ups using AI in the ed-tech sector at a roundtable discussion in IIT Delhi, ahead of the government's Bharat Bodhan AI Conclave starting Thursday.

Officials told presspersons on Wednesday that the government will be launching Bodhan AI during the conclave, which is expected to lead to digital public infrastructure (DPI) for the education sector as a whole.

# Education Ministry pushes for AI-led teaching and learning at all levels by next academic year

## Abhinav Lakshman

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education is working with the goal of ensuring that artificial intelligence (AI) tools become a part of teaching and learning in one way or another from the kindergarten to the research levels by the next academic year, officials said on Wednesday.



Dharmendra Pradhan

public infrastructure (DPI) for the education sector as a whole.

Mr. Pradhan said that while the government was already working to introduce AI knowledge in curricula, the focus now will be on delivering AI-assisted applications, pushing towards "AI-sovereignty".

Applications include using the tool for teacher capacity building programmes, for preparing personalised lesson plans based on con-

tent already produced by institutions like the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and State CERTs.

The Education Minister argued that while the government had made significant efforts to take digital devices and internet connectivity to far-flung areas of the country, the next challenge is to use AI to deliver content to students in these regions.

After the roundtable on Wednesday, which was also attended by Skill Development Minister Jayant Chaudhary, Mr. Pradhan posted on social media, saying that the founders he met were "home-grown", from "middle-class and tier-III city backgrounds", "who are building indigenous AI stacks particularly for transforming the educational landscape".

## FAITH

## All of mankind is our family

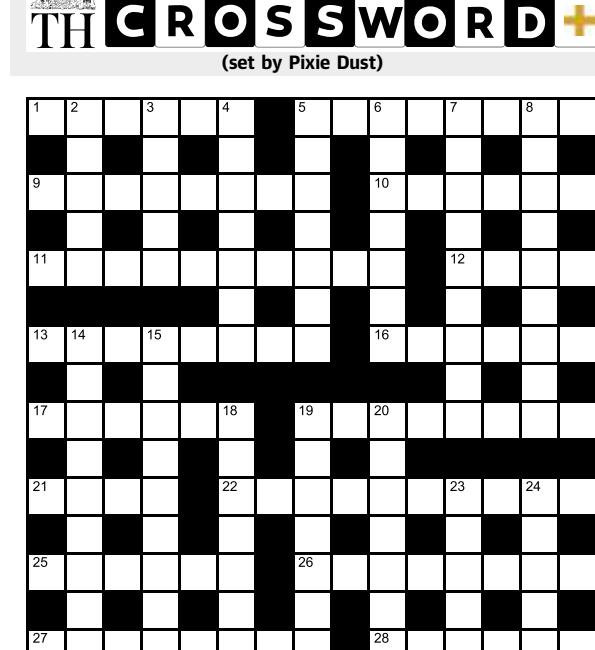
Swami Ramateertha was travelling to America. The ship reached a port in California. While everyone else was leaving the ship, the swami just walked up and down the deck. An American, observing this, asked him where his luggage was? The sanyasi replied that he had his possessions with him, said Akkarakkani Srinidhi in a discourse. The American was puzzled, because the swami had nothing with him. Ramateertha then said, "If you consider all the organs in my body as my possessions, then as you can see, I have all my possessions with me. Besides these, I have nothing to call my own." The American was taken aback.

The American now had another question for Swami Ramateertha. "Do you have money with you?" he asked. Ramateertha said, "I keep nothing for myself. I am a part of this Universe created by God. I am His child. He is my father, and He owns everything on this earth. So, whatever is on this earth also belongs to me. If everything here belongs to me, why should I take anything with me? Those who are spiritually inclined give me food. When I am thirsty, they give me water. If we have love towards our fellow beings, there is no end to our joy."

Ramateertha said the Truth that was responsible for the functioning of the world was the God he worshipped. It was clear that Vedantic truths were the only property Ramateertha had. The American then asked, "Do you know anyone in America?" Ramateertha said, "I know one person – you." The American never forgot his interaction with the swami, which he recalled in later years. The lesson for us is that everyone in this world is worthy of respect and love. We must see all of mankind as our family.

## TH CROSSWORD

14715



## Across

- Plasticine managed to protect films (6)
- Grade repeated often, it's observed? (8)
- These drill masters go about doing tests? (8)
- A new promise but not a solution (6)
- Run dog in park? (10)
- Prized animal caught (4)

## Down

- According to the Reverend, bald assistant can keep locks in place? (8)
- Relative accusing stationer's missing every now and then (6)
- Brown caught sweet model escaping (6)
- Eggs, nuts, lentils and meat perhaps delivered for adolescents (8)
- Politically correct leaders were overwhelmingly knowledgeable. Extraordinary! (4)
- Celebrity on holiday forgets about hunger (10)
- Skimp elite insiders let off (6)
- Soon time will change feelings (8)
- That man's describing Bill in grand captions (8)
- Cuts small fruits (6)
- Guide allowed to display model (5)
- Want to cycle around end of forest and river opening (5)
- Continent ignoring a large country (7)
- Dangerous seducer set free (7)
- Girl managed naughty mad nana (7)
- For a change, desire new, extremely comfortable house (9)
- First lady almost possessed by excitement is high (9)
- Beg pardon! Associate Grace is maintaining journal (9)
- Noted umpire chosen ignoring captain (9)
- Festival not at first Levantine (7)
- Appeals from contenders switching sides (7)
- Unconcerned when a couple of Lilliputians go missing undisguised (7)
- Family involved in neonate birth's coming back (5)
- Ultimately to somehow in the register, find titleholder (5)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

## Solution to previous puzzle

## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

H	M	F	D	S	L




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## IN BRIEF



## India's Akasa Air says co-founder Iyer leaving airline

Indian airline Akasa Air said on Wednesday its co-founder and chief commercial officer, Praveen Iyer, will be leaving in April, at a time when the firm is navigating delayed Boeing jet deliveries. Mr. Iyer will be succeeded by Anand Srinivasan, another co-founder and the chief information officer, Akasa said, without offering more details. It marks the second high-profile departure at the airline in recent months, following the exit of Neelu Khatri, a co-founder, last year. REUTERS

## India corn, soybean prices fall as door opens to U.S. import

Indian corn and soybean prices fell Wednesday after New Delhi agreed to duty-free imports of U.S. soyoil and a protein-rich animal feed under a new trade deal with Washington, stoking fears of cheaper supplies among farmers. Farm unions and Opposition parties, concerned about cheap U.S. supplies, have called nationwide protests for Thursday. Soybean and corn prices have fallen by 10% and 4% each since the interim framework was announced last week. REUTERS

## Silver, gold futures rebound on weak dollar, U.S.-Iran issue

Gold and silver prices rebounded sharply in futures trade on Wednesday, with the white metal climbing nearly 4% or ₹9,665 to ₹2.62 lakh per kg and the yellow metal edging higher to ₹1.58 lakh per 10 grams on firm global trends. Analysts said a weak U.S. dollar and renewed geopolitical tensions between the U.S. and Iran lifted the demand for safe-haven assets. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), silver for March delivery surged by ₹9,665, or 3.83% to ₹2,62,213 per kg. PTI

## India likely to pursue a U.S. tariff waiver for garments made with American cotton

M. Soundariya Preetha  
COIMBATORE

India is likely to pursue a waiver of the 18% reciprocal tariff for garments that are made with U.S. cotton and exported to that country similar to the concession offered to Bangladesh.

## Sector hopeful

Representatives of textile export promotion councils, who participated in a meeting on Wednesday, said there were indications India will pursue with the U.S. to waive the reciprocal tariff on garments and textiles made with U.S. cotton or man-made fibre.



Cotton field in South Carolina.

Exports from Bangladesh that are produced with cotton and MMF textile inputs from the U.S.

## Allay fears'

"The U.S.-Bangladesh Agreement on Reciprocal Trade signed on February 9 says the U.S. will establish a mechanism that will allow for certain textile and apparel goods from Bangladesh to receive zero reciprocal tariff rate for a to-be-specified volume of

## Ashok Leyland Q3 PAT rises 4% to ₹796 crore

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

Ashok Leyland Ltd, a commercial vehicle manufacturer, reported 4% year-on-year (YoY) growth in third quarter net profit to ₹796 crore after considering a one-time charge of ₹308 crore towards new labour code. Revenue grew 22% YoY to ₹11,534 crore.

Medium and heavy commercial vehicles volume stood at 32,929 units compared with 26,692 units in the same period last year up 23%.

"This is higher than Q3 industry growth resulting in a market share gain," the company said.



New tractors for sale at a Mahindra dealership. AFP FILE

CM YK

## M&amp;M Q3 net rises 47% to ₹4,675 crore

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd (M&M) reported 47% year-on-year growth in third quarter consolidated net profit to ₹4,675 crore on consolidated revenue rising 26% to ₹52,100 crore.

Auto and Farm business continued to deliver on growth and margins, with profit rising by 33% to ₹3,931 crore. Revenue grew 26% to ₹38,942 crore.

"The quarterly performance reflects our strong focus on growth coupled with disciplined execution, said Anish Shah, Group CEO & MD. "Auto & Farm maintained its leadership position on the back of steady customer demand,

which is reflected in the

## SMEs unfamiliar with capital markets, lack intermediaries: SEBI

Practical guidance not clear, internal governance systems to handle SME IPOs not yet mature, making IPO process cumbersome, says Pandey

Ashokamithran T.  
MUMBAI

**S**mall and Medium Enterprises (SME) face limited access to intermediary facilities such as merchant bankers and are unfamiliar with capital markets, which make it challenging for them to go public, said SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey.

"Greater SME participation in markets also diversifies financing channels, reduces risk concentration in banking sector and frees bank capacity for genuine



**Shift focus:** Greater SME participation in markets diversifies financing channels, cuts banking sector risk, says SEBI chief.

working capital and priority lending. Yet, SME capital market is under-scaled relative to India's potential." Practical guidance is un-

clear and internal governance systems to handle SME IPOs have not matured making the process cumbersome, he added.

## TMB to shift 50% staff to sales in two years amid tech, automation

Press Trust of India  
MUMBAI

Tamilnad Mercantile Bank will repurpose more than half its staff towards sales as it shifts focus from maintaining long-standing customer relationships to increasing revenue, a top official said.

This will be done through the technology-led investments, which lead to automation benefits in a lot of repeat jobs, MD and CEO Salee S. Nair told PTI, underlining there

will not be any layoffs.

## Staff count to rise

Overall employee count is expected to rise by over 200 from the current 5,000, said Mr. Nair.

"Two years down the line, about 50-60% of the employees will get repurposed into sales. We will be training them for the new roles," he said, speaking on the sidelines of an event to announce its tie-up with tech major Oracle.

Mr. Nair recalled after joining the bank, he found

many processes were being done manually and the use of technology largely limited to the core banking solution.

## Revamping processes

This led to a bank-wide effort on revamping processes with the best of technology tools, he said, adding the board sanctioned an outlay of ₹250 cr. for FY26.

Mr. Nair said at present, human resources account for 47% of the overall ₹1,500 crore expenditure for the bank.

SBT provides globally recognised standards that help firms set and validate science-aligned emissions reduction targets.

Globally, more than 10,000 companies work with SBTi, representing



SBTi CEO David Kennedy with Arun Nanda.

nearly 40% of global market capitalisation and about 30% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.

They said India is not just another market, but a strategic priority to meet Net Zero goals.

Ahead of the Global

South's first Mumbai Climate Week, SBTi CEO David Kennedy and former president of Mahindra group, Arun Nanda, are meeting leaders across major conglomerates, to spread the message that climate action in India must move from aspiration to conviction and from isolated commitments to systemic transformation.

"We claim we are the fourth-largest economy," Mr. Nanda told *The Hindu*. "But we also have a responsibility. We inherited nature not for ourselves but as custodians for future generations. A custodian has two duties: can I protect what I received, and can I improve it?"

SBT

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"Large

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When

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they

activate

thousands

of

suppliers.

That

is how

ambition

becomes

systemic

impact," Mr. Kennedy added.

## MARKETS

## MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	84,234	-0.05
US Dollar	90.78	-0.24
Brent oil	70.05	1.65

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2234.40	6.00
Adani Ports	1553.40	-1.30
Apollo Hosp	7507.00	288.00
Asian Paints	2392.50	-1.10
Axis Bank	1347.30	-9.40
Bajaj Auto	9869.50	95.50
Bajaj Finance	968.95	3.35
Bajaj Finserv	2027.00	-0.90
Bharti Airtel	2012.10	0.80
Cipla	1349.90	7.80
Coal India	423.25	-7.70
Dr Reddys Lab.	170.30	-14.30
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	DE*
Eicher Motors	7771.00	47.00
Etihad Ltd.	300.70	-3.10
Grasim Ind.	2932.60	-21.30
HCL Tech	1551.60	-21.50
HDFC Bank	927.10	-5.30
HDFC Life	701.10	-2.85
Hindalco	965.95	-2.95
Hind Unilever	2462.90	9.30
ICICI Bank	1406.10	-0.40
IntGlobeAvi.	5013.80	53.40
Infosys	1471.90	-25.90
ITC	318.25	-3.15
Jio Financial Servic- es Ltd.	270.30	0.10
JSW Steel	1249.20	5.10
Kotak Bank	429.55	0.25
L&T	4170.40	1.40
M&M	3674.90	-0.90
Maruti Suzuki	1541.00	266.00
Max Healthcare	1055.15	33.65
Nestle India	1305.30	3.30
NTPC	368.45	1.55
ONGC	274.60	2.45
Powergrid Corp	294.45	0.10
Reliance Ind.	1468.70	10.20
State Bank	1182.90	38.80
Shriram Finance	1056.80	8.20
Ltd.	1056.80	8.20
Sun Pharma	1711.10	3.30
TataConsumerPro- duct	1152.60	0.40
Tata Steel	207.59	-0.42
TCS	2909.80	-74.80
Tech Mahindra	1634.40	-10.20
Titan	4249.10	-20.00
Tata Motors PV	384.70	5.35
Trent Ltd.	4218.90	34.50
UltraTech Cement	1286.99	-54.00
Wipro	229.81	-1.66

DE: Demerged Entity

## BHEL shares plunge 6%

Shares of Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) plunged 6% on Wednesday after the government announced plans to sell up to a 5% stake in the firm via an offer for sale (OFS). PTI

GOVERNMENT OF	

**VANCOUVER**

Nine persons killed in shooting in school and home in Canada



A shooting at a school in Tumbler Ridge, a remote northern British Columbia, left seven persons dead, while two more were found dead at a nearby home, Canadian authorities said on Tuesday. A woman believed by police to be the shooter was also found dead, apparently from a self-inflicted wound. AFP

**KYIV**

Three Ukrainian toddlers, father, killed in Russian drone attack



A Russian drone strike on a house in northeastern Ukraine's Bogodukhiv killed three toddlers and their father, officials said on Wednesday. The children's mother, who is eight months pregnant, survived, but sustained "a traumatic brain injury, acoustic barotrauma, and thermal burns", prosecutors said. AFP

**BRUSSELS**

NATO launches 'Arctic Sentry' mission after Greenland crisis



NATO on Wednesday said it had launched a new mission to bolster security in the Arctic, in a move to assuage U.S. President Donald Trump after he backed off claims on Greenland. NATO said the "multi-domain activity" would initially pull together work already being carried out by alliance members in the region. AFP

**COLOMBO**

Sri Lanka sentences 12 to death for lawmaker's mob killing in 2022



A Sri Lankan court sentenced 12 men to death for killing lawmaker Amarakeerthi Athukorala during the 2022 protests that ousted then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Athukorala was lynched in Nittambuwa after he opened fire on people blocking his car. Sri Lanka hasn't executed anyone since 1976. AFP

## BNP accuses Jamaat-e-Islami of trying to buy votes before polling

The accusation was made after a Jamaat leader was caught with nearly 74 lakh taka (₹55 lakh) in Saidpur airport in north Bangladesh; the Islamist party said the incident was a 'staged drama' to project the party in negative light ahead of the vote

**Kalol Bhattacharjee**

DHAKA

**H**ours before polling, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on Wednesday accused Jamaat-e-Islami (Jei) of attempting to sabotage the election process by using money power.

The accusation was made after a Jamaat leader was caught with nearly 74 lakh taka (₹55 lakh) in Saidpur airport in north Bangladesh.

Jei said the incident was a "staged drama" by law enforcement agencies.

"At a time when all banks, financial institutions, business transac-



**Poll fiasco:** Residents walking past a campaign banner of a Jamaat-e-Islami candidate in Bangladesh's Jessore district. AFP

tions and activities are closed to prevent illegal financial dealings in the election, naturally, questions are arising everywhere - from what source did

the top leader of Jamaat in one district obtain this vast amount of money, for what purpose, to whom was it intended for, and why was he travelling from Dhaka to

Thakurgaon on the eve of election," said Mahdi Amin, spokesperson of the BNP's Election Steering Committee, alleging that there have been reports of Jamaat leaders distributing cash in multiple other constituencies including Dha-ka-15, where Jei's chief Shafiqur Rahman is contesting the election.

The BNP and Jamaat, which were coalition partners during 2001-06, are pitted against each other in the absence of the Awami League, whose activities remain banned.

Over the past several days, the two parties have clashed on multiple occasions and on Tuesday in

Bogura, a BNP leader was injured after he was allegedly attacked by Jamaat supporters. Mr. Amin accused Jei of collecting bKash financial transfer numbers and Voter IDs of citizens and planning to hand over cash to voters. "The Saidpur Airport incident cannot be viewed as an isolated event," said Mr. Amin. He added that "a particular party" is accumulating "domestic weapons" and intimidating voters.

Jamaat held a press conference soon after the incident was reported and said concerted attempts were being made to project the party in negative light.

## Iran will not yield in face of aggression: Pezeshkian

**Stanly Johny**

Crowds thronged Tehran and other Iranian cities on Wednesday to mark the 47th anniversary of the Islamic revolution that toppled the U.S.-backed Pahlavi monarchy, and to show solidarity with the government at a time when Iran faces the threat of another war, with the U.S. shoring up military presence in the region.



Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran on Wednesday. REUTERS

On February 9, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged Iranians to take part in "street marches" to demonstrate national power and drive "the enemy to despair". On Wednesday, state TV broadcast visuals of demonstrators filling the streets, carrying portraits of Mr. Khamenei and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Islamic Republic's founder, along with Iranian and Palestinian flags, and chanting slogans such as 'Death to America' and 'Death to Israel'. State media claimed that huge crowds poured into Tehran's Azadi Square and 1,400 cities and towns.

According to Iranian authorities, at least 3,117 people were killed in violent protests and state crackdown.

The U.S. and Iran held talks in Muscat on February 6, but there was no breakthrough.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who ordered air strikes on Iran in June 2025, triggered the 12-day war, is now in Washington to meet Mr. Trump. They are expected to discuss Iran among other topics.

Mr. Trump, in an interview on Tuesday, said he is considering sending a second aircraft carrier to West Asia to prepare for military action against Iran.

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**CLASS ACT**

Rabada is a strong character and will bounce back, says Maharaj



Kagiso Rabada is a world-class performer. Unfortunately, a pacer has to run 30 metres, so sometimes you do bowl a no-ball. His executions were really good. KG's a strong character, and it is only a matter of time before we get a man-of-the-match performance — Keshav Maharaj on Rabada failing to defend 12 in the 20th over.

**GIFTED CRICKETER**

Gurbaz should play an innings like this more often, says Trott



Probably the best I've seen him [Rahmanullah Gurbaz] play. Unfortunately, he couldn't get us over the line. He is a really great and talented cricketer. And the innings we saw... he should play more often with the talent he has, and the physique, the sporting ability and natural hand-eye coordination — Jonathan Trott.

**BACK-UP OPTION**

Smith to travel to Sri Lanka after Aussie skipper Marsh gets injured



Veteran batter Steve Smith was called in as cover as Australia captain Mitchell Marsh was, on Wednesday, forced out of his team's opening T20 World Cup match against Ireland in Colombo owing to a groin injury. Smith, who hasn't played a T20I since February last year, will travel to Sri Lanka as cover to acclimatise and prepare.

**IN AND OUT**

ICC approves Haider as Zohaib's replacement in the UAE squad



The ICC Event Technical Committee has approved Haider Shah as a replacement for Muhammad Zohaib, in pic, in the United Arab Emirates squad in the T20 World Cup. "Haider was named as a replacement after Zohaib was withdrawn from the squad due to player mental well-being and team welfare issues," ICC stated.

# Proteas edge past Afghans in double Super Over thriller

The dramatic win takes Markram & Co. closer to the Super Eights; heartbreak for Rashid's men as a second successive loss leaves them on the brink of elimination; Gurbaz's heroics in vain

**T20 WORLD CUP**

**N. Sudarshan**  
AHMEDABAD

**I**t is said that for lasting success, one has to go through the full cycle of emotions. In the ongoing T20 World Cup, South Africa seems to have embarked on that journey.

After stuttering ever so slightly against Canada, it nearly fell flat on its face, not once but twice against Afghanistan at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Wednesday, before lifting itself up and going past the finish line huffing and puffing.

Aiden Markram & Co. needed two Super Overs — after scores were tied at 187 runs each at the end of regulation time — to take a giant step towards qualification for the Super Eights.

Afghanistan scored 17 in the first shootout but South Africa matched it as Tristan Stubbs smashed a last-ball six off Fazalhaq Farooqi.

**Stubbs, Miller on fire**  
In the second tie-breaker, Stubbs and David Miller plundered 23, and when Keshav Maharaj bowled a dot and had Mohammed Nabi caught at point from the first two balls, it seemed all over.

But Rahmanullah Gur-



Frenetic action: Rabada, who bowled two no-balls in the final over, did well to run out Farooqi and force a Super Over. VIJAY SONEJI

baz, who scored a brilliant 84 (42b, 4x4, 7x6) earlier in the afternoon, carted Maharaj for three sixes in a row.

A subsequent wide meant Gurbaz, with a boundary off the final delivery, could drag the fixture into an unprecedented third Super Over, but it was not to be.

For Afghanistan, it was a second double-Super Over match in just over two years — previous one versus India in Bengaluru in January 2024 — and it has lost both.

The latest defeat also

leaves its position in the World Cup precarious, with losses to both its fellow Group D contenders New Zealand and South Africa.

But should the contest even have gone to the first Super Over, let alone the second? With one wicket remaining and Afghanistan needing 13 from the 20th over, Kagiso Rabada had Noor Ahmad caught at cover, only for it to be a no-ball.

Then, Rabada bowled a wide, got hit by Noor for a six, and came up with

another no-ball costing three runs to leave the Afghans requiring two from three.

But in an anti-climax, Farooqi was run out while stealing a double, a situation he could have entirely avoided by grounding the bat earlier.

Despite the manic action towards the finish that is sure to have a higher degree of permanence, it would be remiss not to doff the hat to Ryan Rickleton's belligerent hitting (61, 28b, 5x4, 4x6), Afghanistan's splendid bowling from ov-

ers 13 to 18 (four for 35), Lungi Ngidi's second consecutive top-draw effort (4-0-26-3) and the Proteas' fantastic fielding. After all, the process matters as much as the ending.

**The scores:** South Africa 187/6 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 59, Ryan Rickleton 61, Azmatullah Omarzai 3/41, Rashid Khan 2/28) tied with Afghanistan 187 in 19.4 overs (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 84, Lungi Ngidi 3/26).

**Super Over 1:** Afghanistan 17/0 tied with South Africa 17/1.

**Super Over 2:** South Africa 23/0 bt Afghanistan 19/2.

**Toss:** Afghanistan; **PoM:** Ngidi.

**I was lucky to have enough runs to defend, says Maharaj**

**N. Sudarshan**  
AHMEDABAD

Dot, wicket, six, six, six, wide, wicket. That's the hero to near-zero to hero roller-coaster that Keshav Maharaj went through on Wednesday as he successfully defended 23 runs in the second Super Over to help South Africa beat Afghanistan.

Of the four bowlers used in the Super Overs at the Narendra Modi Stadium here, he was the only spinner.

But such was the 36-year-old's confidence in executing under pressure that he did not second-guess himself even once.

"I wanted the ball from the start," Maharaj told reporters after the win. "But Lungs [Lungi Ngidi] was on fire so we went with him first."

"Then, Shuks [Shukri Conrad, coach] looked at me and I said 'Shuks give me the ball. I can change the rhythm of play'. And I was lucky enough to have enough runs to defend."

**No panic**

The left-armner stated that at no time did the team panic despite having a



In the thick of things: Maharaj said he wanted the ball from the start. VIJAY SONEJI

rather inglorious history of losing tight games.

"We made a mess of it towards the end but unfortunately these things happen," he said. "Maybe a bit of rustiness coming back. But the positive is the character coming through, to take it two Super Overs

and finding a way to get through."

"In the 2024 World Cup, we had four close games in the initial stages and two in the Super 8s. If that is the way we are going to play our cricket, that's fine as long as we get over the line."

# West Indies proves too good for England

**Amol Karhadkar**  
MUMBAI

Sherfane Rutherford and Jason Holder laid the platform with the bat before the spin duo of Gudakesh Motie and Roston Chase sealed the deal as the West Indies notched up its second successive win in the T20 World Cup with a commanding 30-run victory over England at the Wankhede Stadium here on Wednesday.

Put in to bat, West Indies posted 196 for six, thanks largely to Rutherford's unbeaten 76 (42b, 2x4, 7x6). His 61-run stand off just 32 deliveries with Holder (33, 17b, 1x4, 4x6) lifted the total.

The pair was watchful against leg-spinner Adil Rashid but went hard at the seamers in the death overs. Rutherford raised his fifty with a pick-up over deep square leg off Jamie Overton while Holder smashed Sam Curran for three sixes in the 17th over. A dropped return catch by Rashid when Rutherford was on 56 proved costly as the final five overs yielded 66 runs.

England began briskly, racing to 67 for one in the PowerPlay with Phil Salt taking the attack to Holder, tonking him for two sixes and three fours in the se-



Fine show: Rutherford lifted Windies while Motie's triple strikes pegged England back. EMMANUEL YOGINI

cond over. But the innings unravelled in the middle overs.

Chase had Jos Buttler hole out, and Motie then turned the screws — deceiving Tom Banton in flight, inducing a return catch from captain Harry



Brook, and producing a quicker one to castle a set Jacob Bethell.

Though Curran fought a lone battle, England was bowled out for 166 in 19 overs.

The scores: West Indies 196/6 in

20 overs (Roston Chase 34, Sherfane Rutherford 76 n.o., Jason Holder 33, Adil Rashid 2/16, Jamie Overton 2/33) bt England 166 in 19 overs (Phil Salt 30, Jacob Bethell 33, Sam Curran 43 n.o., Gudakesh Motie 3/33, Chase 2/29).

**Toss:** England; **PoM:** Rutherford.

# Ellis the hero as Australia thumps Ireland

**Sahil Mathur**  
COLOMBO

Nathan Ellis delivered a masterclass in pace-off bowling as Australia opened its T20 World Cup campaign with a commanding 67-run win over Ireland in their Group-B clash at the R. Premadasa Stadium on Wednesday.

**Stirling injured**

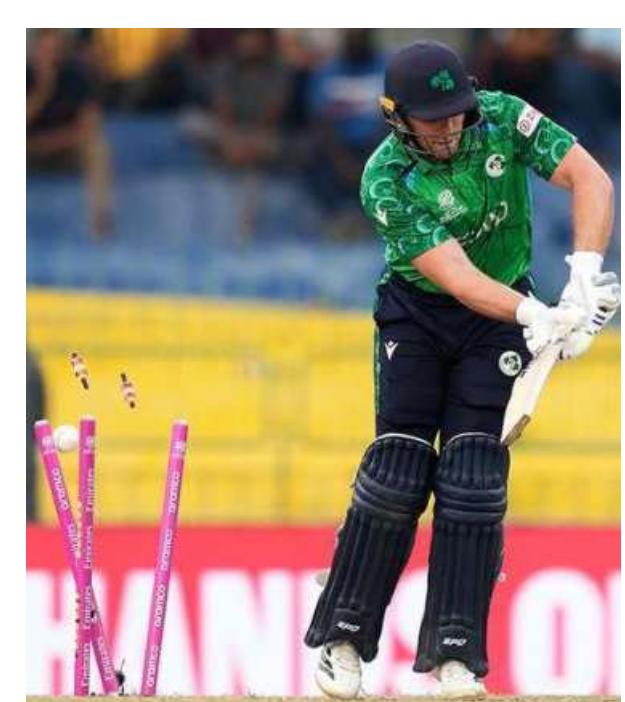
Ireland, chasing 183, suffered a blow off the very first ball when captain Paul Stirling pulled up while taking a single, walked off injured, and never returned.

Matthew Kuhnemann started the wicket-taking proceedings when Harry Tector was caught trying to loft over covers.

Ellis then took over. He began with a back-of-the-hand slower ball to castle Ross Adair and, two deliveries later, had Curtis Campher caught at short midwicket.

In the pacer's next over, Benjamin Calitz chopped on to another cutter as Ireland slipped to 27 for four. He returned later to finish with four for 12 as Ireland was bowled out for 115.

**Brief resistance**  
Lorcan Tucker (24, 27b, 1x4, 1x6) and George Dockrell (41, 29b, 3x4, 2x6) re-



Beaten all ends up: Ellis' back-of-the-hand slower ball proved deadly for Adair. AP

sisted briefly, adding 46 runs for the sixth wicket. The duo rotated the strike and also found the fence occasionally, but the fight-back wasn't enough for Ireland to open its account.

Earlier, skipper Mitchell Marsh had been ruled out with a groin injury, leaving Travis Head to lead the Aussies.

**Run out**  
Opting to bat, Head, despite an early reprieve, was run out after a mix-up with



Josh Inglis. Inglis (37, 17b, 6x4, 1x6) counterpunched, smashing three fours off Matthew Humphreys, while Cameron Green provided impetus before holding out.

After the PowerPlay, Ireland's spinners pulled things back.

Inglis chipped to cover, and Glenn Maxwell was caught behind.

Matt Renshaw (37, 33b, 2x4) and Marcus Stoinis (45) bt Ireland 115 in 16.5 overs (George Dockrell 41, Nathan Ellis 4/12, Adam Zampa 4/23).

**The scores:** Australia 182/6 in 20 overs (Josh Inglis 37, Matt Renshaw 37, Marcus Stoinis 45) bt Ireland 115 in 16.5 overs (George Dockrell 41, Nathan Ellis 4/12, Adam Zampa 4/23).

**Toss:** Australia; **PoM:** Ellis.

# An opportunity for Men in Blue to get their act together

The defending champion will want to deliver a thorough performance against Namibia ahead of the big clash with Pakistan; pace spearhead Bumrah all set to return while dashing opener Abhishek is unlikely to take the field

## T20 WORLD CUP

**Vivek Krishnan**  
NEW DELHI

**I**n a chilly Thursday evening in the national capital, India's fixture against Namibia in Group A of the T20 World Cup is likely to provide an air of calm before the heat ramps up versus Pakistan in Colombo's humid climes. With due regard to the African unit, led by Gerhard Erasmus, it is difficult to envisage any result other than an India win at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

The precise margin may boil down to just how ruthless the defending champion intends to be.

Particularly after the game against the USA at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, where skipper Suryakumar Yadav's unbeaten 84 glossed over a shaky batting display, the co-hosts will want to deliver a thorough performance before taking the flight to

Sri Lanka for the high-pitched battle of the neighbours.

While the surface in Mumbai wasn't exactly given to an exhibition of attacking strokeplay, recent history at this venue suggests that India's batters should relish the conditions.

Opener Abhishek Sharma, however, looks unlikely to be one among them.

The southpaw, who was dismissed for a first-ball duck against the USA and took no further part in that game, was hospitalised with a stomach bug after the team landed in Delhi.

Though he was discharged on Wednesday, his absence from training on consecutive days here indicates that he won't quite be right in time for the contest. With sterner challenges on the horizon, it is prudent for India to tread cautiously with the daredevil batter.

If Abhishek needs more time to recover, Sanju Samson may find a route back into the playing XI.

The 31-year-old was dropped for the T20 World Cup opener after subpar returns in the preceding series against New Zealand.

He and Ishan Kishan were the first batters to hit the nets on match eve. There was a minor scare when Kishan copped a blow on the toe while facing Jasprit Bumrah, but he did bat after that.

Bumrah's presence in the nets, of course, was a source of comfort for India. Having missed the duel against the USA due to illness, the pace spearhead operated at full tilt in training.

His availability may compel India to leave out Mohammed Siraj despite his three-wicket haul in Mumbai.

For Namibia's players, the opportunity to rub shoulders with the Men in Blue is rare.

The only meeting between the two sides came at the 2021 T20 World Cup, when India won by nine wickets.

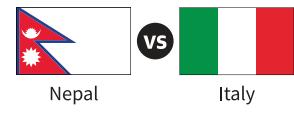


**Back to his best:** Skipper Suryakumar will be eager to make the most of his good form. R.V. MOORTHY

## Today's matches



Pallekele, 11 a.m.



Mumbai, 3 p.m.



HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 1

India 1 | Namibia 0

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR



**Back to his best:** Skipper Suryakumar will be eager to make the most of his good form. R.V. MOORTHY



**Gameplan:** Tilak says he tries to take the contest deep, especially while chasing. R.V. MOORTHY

## Ready to play anchor when required: Tilak

**Vivek Krishnan**

NEW DELHI

In a batting order bristling with flamboyant stroke-makers, Tilak Varma is ready to rein himself in when needed. The 23-year-old has shown that ability already in his fledgling international career, most notably when he successfully steered India to a chase of 147 against Pakistan in the 2025 Asia Cup final with an unbeaten 69 off 53 deliveries.

"I believe the middle overs are very important and should be handled by a settled batter. I try to take the game deep, especially when we are chasing. We have a lot of power-hitters all the way down to No. 8, so someone needs to anchor the innings in the middle phase. I take that pressure on myself to be that batter. There are others who hit anyway. Every match is different – the wicket, the conditions and the bowlers. So, I focus on the present and react to

the situation," Tilak said at a press conference on the eve of India's Group A joust against Namibia at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

India saw the downside of an ultra-aggressive approach when a host of batters succumbed to big shots against the USA in Mumbai. From 77 for six, Suryakumar Yadav's unbeaten 84 proved pivotal in setting up a 29-run win.

Trying to make sense of the early collapse, Tilak said: "When Abhishek (Sharma) got out, I went in and felt that the ball was coming nicely onto the bat. I thought the wicket was fine, but actually it wasn't. I was just in that flow. Unfortunately, it happens. After a few wickets fell, we realised we had assessed the pitch a bit late. But the way Suryakumar played was a masterclass. That's the strength of this team. We haven't lost a bilateral series (since the last T20 World Cup) because someone always takes responsibility."

'Don't know why we didn't get to train under lights'

**Vivek Krishnan**  
NEW DELHI

Namibia's opening game of this T20 World Cup against the Netherlands at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Tuesday was a morning affair. After going down by seven wickets, Namibia coach Craig Williams had said that his team had planned for a training session in the evening in preparation for the clash versus India under floodlights.

### Afternoon slot

However, Namibia was given an afternoon slot for practice on Wednesday as India went through its drills in twilight on both days leading up to the contest.

Curiously, Canada, which will take on the UAE in a 3 p.m. start on Friday, got to train alongside India. Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus wasn't too pleased about it.

"We haven't got floodlights at our grounds in Namibia. Infrastructure-wise, it is probably the challenge for us. Barring the guys who have played in the Nepal Premier League, ILT20 and the World Cups we have played, we don't train under lights very often. We haven't been given a training session at night before this game. I don't know why. I see that India has had two night training sessions. Make of that what you want. We will just rock up and do it the Namibian way, which is to fight," he said.

## + Huge honour for us to play at the Wankhede Stadium, says Madsen

**Shayan Acharya**

MUMBAI

Italy captain Wayne Madsen, who suffered a shoulder injury during the team's opening fixture of the T20 World Cup against Scotland, will miss the game against Nepal at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

While Madsen, who addressed the media on the eve of the game, was visibly upset about missing a crucial game, he made it clear that "to win in front of 35,000 people would be pretty special".

In his absence, Harry Manenti will lead the side, and hope to bring Italy's campaign back on track after the 73-run loss to Scotland.

The Italy players, taking



**Additional responsibility:** Harry Manenti will lead Italy in Madsen's absence. GETTY IMAGES

## Erratic India goes down to Belgium, begins campaign on a disappointing note

### PRO LEAGUE

**Uthra Ganesan**

ROURKELA

India paid the price for its poor attacking display and erratic passing as it began with a 1-3 loss to Belgium in the FIH Pro League 2025-26 at the Birsa Munda Stadium here on Wednesday.

In front of a packed house, the Indians found it difficult to get past a stubborn Belgian defence. With India having just four home matches this year, Wednesday's outing was crucial to find the right momentum, but the host was guilty of being casual on the field. After an evenly-matched first quarter that saw both teams earning a



**False start:** India came up with a below-par performance. BISWARANJAN ROUT

penalty corner each, Thomas Crols latched on to a Harmanpreet Singh mispass in the 23rd minute. Crols ran past an almost absent defence to put Nelson Onana through and the latter slammed the ball home. A PC in the 29th minute saw Amit Rohidas' hit

stopped by Guillaume Helin's stick. But the Belgian couldn't control the ball and Shilanand Lakra swooped in for a quick rebound to level the score. It raised hopes of a fightback but the change of ends did not end India's poor presence in the middle.

India avoided a bigger defeat courtesy the hard-working defence marshalled by Rohidas and some impressive saves by goalkeeper Pawan Malik.

**The result:** Belgium 3 (Nelson Onana 23, Thomas Crols 53, Arno Van Dessel 57) bt India 1 (Shilanand Lakra 29-pc).

The Indian forwards were unable to connect inside the circle and kept shooting wide. In the other half of the field, Crols got one for himself in the 53rd minute; he stepped just inside the circle and, with all the room in the world, delivered a reverse hit. Forced to go all out in search of the equaliser, India eventually let in a third, Arno Van Dessel sealing the win three minutes from time.

India avoided a bigger defeat courtesy the hard-working defence marshalled by Rohidas and some impressive saves by goalkeeper Pawan Malik.

**The qualifiers:** Men: Ankur Bhattacharjee, Punit Biswas, Yashansh Malik, Sanil Shetty, Carlo Rossi (Italy), Jash Modi, Mudit Dani, Preyesh Suresh Raj. Women: Neha Kumari, Amrutha Pushpak, Nithya Mani, Tanishka Kalbhairav, Suhana Saini, Shruti Amrute, Sacha Aoka (Japan), S. Yashini.

## Sri Lanka needs to address middle-order woes

**Press Trust of India**

PALLEKELE

Sri Lanka will have to iron out its batting inconsistencies, particularly in the middle overs, and rework the bowling combination in the absence of an injured Wanindu Hasaranga when it takes on Oman in a Group B match of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

The co-host, which entered the tournament on the back of a 0-3 drubbing by England at home, made

a positive start to the campaign with a 20-run win over a tricky Ireland.

The victory, though, could not mask the batters' struggle against spin.

The 2014 champion failed to hit a single boundary between the seventh and 15th overs after Ireland introduced spin, an area Oman will look to exploit.

Things could have turned messy but for Kamindu Mendis, who smashed a 19-ball 44 in the death overs to lift Sri Lanka to a competitive total.

the opener, will have to shoulder added responsibility.

Oman, on the other hand, was well short of runs against Zimbabwe, slumping to an eight-wicket defeat.

Omran struggled against pace and extra bounce, with the top five batters failing to reach double digits.

It will need to quickly address those frailties if it is to spring a surprise like it did on debut in 2016, when it defeated Ireland.



**Shruti... mission accomplished.**

R. RAVINDRA

**Neha, Shruti in main draw**

### WTT CONTENDER

**K. Keerthivasan**

CHENNAI

France has a tradition of producing world-class men's singles table tennis players. Among the major stars are Jean-Philippe Gatien, the Olympic silver and World Championship gold medalist, while Emmanuel Lebesson and Simon Gauzy have been European champions.

Today, the spotlight is on the Lebrun brothers – Felix (World No. 6) and Alexis (No. 14) – who are rapidly establishing themselves among the world's elite. Backed by a strong domestic table tennis culture, France continues to nurture emerging talent. And the latest additions to this formidable line-up are Flavien Coton (No. 32) and the 21-year-old Thibault Poret (No. 35).

Alvaro Robles, Sora Matsushima, and Jonathan Groth – gave me confidence."

Both were part of the French team that won gold at the 2025 European Championships and could make their debut at the World Team Championships in London during April and May.

"It was an amazing year.

I started with a world ranking of 109 and finished inside the top-30," said the 17-year-old, who also became the first Frenchman to win the European u-21 Championships the same year.

At the WTT Star Contender last March, Coton reached the semifinals,

## Coton, Poret hope to continue their rise on the world stage

**K. Keerthivasan**

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Last year proved to be a breakthrough for both Coton and Poret as they recorded career-best performances with the city of Chennai playing a pivotal role.

"It was an amazing year. I started with a world ranking of 109 and finished inside the top-30," said the 17-year-old, who also became the first Frenchman to win the European u-21 Championships the same year.

"Winning against three

top-32 players – Alvaro Robles, Sora Matsushima, and Jonathan Groth – gave me confidence."

For Poret, Chennai holds special memories. "I came here with so much ambition and I reached the final. This year, I hope to win the title," he said.

"Coton fondly recalls his 2025 campaign. "It was an amazing year. I started with a world ranking of 109 and finished inside the top-30," said the 17-year-old, who also became the first Frenchman to win the European u-21 Championships the same year.

"We hope to be selected for the Worlds," said Coton and Poret and they hope Chennai sets the tone for their continued rise on the world stage.

**CM YK**

M CH-CHE

## IN BRIEF



## Tottenham sacks head coach Thomas Frank

Tottenham Hotspur has sacked manager Thomas Frank after nine months in charge, the Premier League club said on Wednesday, after a woeful run of results left the London club hovering five points above the relegation zone. Pressure on Frank had been mounting and Tuesday's 2-1 home defeat by Newcastle United left his team in 16th place with 29 points from 26 matches.

## Teen Bedabrat stuns Ajaya, takes home 79kg gold

Bedabrat Bharali beat V. Ajaya Babu (327kg), who set a new snatch record (152kg), by two kg to take the men's 79kg crown at the National weightlifting in Modinagar on Wednesday.

**The results (winners only): Men: Elite and Junior: 79kg:** Bedabrat Bharali (Asm) snatch 148kg, clean and jerk 181kg, total 329kg.  
**Youth: Sahil Hadav (Mah)** 122kg, 151kg, 273kg.  
**Women: Elite: 69kg:** Harjinder Kaur 100kg, 122kg, 222kg; **Junior: Tamanna (Har)** 96kg, 110kg, 206kg.  
**Youth: Ratika Chinchwaday (Mah)** 83kg, 96kg, 179kg; **77kg: Elite: Heena (RSPB)** 92kg, 126kg, 218kg.  
**Junior: Sanjana** 94kg, 122kg, 216kg; **Youth: Hasina Shirin (TN)** 82kg, 97kg, 179kg.

## Djokovic pulls out of next week's Doha tournament

Novak Djokovic has pulled out of next week's ATP 500 Doha Open event due to "strong fatigue," organisers announced on Wednesday on Instagram. Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner will be the top two seeds. Both will be playing in their first tournament since the year's opening Grand Slam in Melbourne.

## LIVE TELECAST

**Table tennis:** WTT Star Contender, WTT Global YouTube channel, 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.  
**Men's T20 World Cup:** Star Sports 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 11 a.m. 3 & India vs Namibia, 7 p.m.

**Premier League:** SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

## ENGAGEMENTS

**Tennis:** Chennai Open ATP Challenger, SDAT tennis stadium, 10 a.m.  
**Table tennis:** WTT Star Contender, TNPEPSU, Melakottaiyur, 11 a.m. & 5 p.m.



Stokes has surgery after being struck in the face by cricket ball

## Agence France-Presse

LONDON

England Test captain Ben Stokes says that he has undergone successful surgery after being struck in the face by a cricket ball.

The 34-year-old all-rounder posted a picture on Instagram last week showing his eye heavily swollen and bruised, a graze on his cheek and lip, and a bandage stuffed in his nose.

"You should see the state of the cricket ball," read the caption, alongside a laughing face emoji.

On Tuesday he posted again from hospital with a photo of his swollen face and the caption: "May not look like it but the surgery was a success."

## AROUND THE CITY



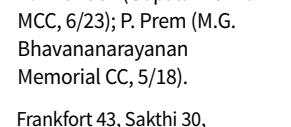
**Triumphant:** Loyola College lifted the Rev. Fr. G. Francis Memorial hockey tournament, beating D.G. Vaishnav College 1-0 in the final.



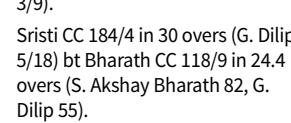
G. Dilip (Bharath CC, 5/18);  
B. Ashwin (GE T&D, 114).



B. Dhanush (Gopalakrishnan MCC, 6/23); P. Prem (M.G. Bhavanarayanan Memorial CC, 5/18).



Frankfort 43, Sakthi 30,  
Subramanian 3/19).



KRC 76 in 23.1 overs (R. Venkataramanan 4/14) lost to Leo CC 77/6 in 28.4 overs (S. Aravind 3/9).

125/4 in 20.1 overs (R. Purushothaman 36, Rajkumar Varadarajan 59).

SKM CC 183/9 in 30 overs (Vijay 47, K. Raghulraj 70, M. Saran 3/24, M. Rithesh 4/19) bt Shaan CC 147/8 in 30 overs (M. Rithesh 42 n.o., B. Surya 3/10).

M.G. Bhavanarayanan Memorial CC 198/5 in 30 overs (Farhan 99 n.o., M. Naveen Kumar 46) bt Leo CC 67 in 18.2 overs (P. Prem 5/18).

Mani Memorial CC 164/7 in 20 overs (A. Shinoj 34, K. Vishnu Kumar 45) bt Little Hearts CC 101/7 in 20 overs (Kukkala Shalom Snehal 31, Nikhilesh Gnanasekar 31).

GE T&D 190/7 in 30 overs (B. Ashwin 114, Periyasamy 51, B. Dhanush 6/23) bt Gopalakrishnan Memorial CC 146 in 30 overs (S. Sivaguru 31, T. Balaji 53, Arvind Rangan 3/34).

Suleymanov emerges champion

GM Alisher Suleymanov of Kazakhstan (six points) won the first Chola Chess International Grandmaster Norm round-robin chess tournament here on Wednesday. The champion got ₹1 lakh.



**Honouring achievers:** TNCA president T.J. Srinivas Raj, centre, hands over the cheques to R.S. Ambish, left, and D. Deepesh.



**St. John's triumphs**

St. John's Public School clinched the Villa Associates under-14 tournament beating WGCA by 73 runs in the final.

**The scores:** St. John's PS 190/5 in 30 overs (P. Tharun 72) bt WGCA 117 in 30 overs (Dhanuj Aramugam 35).

## District selection chess tournament

The Chennai District Chess Association will conduct the Smt. Susila Raghavan Chennai district selection chess championship for boys and girls (U-7, U-11, U-15, & U-19) at the A/C Media Hall and Hall of Chess, Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Feb. 21 and 22. The top four in the Open category and the top two in each of the other categories will represent the district at the forthcoming Tamil Nadu State Championship 2026. For details, contact, 81241 26464.

## Bhanwala wins bronze in 25m rapid-fire pistol

## SHOOTING

**Sports Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Anish Bhanwala clinched bronze in the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol event of the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range here on Wednesday. It is his third Asian Championship medal.

Kazakhstan dominated day eight of the competition, picking up four gold medals.

Adriyan Karmakar won a gold medal in the 50m rifle prone junior men's event as table-topper India took its medal tally to 41 gold, 19 silver and 15 bronze.

Bhanwala and Adarsh Singh took the seventh and eighth qualifying spots with scores of 574 and 573 respectively, ensuring the presence of two Indians in the rapid-fire pistol finals.

In the finals consisting of eight series of five rapid-fire shots, Japan's Dai Yoshioka, Bhanwala and Chiryukin were fastest off the blocks as Vu and Kazakh Artemiy Kabakov became the first two to be eliminated after the third series.

As Adarsh bowed out after the fourth series with 11 hits to his name, Bhanwala found himself in joint lead with Yoshioka and Chiryukin after the sixth series with 21 hits.

However, he got two hits in the seventh to finish with bronze. Yoshioka won gold with a record score of 31 while Chiryukin took silver with 28 hits.



**Sharp-shooter:** Bhanwala on the podium after claiming a bronze.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



**The equaliser:** Sesko, left, salvages a draw for United against West Ham with this strike. AFP

## West Ham ends Manchester United's winning run with a 1-1 stalemate

Chelsea blows a two-goal lead to drop points in draw with Leeds; Tottenham sinks to 16th after damaging defeat to Newcastle

## PREMIER LEAGUE

**Agence France-Presse**  
LONDON

**B**enjamin Sesko salvaged a 1-1 draw for Manchester United at West Ham as Michael Carrick's perfect start came to an end on Tuesday, while Tottenham lost 2-1 to Newcastle and dropped to 16th in the table.

The Hammers kept one United fan who has vowed not to cut his hair until the Red Devils win five consecutive games waiting as they boosted their chances of survival despite the set-

back of Sesko's stoppage time strike. Nuno Espírito Santo's men disrupted the attacking flow that Carrick's side had shown in putting Arsenal, Manchester City and Tottenham to the sword in recent weeks.

Tomas Soucek converted Jarrod Bowen's cross early in the second half to give the home side the lead.

But West Ham were denied a priceless win at the death when Sesko brilliantly flicked in Bryan Mbeumo's cross. "We were definitely not at our best," said Carrick. "We didn't have that sharpness to find the answers. and we will take the point and move on."

United remains in fourth after fifth-placed Chelsea blew a 2-0 lead to draw 2-2 at home to Leeds. Spurs are now just five points above the relegation zone in 16th.

Everton's hopes of European football for the first time since 2017 were dealt a bodyblow after Bournemouth came from behind to win 2-1.

**The results:** Chelsea 2 (Pedro 24, Palmer 58-pen) drew with Leeds 2 (Nmecha 67-pen, Okafor 73).  
Everton 1 (Ndidi 42-pen) lost to Bournemouth 2 (Rayan 61, Adli 64); Tottenham 1 (Gray 64) lost to Newcastle 2 (Thiaw 45+5, Ramsey 68); West Ham 1 (Soucek 50) drew with Manchester United 1 (Sesko 90+6).

## Myneni may be old, but the competitive spirit still burns bright

## C. Shyam Sundar

CHENNAI

Hope springs eternal, so to say. The same goes for Sanketh Myneni, who is keen to work his way back in, albeit slowly, and aims to compete in the Grand Slams again.

"I love to compete. I love to play and tennis has always been part of it. And I want to compete and I want to do the best, even though like I'm getting older," Myneni told *The Hindu*, underlining his desire to keep playing at the highest level.

Though Myneni is not looking too far ahead, the 38-year-old said he wants to make sure he is physically good to go.

"I mean, I want to compete but have to see how my mind and body go. And I want to do my best," Myneni, who is in the city to take part in the Chennai



I didn't play more than four or five tournaments the whole year (2025). So, I want to make sure I get better now

kumar Ramanathan and had a fair degree of success. He, however, felt playing with different partners wasn't easy.

Asked what keeps him going despite the injury-related issues that reduced his playing time on the Tour, Myneni said, "It is the passion for the sport."

"I didn't play more than four or five tournaments the whole year (2025). So, I want to make sure I get better now. Like hopefully there are no injuries and I stay healthy."

While he is done with singles, he is still game to have a go in doubles.

Open ATP Challenger, said.

Myneni, currently ranked 344 in doubles and paired with compatriot Siddhant Bantia here, said he does not have any plans for the rest of the year as far as a partner goes.

Though Myneni is not looking too far ahead, the 38-year-old said he wants to make sure he is physically good to go.

"I mean, I want to compete but have to see how my mind and body go. And I want to do my best," Myneni, who is in the city to take part in the Chennai

respectively, ensuring the presence of two Indians in the rapid-fire pistol finals.

Former champion Nikita Chiryukin of Kazakhstan topped the qualifiers with a 582.

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As Adarsh bowed out after the fourth series with 11 hits to his name, Bhanwala found himself in joint lead with Yoshioka and Chiryukin after the sixth series with 21 hits.

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**Sharp-shooter:** Bhanwala on the podium after claiming a bronze.

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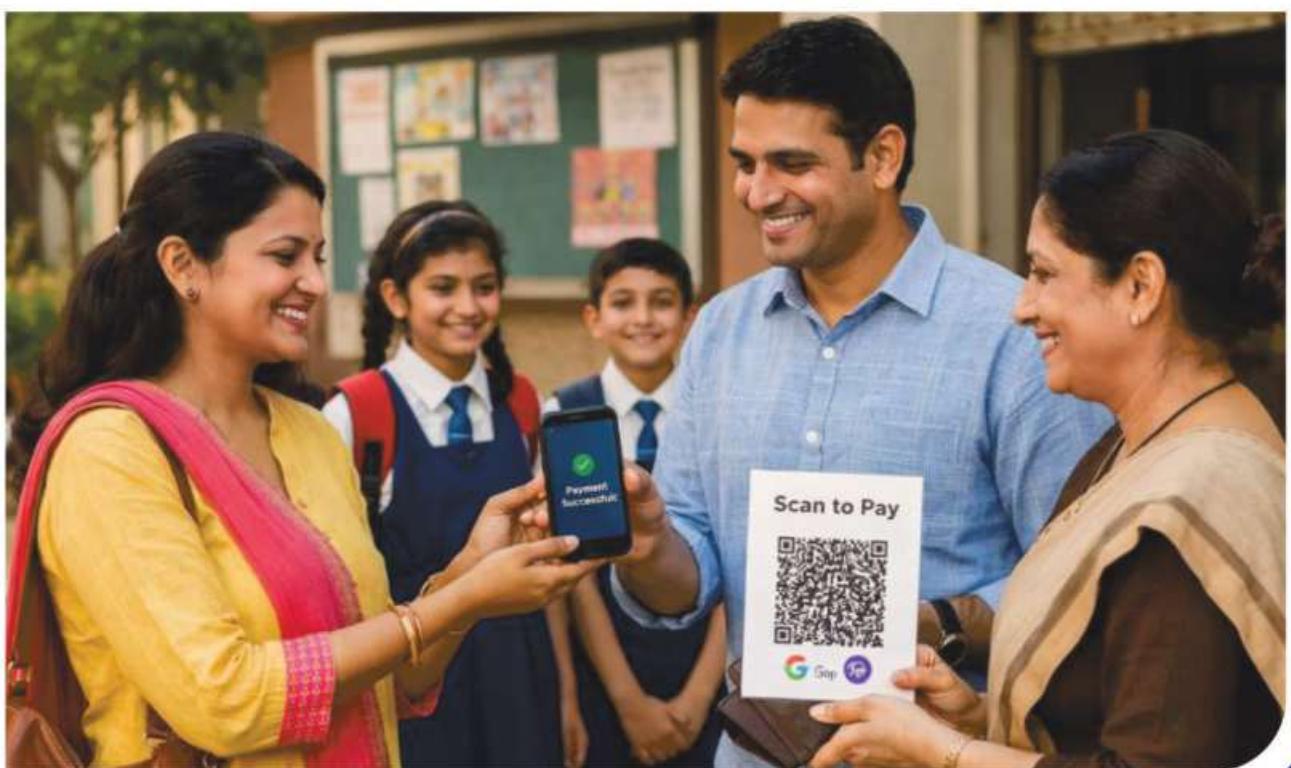
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DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

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R. Kaushik  
NEW DELHI

**A**s India readied for their first practice session at the Arun Jaitley Stadium ahead of the T20 World Cup clash against Namibia on Thursday, all eyes were understandably on Jasprit Bumrah, who had missed the opener against the USA in Mumbai on Saturday on account of illness.

Leading into Tuesday night's stint, Bumrah hadn't bowled for more than a week; his last bowl competitively was eminently forgettable as he went for 58 runs off his four overs against New Zealand, the most runs he has conceded in his 87 T20I appearances.

Bumrah took a few tentative steps before breaking into an easily recognisable stammer-start jog. After more stretches which eventually convinced him that he had loosened up enough to hit the bowling crease, he bowled for the better part of 30 minutes with the intensity that one has come to expect off him, an intensity on which he makes no compromises even in a training session.

It wasn't Bumrah at his absolute best. Like they have for some time now, the workers refused to do his bidding, often ending up as full tosses that were put away with impunity by Tilak Varma. There were a couple of mean bouncers and he tested the outside edge of Suryakumar Yadav more than once. The rhythm didn't come flooding back, but the signs were encouraging.

Bumrah will be better off with a few overs in a competitive setting, which is precisely what will greet him on Thursday night.

Around his back injuries which have now become a constant if singularly unwelcome companion, or more likely because of it, India have handled their most valuable cricketing treasure with care and caution.

A flare-up of the back injury that prevented him from bowling in the final innings of the five-Test series in Australia in January last year has compelled the think-tank to manage his workload with greater diligence than it would have in any case. The injury forced him to miss the Champions Trophy in Dubai in February-March as well as the early part of IPL 2025.

Because of the imperativeness of making sure that he is rested enough, his captaincy credentials were overlooked once Rohit Sharma retired from Test cricket.

#### Wrapped in cotton wool

Bumrah played in only three of five Tests in England last summer in Shubman Gill's first series as India's red-ball skipper. He did subsequently feature in all four of the home Tests, against the West Indies and South Africa, but even in white-ball cricket, India have been loath to use Bumrah liberally.

The 32-year-old hasn't featured in a single One-Day International since the final of the 50-over World Cup more than two and a quarter years ago, while even his T20I appearances have been sporadic.

Bumrah figured in only 17 of the 41 T20 games India played between the two World Cups; he is also the lone exception to the Board of Control for

# Gold-standard Bumrah looks to add sheen

The premier pacer, returning after a break, will want to get back into competition mode as early as possible; the 32-year-old, hoping to leave an imprint on the 2026 T20 World Cup, will target the next three fixtures to get his game in order



GETTY IMAGES

Cricket in India diktat necessitating players to represent their state (Gujarat, in his case) in domestic cricket when not consumed by national duty.

Evidently, Bumrah is every bit worth the 'special' treatment simply because of how special he is, and how much he brings to the table not just as the best all-format pacer of his generation but as a seasoned, wise and intelligent head also willing to play the role of guide and mentor without hesitation or prodding.

That being said, Bumrah hasn't been at his consistently most potent or threatening in his now-on, mostly-off appearances since the final of the last T20 World Cup in June 2024. Thrice in his last 15

bowls alone, he has gone at more than 11 runs per over as opposed to just four times in his previous 69 innings. At the Asia Cup in Dubai in September, he was taken apart by Sahibzada Farhan, the Pakistan opener who smacked him for sixes for fun during an Indian experiment that saw Bumrah bowl three overs in the PowerPlay for the first time since 2017.

When it comes to others, an economy of 11-plus three times in 15 innings is hardly worth a mention, but Bumrah clearly isn't 'others'. Great champions are often victims of their own standards; two of those 11-plus efforts came in his last six visits to the bowling crease. He finished with none for 45 against South Africa in Mullanpur in December and none for 58 in his last T20I, against New Zealand in Thiruvananthapuram on January 31.

These matches, as well as all others during India's final two series before the World Cup, were played on absolute belters and there was no shame in going the distance. But around and between these two matches, he also had two for 17 off three overs in Cuttack, two for 17 off four in Ahmedabad and three for 17, also off four in Guwahati. Safe to presume then that 17 is Bumrah's golden number?

The pitches at this World Cup have been anything but shirtfronts. There appears a greater balance between bat and ball than in bilateral faceoffs and 12 matches in the first four days produced a solitary score of more than 200. In any case, traditionally, matches have been lower-scoring in multi-team tournaments compared to bilateral

showdowns, which isn't the worst development at a time when the race to 300 is getting more and more frenzied.

Against this backdrop, India need Bumrah to be at his incisive best over the next three and a half weeks. He was forced to miss the opening T20 World Cup game against the USA through illness, bringing Mohammed Siraj immediately into play on his return to the T20I side after a year and a half in the wilderness.

Siraj's belated inclusion stemmed from an unfortunate knee injury that ended Harshit Rana's World Cup even before it started. Even though he returned his second best T20I figures of three for 29 against the Americans, the Hyderabadi will in all likelihood warm the bench on Thursday when India continue their campaign against Namibia.

Bumrah will want to get into the competition as quickly as possible. He was the engine room on whom Rohit Sharma's side rode piggyback in the Americas nearly 20 months ago; Bumrah was incisive, parsimonious, intelligent, always threatening and rose to the occasion when the team needed him most.

It was his dismissal of Mohammad Rizwan that scuttled Pakistan's chase of 120 on a decidedly dodgy New York surface. Pakistan were 80 for three after 14 overs when Rizwan was bowled swinging across the line. From then on, Babar Azam's side added just 33 runs in 35 deliveries to finish on 113 for seven to go down by six runs.

Typically, in keeping with his status as a genius, Bumrah saved his best for last. Through Heinrich Klaasen, South Africa were running away with the final. A 24-run 15th over from Axar Patel left the Proteas needing 30 from as many deliveries with six wickets in hand when, in a final throw of the dice, Rohit turned to his hitman.

Bumrah didn't provide a breakthrough, but he did provide a semblance of control by going for just four. It was still South Africa's game to win at 26 off 24 when Klaasen fell to Hardik Pandya. Rohit chose to bowl Bumrah out in the 18th over, knowing that the game was on a razor's edge and it was imperative to seize the moment. Bumrah responded like only he can - a mere two runs and the wicket of Marco Jansen meant South Africa had suddenly gone from the hunter to the hunted. Having produced a peach with the new ball to pluck out Reeza Hendricks' off-stump in his first over, Bumrah's final burst of 2-0-6-1 gave him match figures of 4-0-18-2. Bumrah was rewarded for his

sustained brilliance throughout the competition with the Player-of-the-Tournament award.

Arshdeep Singh and Afghanistan's Fazalhaq Farooqi topped the wicket-takers' chart with 17 wickets apiece. Bumrah had the joint second most scalps, alongside Anrich Nortje, but his 15 wickets combined with an economy rate of 4.17 - no one else with more than 10 wickets went at less than 5.74 an over - clearly singled him out as the most influential performer across the length of the World Cup.

#### Determined for more

As India seek to rewrite history by becoming the first team to win the World Cup thrice, the first side to successfully defend the trophy and the first outfit to triumph on home soil, it is a no-brainer that Suryakumar and the remaining 13 squad members will want Bumrah to be at his marauding best.

Bumrah has shown himself to be capable of lifting his already remarkable game to a higher level at continental and global tournaments. One isn't sure what the future holds for him, but in front of adoring thousands on his home patch, he will be determined to leave his imprint on the World Cup again.

Despite his and his colleagues' best efforts, India stumbled at the final hurdle in the 50-over World Cup. Bumrah will leave no stone unturned in trying to ensure that there is no unwelcome encore while being well aware that the path to the knockouts itself is fraught with pesky obstacles.

With no disrespect, Namibia are the perfect launchpad for Bumrah ahead of the marquee Sunday showdown against Pakistan in Colombo, just recently greenlit by the Pakistan government. If the formbook holds and India maintain their wonderful T20 run, they should find themselves in the Super Eights where the quality of their opponents will be consistently higher than what they will encounter in Group A.

Bumrah will target the next three fixtures to get his game in order. Of late, he hasn't been nailing his yorkers with the same regularity as in the past and even at nets on Tuesday, several of them manifested themselves in low to not-so-low full tosses.

To erase that anomaly will be high on his priority list because Bumrah is a proud perfectionist who hates letting himself, his team and his legion of fans down, in that order.

#### THE GIST

Bumrah figured in only 17 of the 41 T20 games India played between the two World Cups

In the previous edition, the fast bowler was rewarded for his sustained brilliance throughout the competition with the Player-of-the-Tournament award

The pace spearhead will be key to India's chances as the hosts eye history



**India need Bumrah to be at his incisive best. He was forced to miss the opening T20 World Cup game against the USA through illness, bringing Siraj immediately into play**

# SCIENCE

# Budget gives science missions big figures but core funding gaps persist

The 2026-27 Union Budget touted science as an engine of growth but leading researchers in India see familiar gaps; they say that while new funds and big-ticket missions look impressive, basic research, state universities, and core institutes still face stagnant support and uncertain disbursement

**T.V. Padma**  
**Vasudevan Mukunth**  
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

**T**he Union Budget 2026-27 presented science as an instrument of growth, with large numbers on biopharma, semiconductors, carbon capture, and research-linked industrial finance on paper. However, expert reactions to this budget point to a more fragile reality.

As the state attempts to move from adopting technologies to creating them, by building mission-linked platforms in biopharma, semiconductors, critical materials, and climate, it seems that the limiting factor isn't the ambition of schemes but what the government actually delivers – including reliable and timely funds, autonomy for research institutions, and the transparency and performance of large finance vehicles for innovation.

In 2023-24, allocation for the Department of Biotechnology was revised down from ₹2,683.86 crore (BE) to ₹1,607.32 crore (RE), and actual spending fell further to ₹1,467.34 crore. Likewise for the Department of Science and Technology, from ₹7,931.05 crore (BE) to ₹4,891.78 crore (RE) and actuals of ₹4,002.67 crore. Even in 2024-25, when the Department of Biotechnology's RE of ₹2,460.13 crore exceeded its BE, the Department of Science and Technology experienced a sizeable cut from ₹8,029.01 crore (BE) to ₹5,661.45 crore (RE).

#### Biopharma SHAKTI

Against this backdrop, L.S. Shashidhara, director of the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, framed the biopharma outlay as welcome but incomplete. He pointed to "significant funding shortfalls following major changes introduced in 2024-25 to the fund-flow system" and to delays in the transition from the Science and Engineering Research Board to the Anusandhan National Research Foundation.

According to him, some of the under-spending in recent years may have been less about lack of intent and more about administrative disruption. The budget, he said, has at least avoided "punishing" science departments for that disruption by cutting overall allocations.

The biggest allocation this year was for a new programme called 'Biopharma SHAKTI', of ₹10,000 crore over five years. Department of Biotechnology secretary Rajesh Gokhale said it will address non-communicable diseases and scale indigenous development and manufacturing of biologics and biosimilars. He linked it explicitly to the earlier DBT-National Biopharma Mission.

Dr. Gokhale also said the next set of ambitions would include cell and gene therapy missions, biomanufacturing hubs and biofoundries, and "Moolankur" hubs that integrate AI with biology.

#### Big-ticket infra

The technical case for such a push is obvious. India has real competencies in vaccines, diagnostics, and bioengineering. The issue is whether the outlay will broaden the base or only thicken the top layer of applied



Students, science and technology enthusiasts, and others visit the Indian Institute of Science campus in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

programmes. Dr. Shashidhara expressed caution related to this: if Biopharma SHAKTI is administered primarily through the Department of Pharmaceuticals, as planned, it could privilege downstream manufacturing goals while neglecting the upstream life-science ecosystem that produces the tools and ideas.

So he asked that the Department of Pharmaceuticals "actively engage the broader life sciences community" in design and implementation. He also said longstanding prevention programmes and the routine issuance of small- and medium-sized grants could deliver high social returns – but only if agencies and the Finance Ministry's Expenditure Division fix the problem of "smooth and timely fund flow".

A similar tension appears in the budget's embrace of big-ticket infrastructure linked to 'missions'. N. Kalaiselvi, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) director-general N. Kalaiselvi read the budget as "a strong and reassuring affirmation" of science as an engine of growth and self-reliance.

She highlighted sustained support to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the CSIR and welcomed mission-mode initiatives such as Biopharma SHAKTI, India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, the new carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) mission, and expanded support for electronic components manufacturing, and critical minerals.

#### Gap in astronomy

IIT-Madras Institute Professor T. Pradeep also welcomed the way the budget embedded research "across multiple mission-mode initiatives" and said platforms and infrastructure that span multiple sectors, such as clinical trial networks and industry-linked training centres, could improve India's

#### As the state attempts to move from adopting technologies to creating them, by building mission-linked platforms in biopharma, semiconductors, critical materials, and climate sectors, it seems that the limiting factor isn't the ambition of schemes but what the government actually delivers

translational capacity and "full-stack" capabilities. His proviso, however, was that the budget "largely presents policy perspectives". He also said he expected "various missions/ministries to allocate sector-specific funding" in the coming years.

This has in fact been a recurring problem in India's research ecosystem: the government often proclaims science as a foundation for missions but often defers the stable, long-term financing required for that foundation to future plans.

Raman Research Institute director Tarun Souradeep remarked favourably on the budget's support for major national observational facilities and recalled the various spin-off technologies these facilities have produced, including CCD imaging and instruments for high-frequency communications.

#### Globally fashionable script

However, National Institute of Advanced Studies adjunct professor C.P. Rajendran articulated a counterpoint: that while the Finance Ministry's proposal to upgrade four astronomy facilities, including the National Large Solar Telescope and the National Large Optical Infrared Telescope, at ₹3,500 crore could strengthen the field, the support for the Indian Institute of Astrophysics has stagnated while a set of autonomous institutes including the Institute has

received only ₹1,623 crore.

More broadly, Dr. Rajendran said the budget followed a "globally fashionable script" that privileges applied sectors such as space applications and semiconductors while continuing to underfund basic research.

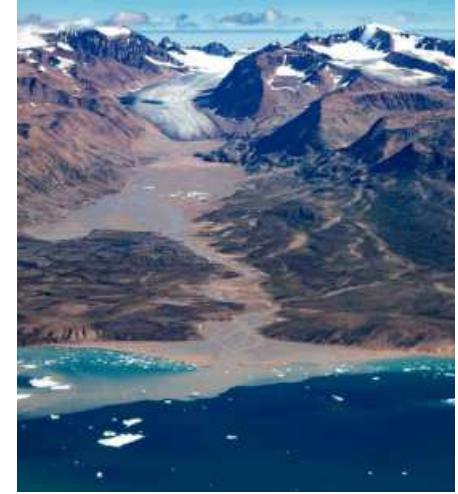
He added that India's gross expenditure on R&D has hovered around 0.64-0.7% of GDP for years, which when adjusted for inflation amounts to cuts in real terms. He also said the state's hope that private capital will carry domestic R&D hasn't materialised at the required scale.

While Dr. Shashidhara welcomed the ₹20,000 crore for the Research, Development and Innovation Fund, Dr. Rajendran recalled that a promise in the 2024-25 budget to deploy ₹1 lakh crore over seven years has been followed by only ₹3,000 crore disbursed so far.

Likewise, Panjab University vice-chancellor Renu Vig lauded the budget's emphasis on "university townships" as a move towards integrated industry in education but she also argued that the Centre shouldn't bypass legacy State universities in favour of new enclaves. Instead, she suggested a "thematic cluster" where "a legacy State university leads in the basic sciences, humanities, and regional innovation, while technical institutes provide the necessary toolsets."

"This kind of multi-disciplinarity is the core of the National Education Policy 2020 and it is already in the DNA of legacy institutions. These universities educate more than 80% of our students and have built the nation's intellectual foundation over decades; they are a national asset that must be nurtured to ensure the success of India's new educational map," Dr. Vig added.

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**Cold ground:** The Arctic is home to diverse flora and fauna from tundra shrubs to beluga whales. AFP

## As the Arctic warms, threat of invasive plants looms

**Divya Gandhi**

**T**he frozen Arctic presents one of the most iconic stories of climate change: we have all seen pictures of icebergs collapsing into the ocean and polar bears left stranded on a shrinking patch of sea ice. The Arctic has in fact become a site of "last-chance tourism", according to a paper published earlier this month in *Nature Climate Change*. Millions of visitors behold the vanishing glaciers and collectively express their "ecological grief" over the imminent change in its landscape.

In its warmest parts, the Arctic is habitat to shrubs such as bearberry, and in the coldest parts the ground is bare but for thick layers of non-vascular plants,

#### Climate change and human activity are affecting Arctic ecosystems which have largely been shielded from devastating effects of alien species so far

such as mosses and lichens, that form the tundra ecosystem. The snowy owl, the Arctic fox, the grizzly bear, seals, walruses, and belugas live here.

Now, another study published in *NeoBiota* has reported that thousands of alien floral species could "invade" and transform the Arctic ecology forever. These plants have a chance of surviving the warming Arctic if they manage to find a way to get there and proliferate.

The authors, at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, have already found an unexpected number of non-native species in Svalbard, including the common meadow rue, a shrub native to Russia and parts of Europe, in full bloom. In fact, they reported 2,554 vascular plants could find a suitable climatic niche in the new Arctic.

"Our results show that alien species from virtually all over the world can find a niche in the Arctic. And with all the human activity in the Arctic now, there are lots of opportunities to get there," study coauthor and university associate professor Kristine Bakke Westergaard, was quoted as saying in a release.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change considers alien species that displace native ones as one of the greatest threats to species diversity on the earth.

Scientists at the Norwegian University and from the University of Liverpool used data from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to reveal six major potential hotspots for introductions: western Alaska, southwestern and southeastern Greenland, northern Iceland, Fennoscandia, and Kanin-Pechora.

Unlike most areas of the world, Arctic terrestrial ecosystems have largely been shielded from the devastating effects of alien species "due to natural barriers, including short growing seasons, harsh climatic conditions, and limited human activity and disturbance," the paper said. But climate change and increasing human activity are changing this, it added. An older inventory in the Arctic documented 341 taxa, of which 188 had become naturalised in at least one floristic province, per the paper.

The most common routes for naturalised species is "escape from confinement," which accounts for 48% of invasive plant introductions, while "transport-stowaway" accounts for 37%. Seed contaminants and "transport via vehicles" have been important routes, each contributing 14% of introductions, the paper said. "However, a significant proportion (43%) of introductions remains classified as 'unknown'."

Last October, mosquitoes were found in Iceland for the first time, as global warming has made it a suitable habitat for the insect. Antarctica is currently the last remaining mosquito-free area.

## THE SCIENCE QUIZ

### Remembering Charles Darwin, who was born on this day in 1809

**Vasudevan Mukunth**

#### QUESTION 1

Charles Darwin originally went to the University of Edinburgh to study \_\_\_\_\_, but he disliked the experience so much that he left, but not before he learnt taxidermy from the British taxidermist John Edmonstone. In his second year, Darwin began to focus on natural history. Fill in the blank.

#### QUESTION 2

The voyage that shaped Darwin's science was the second expedition of the HMS \_\_\_\_\_, in 1831-1836. He boarded as a young naturalist and spent years collecting specimens across South America and elsewhere. However, he didn't instantly 'discover' evolution. The meaning of his findings became clear after further studies and expert inputs back in Britain. Fill in the blank.

#### QUESTION 3

Darwin developed the core idea of natural selection years before publishing

one important intellectual inspiration was X's essay on population. Darwin applied the idea of people competing for limited resources in the essay to living organisms, helping him see how selection could operate continuously. Name X.

Darwin's major work, *On the Origin of Species*, was published in 1859 and sold out quickly. It proposed natural selection as a principal mechanism driving adaptation. Y independently arrived at a similar mechanism; his 1858 letter to Darwin prompted a joint presentation of their ideas at the Linnean Society of London. Name Y.

Darwin also wrote \_\_\_\_\_ in 1871, which extended evolutionary arguments to humans and introduced sexual selection, with traits shaped by mating success rather than just survival. Fill in the blanks.



**Visual:** Name this woman, a pioneer of close-up photography who also captured the famous 1862 image of Charles Darwin with a big beard. PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

#### Answers to February 5 quiz:

- Location of fort through which IST's time meridian passes – **Ans: Prayagraj**
  - New Zealand territory with a 45-minute timezone offset – **Ans: Chatham Islands**
  - Country with the most number of timezones – **Ans: France**
  - Republic with the earliest timezone on the earth – **Ans: Kiribati**
  - Country in the 'wrong' timezone for more than 80 years – **Ans: Spain**
- Visual:** Pips

**First contact:** K.N. Viswanathan | Tamal Biswas | Anmol Agrawal

#### Corrections & Clarifications

The size of the NLOT's primary mirror was erroneously printed as 30 m in the February 9 article "Budget boosts domestic space research while spending lags behind". It is 13.7 m

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# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### The fine imposed on Telegram by a Russian court

**11** in million roubles. A Russian court has fined the Telegram messaging app around 11 million roubles (\$142,210.73) for refusing to remove banned content which the authorities regard as extremist. The state communications watchdog said that Telegram would face further restrictions. REUTERS

### Number of troops deployed by the U.S. to train Nigerian military

**200** The United States will deploy 200 troops to Nigeria to train its armed forces in their fight against jihadist groups, as Washington increases military cooperation with the West African country. The additional troops will provide "training and technical guidance". AFP

### Number of people suffering from cataracts as per WHO

**94** in million. More than 94 million people suffer from cataracts, but half of them do not have access to the surgery needed to fix it, the World Health Organization said. Cataracts — the clouding of the eye's lens that causes blurred vision and can lead to blindness — are on the rise. AFP

### Passengers handled by Dubai International Airport in 2025

**95.2** in million. Dubai International Airport maintained its crown as the world's busiest airport last year, as officials said on Wednesday that a record 95.2 million passengers transited through its terminals, part of the emirate's continued economic boom. PTI

### Polling stations considered 'risk-prone' in Bangladesh

**50** in per cent. More than half the polling centres have been identified as "risk-prone" for the general elections in Bangladesh. Officials said 90% of them will be under CCTV surveillance, with many policemen deployed in the capital, Dhaka. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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## Have States gained from the 16th FC?

What have been the recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission? What taxes are shared between the Centre and the States? Why did the last Commission revise vertical devolution to 41%? What had industrialised States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana demanded?

### EXPLAINER

#### Rangarajan, R

**T**he 16th Finance Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Arvind Panagariya has submitted its report for the period of 2026-31. The Central government has accepted its recommendations with respect to devolution of funds from Centre to States.

**What were past recommendations?** The Constitution in Article 270 provides for the scheme of distribution of net tax proceeds collected by the Central government between the Centre and the States. The taxes that are shared between the Centre and the States include corporation tax, personal income tax, Central Goods and Services Tax (GST), Centre's share of the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) etc. This division is based on the recommendation of the Finance Commission that is constituted every five years as per the terms of Article 280. This divisible pool, however, does not include cess and surcharge that are levied by the Centre. For the year, 2025-26, it is estimated that the divisible pool constitutes only around 81% of the gross tax revenue of the Centre after excluding cess and surcharge.

Till the 13th FC (2010-2015), the devolution involved specific transfers for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) with extensive conditionalities. The share of States in Central taxes (vertical devolution) was fixed at 32%. However, since the 14th FC (2015-2020), the specific transfers for CSS were discontinued and the vertical devolution was increased to 42%. It was revised down to 41% in the 15th FC (2020-2026) due to the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.

The criteria for distribution amongst the States (horizontal devolution) since the 13th FC is provided in Table 1. As can



fix a cap on cess and surcharge or for their inclusion in the divisible pool. These instruments may also be needed to raise resources for the Union to meet any exigencies. Similarly, the FC recommended retaining the States' share in vertical devolution at its current level of 41% considering three main reasons – that the States' share in total tax revenues of the country; that much of the spending of the Union in CSS is anyway ultimately routed to the States; and that the Union government needs increased funds for defence and infrastructure.

In its approach for horizontal devolution, the FC was guided by two principles. First, changes to each State's share in the portion of divisible pool should be gradual. Second, due recognition should be given to efficiency and especially the States' contributions to growth. Accordingly, a new criterion of State's contribution to GDP has been added. The weightage to this new criterion as well as other criteria has been assigned in such a way that it spells a directional change without causing a drastic shift in States' shares.

Considering all the above factors, the share of southern and western States has marginally increased while the share of big north and central States has marginally decreased. Hence, one may conclude that it is status quo as far as vertical and horizontal devolution is concerned with a directional change towards providing due recognition for efficiency. Additionally, the following observations of the FC should be borne in mind. The Centre should progressively reduce raising revenues through cess and surcharge. The States should make their subsidies efficient and targeted, actively pursue reforms in the power sector, and rein in the levels of their fiscal deficit and debt. The Centre and States should undertake various public sector enterprise reforms.

*Rangarajan, R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified.' He trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal.*

#### The share for States

Till the 13th FC (2010-2015), the devolution involved specific transfers for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) with extensive conditionalities

**Table 1: Criteria for horizontal devolution amongst States**

Criteria	13th FC 2010-15	14th FC 2015-20	15th FC 2020-26	16th FC 2026-31
Income distance	47.5	50	45	42.5
Population (1971)	25	17.5	-	
Population (2011)	-	10	15	17.5
Area	10	15	15	10
Forests	-	7.5	10	10
Fiscal discipline	17.5	-	-	
Demographic performance	-	-	12.5	10
Tax effort	-	-	2.5	
State's contribution to GDP				10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



be observed, higher weightage has been given for equity (income gap) and needs (population and area) when compared to efficiency (forests, demographic performance and tax effort).

**What were States' demands?** Firstly, as regards vertical devolution, 18 States had demanded that the States' share be increased from the current 41% to 50%. Few other States had demanded an increase of 45% to 48%. Many States had demanded the inclusion of cess and surcharge in the divisible pool as well as fixing a cap on cess and surcharge that could be levied by the Centre.

Secondly, as regards horizontal

devolution, many States had pitched for the continued dominance of equity parameters in the criteria. Equally, many States had recommended reducing the weight assigned to 'income distance' as a criterion. Industrialised States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana had recommended the inclusion of States' contribution to GDP among the horizontal devolution criteria.

**What did the 16th FC recommend?** With respect to the demands regarding vertical devolution, the FC opined that under the present constitutional scheme, it is neither permissible nor desirable to

### THE GIST

The Constitution in Article 270 provides for the scheme of distribution of net tax proceeds collected by the Central government between the Centre and the States.

With respect to the demands regarding vertical devolution, the FC opined that under the present constitutional scheme, it is neither permissible nor desirable to fix a cap on cess and surcharge or for their inclusion in the divisible pool.

In its approach for horizontal devolution, the FC was guided by two principles. First, changes to each State's share in the portion of divisible pool should be gradual. Second, due recognition should be given to efficiency and especially the States' contributions to growth.

### THE GIST

A total of 2,034 candidates, including 275 independents, are contesting this election.

The Awami League (AL), which was the party of the ousted former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, has had its registration suspended by the Bangladesh election commission.

Apart from the general elections, citizens are also required to vote "Yes" or "No" on the July charter.

## Elections in Bangladesh: looking towards the future

Which are the two major blocs competing in the Bangladesh elections? What is the referendum for?

### Tabshir Shams

#### The story so far:

**T**he fate of the 'Second Liberation' of Bangladesh shall be decided on February 12, the day of its general elections. Around 12.7 crore voters are going to cast their vote for 300 seats of the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) and for a national referendum on the July charter.

#### Who is contesting in this election?

A total of 2,034 candidates, including 275 independents, are contesting this election. There are 80 candidates from the minority Hindu community and 85 women candidates. There were 17 Hindu MPs in the 2024 Jatiya Sangsad. Currently, there are 59 registered political parties in Bangladesh, of which 51 are participating in the elections. There are two major blocs – the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and a 11 party alliance which

includes Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party (NCP) among others. The BNP is contesting for 292 seats out of the 300, leaving the remaining seats for its coalition partners. Jamaat is contesting in 224 seats; they have no women candidates, and only one Hindu candidate. The NCP, a youth party that emerged after the July Revolution, is contesting in 30 seats.

**What is the Awami League's status?** The Awami League (AL), which was the party of the ousted former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, has had its registration suspended by the Bangladesh election commission. In May 2025, the interim government headed by Mohd. Yunus banned all activities of Awami League under the Anti-Terrorism Act. According to Transparency International Bangladesh, 1,785 cases had been filed nationwide against AL activists and supporters as of November 19, 2025. AFM

Bahauddin Nasim, joint general secretary of the Awami League, told *The Hindu* on February 8, that the party has boycotted the election and instructed its supporters not to vote. Ms. Hasina has maintained that the elections are undemocratic, and that a large section of the population will boycott the polls.

**What is the national referendum?** Apart from the general elections, citizens are also required to vote "Yes" or "No" on the July charter. After the ouster of Ms. Hasina, following mass protests against her government, in 2024, faith was reposed in Nobel Laureate Mohd. Yunus. Mr. Yunus was appointed Chief Adviser to the interim government and also made chair of the National Consensus Commission (NCC). The NCC was to suggest structural reforms to the state which include constitutional, electoral, and judicial amendments. Of the 166 recommendations of the NCC, 84 were

taken up forming the "National Charter of July 2025". Major reforms in the charter are centred around making constitutional bodies more independent, proposing a bicameral legislature, and increasing women's representation in parliament. If the "Yes" vote prevails then the newly formed parliament will be bound to implement the charter's provisions within 180 days. If its "No", then the risk of one-party rule and weak institutions will loom over Bangladesh's future.

**What have been India's observations?** India was invited by Mr. Yunus as an observer for the elections. More than 330 international observers, double that of the previous controversial 2024 elections, have been invited as observers. India is yet to confirm this invitation.

India remains the largest trading partner of Bangladesh in South Asia. Many infrastructure and connectivity projects like the Kolkata-Khulna, Agartala-Akhaura, Haldbari-Chilahati as well as the 1,000 MW electricity export to Bangladesh and the Tripura-Comilla power link are the strategic pillars of this bilateral relationship. However, since the 2024 regime change, there has been a degree of ambivalence between the two nations. Only time will tell how the relationship will progress between the two neighbours.

*Tabshir Shams is a postgraduate student from South Asian University, Delhi.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



**Under siege:** Police officers stand guard during a protest in Caracas, Venezuela, on February 10. REUTERS

## Trump's Venezuela attack a footnote in West's history of imperial plunder

Writers argue why Latin American underdevelopment should be seen as a structural byproduct of western development, of mainly Britain in the 17th to the early 20th centuries, and the U.S. from the 19th century onwards

### Suhit K. Sen

In even the most liberal western commentary, U.S. President Donald Trump's invasion of Venezuela presages the destruction of a rules-based international order, which itself presumes that nations are equal. It's actually a footnote in the bloody and barbarous history of the colonial subjugation and rapine of the world by the 'West'.

Latin America has been savagely pillaged for over half a millennium, beginning with Christopher Columbus's landing in 1492. What followed was a genocide in which the autochthonous were either killed or enslaved to work at extracting their own natural resources for the benefit of Europe.

**'Civilising' mission**  
The magnificent civilisations of the Mayans, Aztecs and Incas were razed as European 'civilisation' was transplanted in its place. In *A History of Venezuela*, Guillermo Morón recounts this history from an unabashedly Eurocentric perspective, lauding the theft of a country and a continent as a civilising mission in which well-intentioned priests and benevolent conquistadors brought the fruits of European enlightenment to savages stranded on the lowest rungs of the civilisational ladder.

There are references to cruelties, but those remain in metaphorical parentheses. There is a recognition that the native civilisations played some role in the shaping of Venezuela, through cultural intermingling and miscegenation. But Morón's perspective prevents him from recognising forced assimilation as just another face of barbarous extermination or banishment to the margins.

Morón's history of the 19th and 20th

centuries, independence from Spain and since, notes the preponderance of dictatorship over democracy in Venezuela. But since he can't see the structures of colonialism/imperialism and neocolonialism/neo-imperialism, he attributes this to the temperament of the people. Nor can he recognise, in the underdevelopment of the region, the structural role of colonialism and neocolonialism.

**Indictment of colonialism**  
Eduardo Galeano makes up for these lacks in his searing indictment of colonialism in *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. Framed in dependency theory, Galeano's story sees Latin American underdevelopment as a structural byproduct of western development, of mainly Britain in the 17th to the early 20th centuries, and the U.S. from the 19th onwards.

But Galeano's is not a bloodless accounting of political economy. It is a rich history of peoples that takes readers on a journey from the barbarities of Francisco Pizarro, the illiterate pig-breeder who was given Spanish imperial licence to forage for empire, to the slick boardrooms in U.S. metropolises which provoked and financed coups and massacres every time a Latin American dispensation tried to forge a path to the development of its nations and peoples. Galeano notes with satisfaction the efforts of the Cuban revolutionaries to construct not just an independent economy that worked for all the people, but a just society that was bound by the ties of fraternity and cooperation. It also notes the manner in which U.S. corporate interests funded the coup d'état through which Augusto Pinochet overthrew the legitimate socialist government of Salvador Allende. The U.S. state

generously provided training to the putschists.

### Coups, and aftermath

Naomi Klein provides agonising details of the manufactured coup in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. In its quest to subordinate and exploit Latin America, the U.S. propped up the bloodiest of dictators who were willing to do its bidding. The British did the same in the 19th century and till World War II destroyed its empire and made it a second-rate power.

The development of the core of the world capitalist system, based on the export of the infinitely squeezed surplus value of the peripheries, which is precisely what keeps them underdeveloped and immiserised, required draconian comprador regimes that would keep people – labour power – terrorised and industries denationalised. Galeano shows wonderfully through theory and human stories how metropolitan economic centres plundered natural resources and labour to first fire capitalism and then extend it.

### The Venezuela story

Gregory Wilpert takes the Venezuelan story forward to 2006, providing a critical account of Hugo Chávez's attempts to break free of the stranglehold of the capitalist-imperialist system and build a national economy and society that worked for the poorest. In *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power: The History and Policies of the Chávez Government*, he concluded that while the 'Bolivarian' project was a beacon to the world on account of the possibilities of democratic socialism it contained, it was incomplete, and beset by internal contradictions and external besiegement, again stoked by the U.S. state. There was no unambiguous hope, Wilpert concluded presciently, that

the revolution would bear fruit.

There were three main arenas in which Chávez and his party promoted participatory democracy: politics, society and the economy. In trying to remould the political system as more people-centric, Chávez introduced a new constitution in 1999. It made provisions for more accountable governance by including two more branches for auditing, introduced referenda for legislation and recall, which were unsuccessfully deployed against him, and decentralised power to communities. In the economic sphere, the Chávez dispensation gestured at workers' role in managing industries, promoted the cooperative movement, nationalised some industries, including partially the oil sector, though he failed to curb the dependence on oil, which kept the economy vulnerable to sudden shocks. In the social and economic sector, the Chávez administration made a major break by providing constitutional guarantees for women and indigenous people. He also expanded urban and rural land reforms to give entitlements to the poor, buttressing these with reform of the state health and educational systems.

The failure of the Venezuelan way, as compared to the Cuban path, can be explained largely by geopolitics. Cuba had the benefit of a bipolar world and thus Soviet assistance; in Chavez's unipolar world of U.S. hegemony, there was just the unremitting 'enemy action' of the hegemon and its allies, and no source of succour. And fifth columnists like Maria Corina Machado at hand to derail the experiment. This prompted an authoritarian turn.

For the moment, though, another western capitalist assault has won another battle, hopefully not the war humanity must wage.

*The author is a historian and journalist.*

## THE DAILY QUIZ

### A quiz on the life of Abraham Lincoln on his 217th birthday

#### V.V. Ramanan

##### QUESTION 1

Lincoln was elected from the newly formed Republican Party. To which party did he belong before that?

##### QUESTION 2

Lincoln was very good in a contact sport and is enshrined in the Hall of Fame for that sport. Name the sport.

##### QUESTION 3

What is the relevance of the phrase 'You sockdologizing old man-trap' in the life of Lincoln?

##### QUESTION 4

If the famous President's memorial is in Washington DC, where is his resting place?

##### QUESTION 5

Which national holiday did he establish in 1863 during the Civil War?

##### QUESTION 6

On May 22, 1849, Lincoln was given Patent No. 6469 and is the only U.S. President to have a patent. What did he devise?

##### QUESTION 7

Apart from Kansas, which two States were admitted to the Union during Lincoln's presidency?

##### QUESTION 8

What does the landmark 13th Amendment, passed by Congress shortly before Lincoln's death, deal with?



#### Visual question:

Name this legendary English scientist who was born on the same date and year as Lincoln.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. India won gold in this team sport in New Delhi. **Ans: Football**

2. Australia beat Germany in the final of this world cup held in India in 2010. **Ans: Hockey**

3. Name the player who won his first title beating Viswanathan Anand in 2013 in Chennai. **Ans: Magnus Carlsen**

4. This person won the race when India last hosted a Formula 1 race on this circuit. **Ans: Sebastian Vettel; Buddh International Circuit**

5. India is preparing to host the Commonwealth Games again here in this year. **Ans: Ahmedabad; 2030**

Visual: Name this Manchester City and England star. **Ans: Phil Foden**

**Early Birds:** Tamal Biswas| Arun Kumar Singh| Abhiroop Bose| Yeshu Pandey| Sufyan Kirmani



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### Know your English

#### S. Upendran

**What is the meaning and origin of the expression "red carpet welcome"?** (Prof. C. Venkataramaiah, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh)

When you are given a "red carpet welcome" or the "red carpet treatment", you are given special treatment on your arrival at some place. You are treated as a guest of honour. As the expression suggests, a thick red carpet is usually rolled out when someone who is considered important visits a place.

When Nelson Mandela visited India, he was given a red carpet welcome. The famous film star was rather disappointed that he wasn't given the red carpet treatment. I was quite surprised that they gave me a red carpet welcome.

The question is, why a red carpet and not a carpet of a different colour? In the old days, the colour red was always associated with honour. Important people wore red robes. For example, the robe that a king wore was always red. The colour red was also associated with magic; fairies were always shown wearing red caps. This sense of red meaning something important is retained in the expression "red letter day". People often refer to important or special days as "red letter days".

Preethi says that 21 October is a red letter day because that's the day she arrived in America.

Scholars claim that it was during the French Revolution that red began to acquire a negative meaning. The people who killed all the nobles during the revolution called themselves "red republicans". Nowadays of course communists are referred to as "reds".

**What is the difference in meaning between "stationary" and "stationery"?** (Ankit R. Vyas, Chennai)

When an object remains "stationary", it does not move, it stands still.

The train remained stationary for several hours. The truck hit a stationary car. How did Promod manage to run into a stationary bus?

"Stationery", on the other hand, refers to items usually associated with writing – pen, pencil, paper, etc. The secretary informed me that we had run out of stationery.

Could you tell me where the nearest stationery shop is?

Both "stationery" and "stationary" are pronounced the same way. The first two syllables are pronounced like the word "station". The "e" and "a" in the suffix "ery" and "ary" are pronounced like the "a" in "China". The main stress is on the first syllable "sta".

**What are goose pimples?** (Santhana Krishnan, Vellore, Tamil Nadu)

The pimples that a teenaged goose gets are called goose pimples! Just joking! Do you remember the last time you got terribly scared about something? Usually when someone gets scared, the hairs on their skin stand up and the skin begins to develop small bumps. In fact, the skin begins to look like it is covered by a series of dots. These bumps that you get when you feel scared, excited or cold are called goose pimples. They are also called "goose flesh" and "goose bumps".

*Published in The Hindu on July 27, 1999.*

## Word of the day

### Presentiment:

a feeling of evil to come

### Synonyms:

foreboding, premonition

### Usage:

*The lawyer had a presentiment that the judge would dismiss the case.*

### Pronunciation:

newsth.live/presentimentpro

### International Phonetic Alphabet:

/pri'zen.t̬.mənt/

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