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INVESTMENT CHALLENGE - KU READY YA

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| ஒரு பவன் தங்கம் ₹30,000 கிடைக்குமா? | ✗ கிடைக்காது |
| SILVER 100 GM ₹10,000 - ல கிடைக்குமா? | ✗ கிடைக்காது |
| MUTUAL FUND - ல 30% லாபம் வருமா? | ✗ MARKET-DEPENDENT |
| SHARE MARKET - ல 60% லாபம் உறுதியா? | ✗ HIGH RISK |
| BANK FIXED DEPOSIT - ல 30% வட்டி கிடைக்குமா? | ✗ IMPOSSIBLE |
| BOND INVESTMENT - ல 50% லாபம் உறுதியா? | ✗ IMPOSSIBLE |

CHENNAI CITY-LIMIT KULLA PLOT



MARKET PRICE ₹4000 /SQ. FT.	SRIPERUMBUDUR NEXT TO KINGS COLLEGE ₹1450 - KU கிடைக்குமா? /SQ. FT.
MARKET PRICE ₹5000 /SQ. FT.	SRIPERUMBUDUR NEAR TOLL ₹2250 - KU கிடைக்குமா? /SQ. FT.
MARKET PRICE ₹4000 /SQ. FT.	SINGAPERUMAL KOIL ₹1999 - KU கிடைக்குமா? /SQ. FT.
MARKET PRICE ₹5000 /SQ. FT.	KUTHAMBAKKAM BUS TERMINUS ₹1999 - KU கிடைக்குமா? /SQ. FT.
MARKET PRICE ₹4000 /SQ. FT.	KARANODAI NEAR RED HILLS ₹1690 - KU கிடைக்குமா? /SQ. FT.
MARKET PRICE ₹8000 /SQ. FT.	POONAMALLEE ₹4500 - KU கிடைக்குமா? /SQ. FT.

✓ 100% GUARANTEE - AH கிடைக்கும்...

(PRE-LAUNCH சலுகை முதல் 100 பேருக்கு மட்டும் / EACH PROJECT)



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BEST TIME TO INVEST IN PLOTS ACROSS CHENNAI

இநு பவுன் துங்கம் ₹30,000 கிடைக்குமா?

இணா, SRIPERUMBUDUR - ல கிடைக்கும்
NEXT TO KINGS COLLEGE

MARKET PRICE
~~₹4000~~
/SQ. FT.

PRE-LAUNCH PRICE
₹1450
/SQ. FT. ONWARDS

COMPETITOR A
~~₹3800~~
/SQ. FT.

COMPETITOR B
~~₹3500~~
/SQ. FT.

FOUND A LOWER PRICE THAN OURS?
GET THE PLOT FOR JUST 1 RUPEE!

BANK FIXED DEPOSIT - ல
30% வட்டி கிடைக்குமா?

இணா, KARANODAI
NEAR RED HILLS - ல கிடைக்கும்

MARKET PRICE
~~₹4000~~
/SQ. FT.

PRE-LAUNCH PRICE
₹1690
/SQ. FT. ONWARDS

COMPETITOR A
~~₹3900~~
/SQ. FT.

COMPETITOR B
~~₹3500~~
/SQ. FT.

MUTUAL FUND - ல 30% லாபம் வருமா?

இணா, KUTHAMBAKKAM
BUS TERMINUS - ல கிடைக்கும்

MARKET PRICE
~~₹5000~~
/SQ. FT.

PRE-LAUNCH PRICE
₹1999
/SQ. FT. ONWARDS

COMPETITOR A
~~₹4600~~
/SQ. FT.

COMPETITOR B
~~₹4800~~
/SQ. FT.

SILVER 100GM ₹10,000 - ல கிடைக்குமா?

இணா, SINGAPERUMAL KOVIL - ல
கிடைக்கும்

MARKET PRICE
~~₹4000~~
/SQ. FT.

PRE-LAUNCH PRICE
₹1999
/SQ. FT. ONWARDS

COMPETITOR A
~~₹3800~~
/SQ. FT.

COMPETITOR B
~~₹3600~~
/SQ. FT.

SHARE MARKET - ல 60% லாபம் உறுதியா?

இணா, SRIPERUMBUDUR
NEAR TOLL - ல கிடைக்கும்

MARKET PRICE
~~₹5000~~
/SQ. FT.

PRE-LAUNCH PRICE
₹2250
/SQ. FT. ONWARDS

COMPETITOR A
~~₹4700~~
/SQ. FT.

COMPETITOR B
~~₹4900~~
/SQ. FT.

BOND INVESTMENT - ல 50% லாபம் உறுதியா?

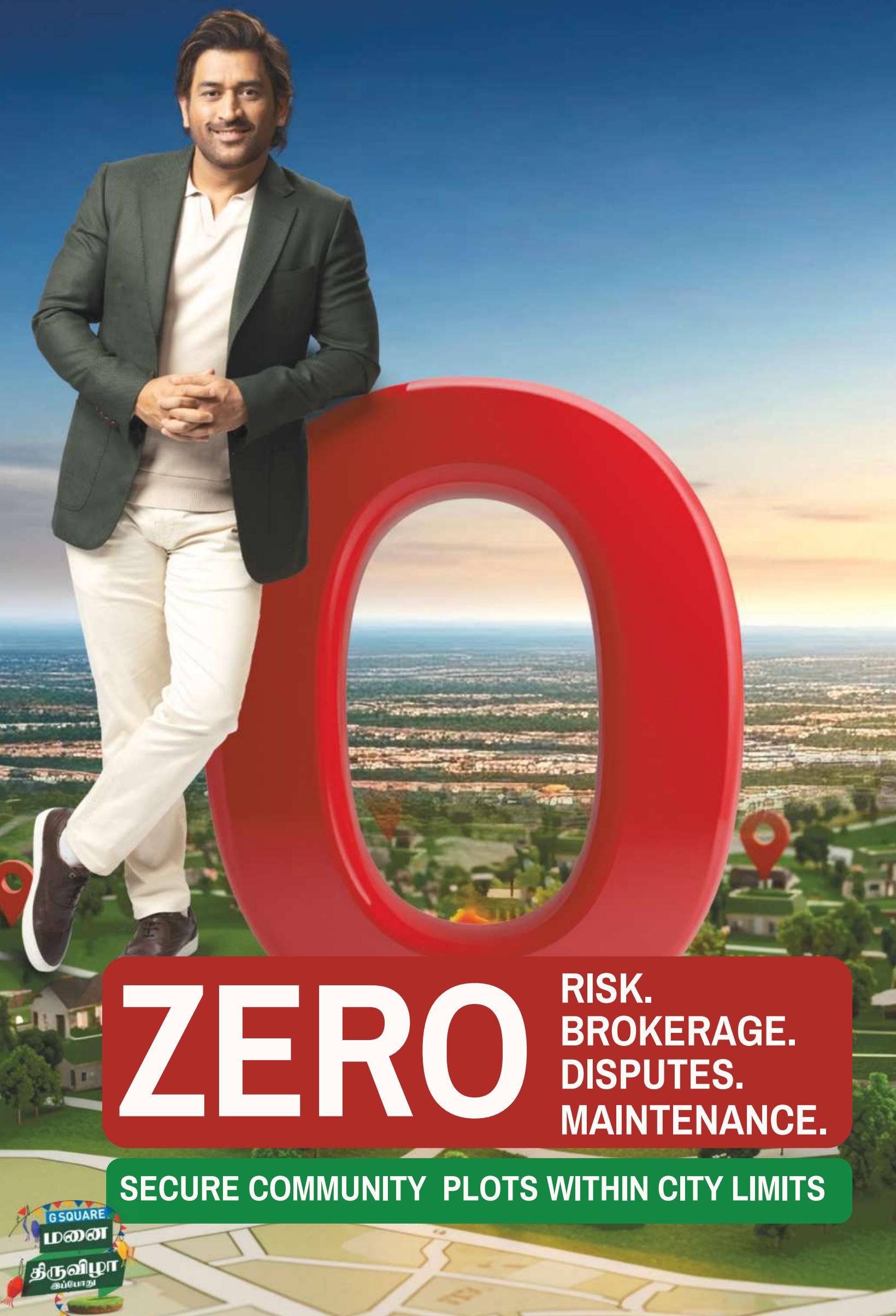
இணா, POONAMALLEE - ல கிடைக்கும்

MARKET PRICE
~~₹8000~~
/SQ. FT.

PRE-LAUNCH PRICE
₹4500
/SQ. FT. ONWARDS

COMPETITOR A
~~₹7500~~
/SQ. FT.

COMPETITOR B
~~₹7800~~
/SQ. FT.



SECURE COMMUNITY PLOTS WITHIN CITY LIMITS



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THE SMART TIME TO INVEST AND SAVE

PROJECT LOCATIONS	SQ.FT RANGES FROM	MARKET PRICE / UNIT	PRE-LAUNCH PRICE / UNIT	SAVINGS / UNIT FROM DAY 1
SRIPERUMBUDUR NEXT TO KINGS COLLEGE	700 SQ.FT.	₹28L	₹10L	₹18L
SRIPERUMBUDUR NEAR TOLL	900 SQ.FT.	₹58L	₹26L	₹32L
KUTHAMBAKKAM BUS TERMINUS	900 SQ.FT.	₹45L	₹18L	₹27L
KARANODAI NEAR RED HILLS	600 SQ.FT.	₹25L	₹10L	₹15L
SINGAPERUMAL KOIL	600 SQ.FT.	₹24L	₹12L	₹12L
POONAMALLEE	600 SQ.FT.	₹56L	₹27L	₹29L

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ONWARDS



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₹61L
ONWARDS



PLOT + 4 BHK VILLA
₹73L
ONWARDS



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- Zero brokerage or hidden charges



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- Full legal & documentation support



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- 10,000+ customers have already achieved 2x returns - a proven track record

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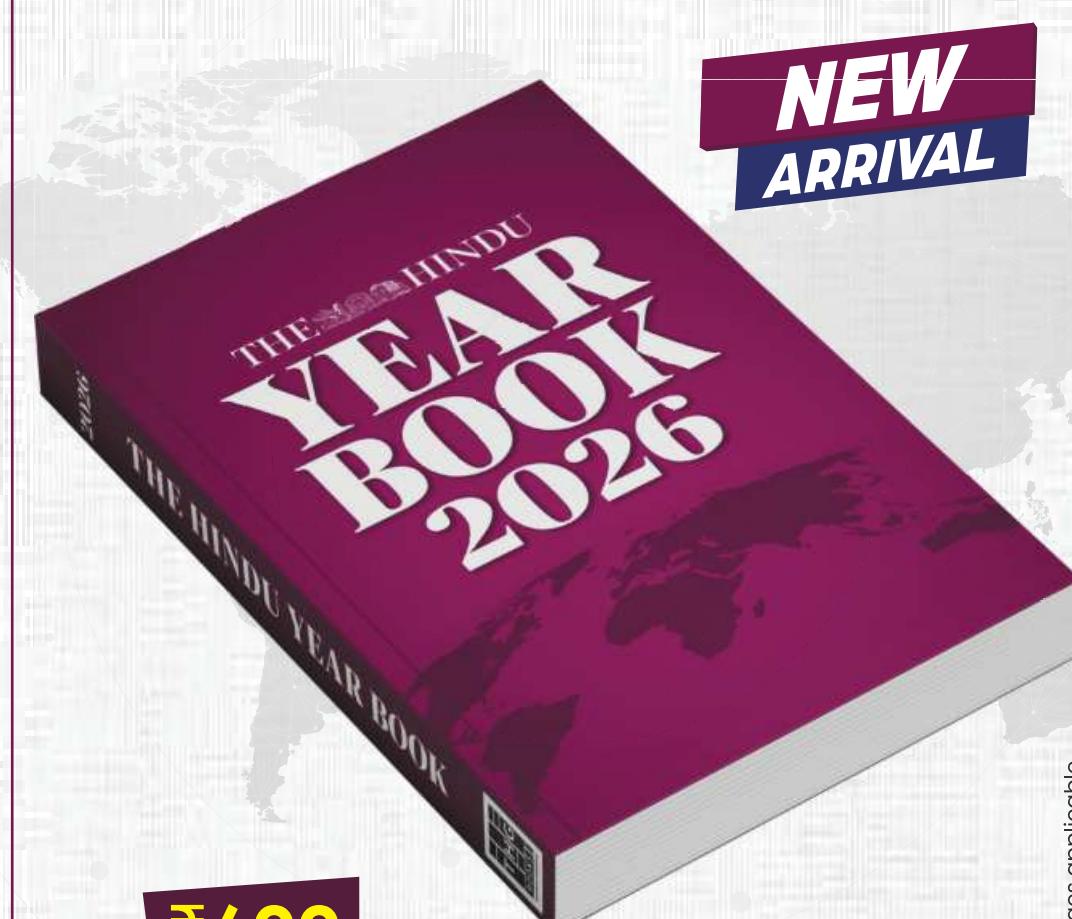
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The Hindu Year Book 2026

provides chronological, contextual, and factual information on the key events that occupied public attention **between January and December 2025.**

It features a Calendar of Events with Profiles of People, and Data on India and the World. Expert essays cover critical topics such as like AI and the Indus Waters Treaty, while dedicated sections analyse global governance, economy, and sports through evocative photographs and factual reporting.



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DATA 2025 | COMMENTARY
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NEARBY



T.N. CM slams NDA as 'alliance of betrayal'

CHENNAI
M.K. Stalin rejected the allegations of dynasty politics, corruption, and anti-Hindu bias levelled against DMK. He reiterated that the NDA in the State was merely an "alliance of betrayal". [» PAGE 6](#)

Govt. doctors launch next phase of protests

CHENNAI
The Federation of Government Doctors Associations has begun the next phase of its protests, launching a non-cooperation movement on Friday. [» PAGE 6](#)

METROPLUS WEEKEND » 6 PAGES
PROPERTY PLUS » 16 PAGES

Menstrual health in schools is integral to right to life: SC

The court says lack of menstrual hygiene management in schools subjects girls to stigma and humiliation; it directs States, Union Territories to ensure access to sanitary napkins in all schools

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday declared that the right to menstrual health and access to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) measures in educational institutions is part of the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution.

"Dignity cannot be reduced to an abstract ideal; it must find expression in conditions that enable individuals to live without humiliation, exclusion, or avoidable suffering. For menstruating girl children, the inaccessibility of MHM measures subjects them to stigma, stereotyping, and humiliation," a Bench of justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan observed in a judgment.

Access for all

Supreme Court rules that all schools must provide menstrual hygiene access to students



- The right to life under Article 21 includes the right to menstrual health
- Denial of menstrual hygiene measures denies girls equal participation in school
- The right to free and compulsory education under Article 21A includes supply of free sanitary napkins in schools

The absence of safe and hygienic menstrual management measures undermined dignified existence by compelling adolescent students to either resort to absenteeism or adopt unsafe practices.

"Menstrual poverty hinders girls from exercising their right to education

with dignity equal to that of their male counterparts, or students who can afford sanitary products. There is no gainsaying that impairment of primary or secondary education has grave and lasting consequences," the court explained.

The judgment was based on a writ petition

filed by Dr. Jaya Thakur, highlighting the lack of MHM measures in schools across the country. The court held that the lack of MHM measures in schools violates the right to privacy and bodily autonomy of students.

Issuing a series of directions, the Supreme Court ordered States and Union Territories to ensure that every school, whether government-run or privately managed, in both urban and rural areas, is provided with functional, gender-segregated toilets. These schools must make oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins readily accessible to students free-of-cost, preferably within the toilet premises, through sanitary napkin vending machines.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Delhi blast: terror module planned to hit coffee chain

EXCLUSIVE

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI



Security personnel at the Red Fort blast site, where over a dozen were killed on November 10, 2025. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The group of doctors arrested in connection with the November 10, 2025, Red Fort car-borne suicide attack that killed over a dozen people were allegedly conspiring to bomb the outlets of a global coffee chain, whose founder is a Jew, a source in the government told *The Hindu*. The "white collar terror module" had been active for the past four years, the source said.

The three accused doctors, Muzamil Ahmad Ganai and Adeel Ahmed Rather from Jammu and Kashmir, and Shaheen Saeed from Uttar Pradesh, have told investigators that there was a difference of opinion with Umar-UN-Nabi, the car-borne attacker who was killed in the terror attack, regarding the choice of targets. By attack-

ing the coffee chain outlets in Delhi and other major Indian cities, the accused wanted to send a message against Israel's military action in Gaza. Some members of the group wanted to restrict the terror plot to targeting security forces in J&K, the source said.

The group wanted to revive the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGuh), the Indian offshoot of the global terror outfit al-Qaeda, a senior government official said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

EU deal to be implemented in 2026 itself: Piyush Goyal

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI



Mr. Goyal also called the UPA's push to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) the "most stupid" move that would have "demolished" India's manufacturing sector.

"There is no going back to the RCEP. It's the most harmful suggestion that some people seem to still come up with to even consider looking at India doing an FTA with China, which the Congress tried to do," Mr. Goyal said. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will never let down the people of India," he said.

He added that India, under the Modi government, has only done deals with developed nations, not ones it competes with.

INTERVIEW ON
» PAGE 11

'States must not err by focusing on cash transfers'

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran on Friday asserted that quality output in India would be established through market forces and competition, not through regulatory action such as quality control orders (QCOs).

Speaking to *The Hindu* in an interview, the CEA also argued that, despite the political attractiveness of unconditional cash transfers, States would have to make sure not to "err" by choosing too much of these at the cost of growth and development.

INTERVIEW ON
» PAGE 13

Triple murder: police recover woman's body from Perungudi dump in the city

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI



After a three-day search in the triple murder case, the police on Friday recovered the body of a woman from Bihar at the Perungudi dump. She, her husband Gaurav Kumar, a migrant labourer, and their son were allegedly murdered at Taramani on January 24 by assailants who were also from Bihar.

On the morning of January 26, passers-by noticed blood oozing from a gunny bag left near a two-wheeler showroom on Indira Nagar's First Avenue in the Adyar police station limits. On information, the police

identified as Gaurav Kumar, native of Bathiyabar village in Bihar's Sheikhpura district. It was also learnt that he had come to Chennai in search of employment, along with his wife and their two-year-old son.

Based on suspicion, the police questioned Sathyender alias Santhosh Kumar, 30, on January 27. It emerged that he hailed from Alipur in Nalanda district of Bihar, and was employed as a daytime watchman at the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT) at Taramani.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 6

rushed to the spot. In the bag, they found the body of an unidentified man, aged about 25, with cut injuries to the head.

The body was sent to

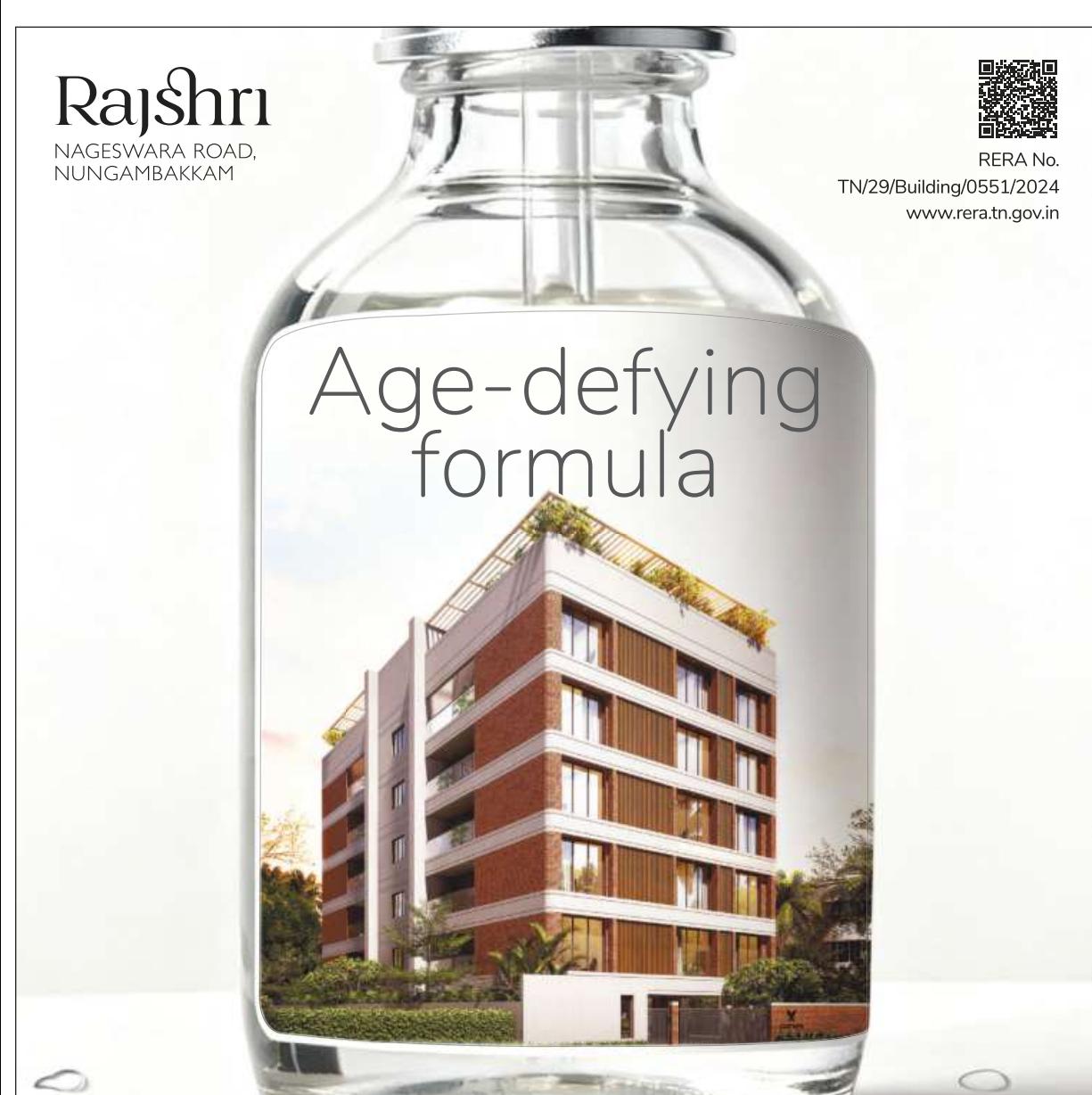
the Government Royapettah Hospital for post-mortem.

A case was registered at the Adyar police station, and the deceased was

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IN BRIEF



DGP(DVAC) Abhay Kumar Singh to retire today

Director-General of Police (DGP)/Director of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Abhay Kumar Singh is retiring from service on Saturday as he attains the age of superannuation. Mr. Singh is a 1992-batch IPS officer and began service as Assistant Superintendent of Police in Thoothukudi Sub-Division. He also held the charge of DGP (Law and Order in-charge) briefly. At Rajarathinam Stadium, the police department held a farewell parade on Friday. He was greeted by DGP G. Venkataraman, Greater Chennai Police Commissioner A. Arun, and other officers.

Spotlight

Read longform articles from our regional editions

- Andhra Pradesh: Ancient grain storage tradition fading fast in Srikakulam district [newsth.live/grains](#)
- Delhi: Colleges within schools [newsth.live/haryanacolleges](#)
- Karnataka: Solving Bengaluru's parking puzzle [newsth.live/bengaluruparking](#)
- Kerala: Life is a stink for Eloor-Edayar residents [newsth.live/eloorpollution](#)
- Telangana: Stray dogs at the centre of a growing social divide [newsth.live/telanganadogs](#)

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

BJP councillor thanks DMK govt. for support

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The lone Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) councillor of Ward 134 in T. Nagar Uma Anandan said it was possible to fulfill 80% of her poll promises to voters due to the cooperation of the DMK government. At the GCC Council meeting on Friday, she thanked Chief

Minister M.K. Stalin, Mayor Priya, and Minister for Health and Family Welfare Ma. Subramanian for their cooperation.

VCK councillor C. Ambivelavalan, aka as C. Kumaraasamy, said biriyani shops operating 24 hours a day were causing public nuisance. He alleged that a 17-year-old boy had recently eaten at a 24-hour biriyani

GCC approves ₹3.14 crore for new dog cages, kennels

CHENNAI: The GCC Council meeting on Friday approved the procurement of stainless steel foldable cages and dog kennels for stray animal facilities in

north and south Chennai at ₹3.14 crore. The new equipment will replace or supplement existing cages with medical-grade stainless steel units.

Webinar on recent advancements in cancer care to be held on February 3

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Ahead of World Cancer Day (February 4), Kauvery Hospital and *The Hindu* will jointly organise a webinar on 'Recent Advancements in Cancer Treatment' as a part of the Wellness Series at 11.30 a.m. on February 3.

Cancer care has seen remarkable progress in recent years, driven by advancements in medical technology, clinical research, and personalised treatment approaches. This session will focus on the importance of early detection, customised treatment planning, and improved patient outcomes.

The webinar aims to offer insights into recent developments in cancer treatment, highlighting emerging trends in oncology care, and enable patients and caregivers to better understand the evolving cancer care landscape.



a webinar on Recent Advancements in Cancer Treatment

Corporation plans to make licensing, microchipping of stray cattle mandatory

Cattle owners have been granted time until March 18 to obtain the licences; each animal within GCC limits to be implanted with a microchip with the owner's name, address, and other details

R. Aishwarya
CHENNAI

After mandating pet dog licensing and microchipping, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) now plans to do the same for cattle to curb stray cattle menace and conflicts on the streets.

The civic body, at the Council meeting held on Friday, resolved to make it compulsory for cattle owners to obtain licences for their animals across all zones.

According to the resolution tabled at the meeting, the 2024 census conducted by GCC identified 22,875 cattle within city limits.

Lack of shelters

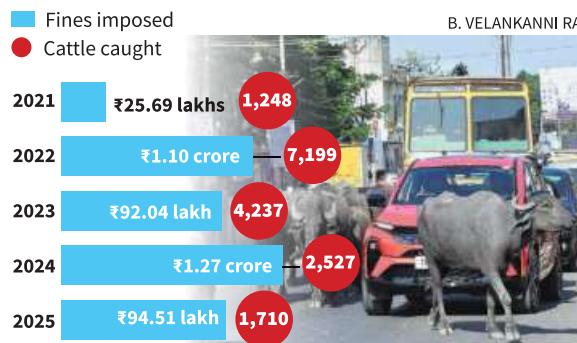
Many of these animals lack proper shelter and roam free on roads, causing traffic disruptions and public health hazards.

Instances of cattle attacking the public have also been recorded. To ad-

Strict enforcement

GCC has deployed dedicated cattle-catching vehicles across 15 zones, each with five workers

Action taken to curb stray cattle menace over the last five years



dress this, GCC has deployed dedicated cattle-catching vehicles across 15 zones, each with five workers.

The impounded animals are held at Corporation sheds in Pudupet, and the owners concerned are charged a fine of ₹10,000 per head, with the condition that the animals

should not be released back on the streets, the resolution said. Between 2024 and 2025, the civic body impounded 4,237 cattle and collected ₹2.22 crore in fines.

New rules

The new regulations require owners to download application forms from

GCC's website and submit them to zonal veterinary officers.

Following a field inspection by health inspectors and veterinary officers, a licence will be issued upon payment of ₹100 as a fee. Each animal will be implanted with a microchip containing the owner's name, address, and animal details. Owners have been granted a 45-day window until March 18, 2026, to obtain these licences.

Acts of cruelty

The plan cites provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, which views overcrowding and allowing animals to roam freely as acts of cruelty.

The Tamil Nadu Keeping of Animals and Birds in Urban Areas (Control and Regulation) Act, 1997, further empowers the Corporation to regulate livestock to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.



GCC's announcement comes after the State government said that 200 km of footpaths would be built in the city. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

GCC Council approves phase two of footpath projects in 6 locations

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

um, the construction of a new sports facility at Aspiran Garden for ₹4.80 crore, and infrastructure works at the Pulianthope slaughterhouse for an additional ₹9.29 crore. Procurement of six high-capacity suction-cum-jetting machines was cleared at an estimated ₹12 crore, and boats will be purchased for recreational facilities at Madhavaram Lake, Manali Lake, and near the Tiruvottiyur railway bridge.

The Council also approved the lease of TANSI land on Walltax Road for ₹6.7 lakh to establish a temporary bus terminal. It also approved renaming Balakrishna Colony 3rd Street as T.V. Viswanathan Street and John Trevor Street as K. Veerasamy Street, while a new park in Ramapuram

will be named after freedom fighter S.S. Viswanathan. Statues of Tamil martyrs Thalamuthu and Natarajan will be installed at the Chennai Schools complex in Egmore, and an Ambedkar statue will be placed at the Victoria Hall premises.

Access road to be laid at Kodungaiyur waste plant

CHENNAI: The Greater Chennai Corporation Council meeting on Friday approved the construction of a cement concrete road

at the Kodungaiyur dumping ground at ₹3.74 crore to provide access to the Integrated Waste to Energy plant facilities.

CINEMA ♦ ARTS ♦ EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

Anusham Arts Academy / Karnataka Sangha. Ph: 9884190454 Today Ramarao Kala Mantapa, No.111 Habibullah Road, T.Nagar, B/N 6p.m. Students of Guru Sadhana Ramakrishnan, 7.15p.m. K. Madhav Haygreev Guru Karuna Sagari. All are welcome.



Nataka Kavalai R.S.MANO-HAR's Birth Centenary, 6.40pm: UAA presents Y.GEE MAHENDRA & Y.G.MADHUVANTHI in 'LIGHTS ON' written by VEN-KAT Dramatised & Directed by Y.GEE.Mahendra at Youth Hostel, 2nd Avenue, Indira Nagar, Adyar. Sponsor: CPCL, Supported by Super Auto Forge, Donor Pass, Rs.200/- Membership Open. Tomorrow: Violin Concert A.KANYAKUMARI & EMBAR KANNAN with Patri Satish Kumar & B.S.Purushotham

(Bharathanatyam solo) 7:00pm - Smt. Nithyakalyani Vaideyanathan (Bharathanatyam solo) All are welcome!

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IN BRIEF



Governor, Chief Minister pay tributes to Mahatma Gandhi

Governor R.N. Ravi and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi in separate events in Chennai, on the occasion of his death anniversary on Friday. They paid the tributes at the Gandhi Mandapam and Egmore museum, respectively. "Paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his *Purnyatithi* – the eternal beacon of truth, non-violence, and selfless service, whose life of sacrifice, Satyagraha, and moral courage awakened the spirit of a nation, uplifted the marginalised, fought social discrimination and was dedicated to the service of the weakest sections of society. Let us live Bapu's ideals and build a Bharat of his dreams," the Lok Bhawan said. In a social media post, Mr. Stalin denounced communalism and hailed Mahatma Gandhi. He said the Mahatma, who was shot by Godse, would continue to live in the lives of the people.

AIADMK district secretaries to meet on February 4

AIADMK district secretaries will meet at the party headquarters on February 4 to discuss the preparedness of the organisation for the Assembly election. To be chaired by AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the meeting may witness the functionaries giving their nod to Mr. Palaniswami for all the decisions taken by him in connection with the poll alliance. It was on December 10 that the party's general council met in Vanagaram near Chennai where Mr. Palaniswami was authorised to decide on the alliance matter. On January 24, the party completed its exercise of holding interviews with aspirants for the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry. On Thursday, Mr. Palaniswami flatly rejected an offer of his erstwhile colleague and former coordinator O. Panneerselvam for re-entry into the organisation.

Timings CHENNAI	
SATURDAY, JAN. 31	
RISE 06:35 SET 18:10	
SUNDAY, FEB. 01	
RISE 06:35 SET 18:10	
RISE 17:44 SET 05:59	
MONDAY, FEB. 02	
RISE 06:35 SET 18:10	
RISE 18:43 SET 06:49	

Chennai Weather max min
Tiruvallur 29 18
Chennai Airport 30 21
Chennai City 29 22

Chennai Airport Today 30°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be slightly warm. Night also will be pleasant. Mostly dry weather to prevail.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow 31°C The weather will be dry. Day will be slightly warm. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Will waive co-op loans for persons with disabilities: EPS



The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Friday announced that loans taken by persons with disabilities from cooperative societies would be waived, in the event of his party capturing power in the State.

Referring to the release of the first set of promises made two weeks ago, Mr. Palaniswami told a public meeting in connection with the birth anniversary of party founder and former Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran held at MGR Nagar of the Virgumbakkam Assembly constituency here that those who had registered themselves with associations for auto-rickshaw drivers would be given a subsidy of ₹75,000 each for buying the vehi-

cles. "Some more concessions will be unveiled."

Targeting the ruling party for not having fulfilled its electoral promises, Mr. Palaniswami said contrary to the assurance that 3.5 lakh persons would be recruited in the government and another two lakh in bodies falling under the control of the government, 75,000 persons retired since the assumption of office by the DMK in May 2021 and 50,000 persons were recruited. "Totally,

there are 5.75 lakh vacancies," he contended.

Questioning the DMK regime for borrowing ₹5.5 lakh crore, he said the tax revenue went up by ₹1.36 lakh crore from 2020-21 to 2024-25. Though there had been no new schemes, the government was still borrowing funds.

Stating that his party had almost finalised the alliance for the Assembly election, with a few more parties likely to join, Mr. Palaniswami asserted that the alliance issue had not been resolved in the DMK-led front. "It appears that the Congress is drifting from the alliance," he observed, expressing the hope that his party would form a government on its own with an absolute majority and the AIADMK-led coalition would secure 210 Assembly seats.

Congressmen know how to hit back, says Manickam Tagore



The Hindu Bureau MADURAI

Keeping alive the spat between the Congress and the ruling DMK over a share in power in Tamil Nadu, Congress MP B. Manickam Tagore said on Friday that Congressmen knew how to hit back.

He also said his party would stake a claim to the Madurai North Assembly constituency in the coming election. Talking to reporters here, Mr. Tagore, the Lok Sabha Member from Virudhunagar, reiterated the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee's demand that the DMK take action

against its Madurai Urban district secretary G. Thalapathi for allegedly disrespecting the Congress and its workers. "I am only reiterating TNCC president K. Selvaperunthagi's demand for action against Mr. Thalapathi," he said.

Mr. Thalapathi said a few days ago that the Congress lacked workers even to be posted as booth agents and had a vote base of just 4,000 in each Assembly constituency.

Mr. Tagore said he had put forth his demand – for the Congress to contest in Madurai North – to AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge. "After the session of Parliament ends, we will convene a meeting of the Congress booth agents in Madurai North and showcase our strength. Congress workers know not only how to hail *Vande Matram* but also how to hit back," he said.

BJP's H. Raja hospitalised after collapsing at public event

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

Senior BJP leader H. Raja collapsed on stage during a public event in Chennai on Friday, and was rushed to a private hospital.

Senior BJP leader and former Telangana Governor T. S. Soundararajan, who is a doctor and was present at the venue, rendered emergency assistance. Dr. Soundararajan said "We took him to a nearby hospital. He was later shifted to another hospital and is relatively better now."

TVK moves HC against two provisions of SOP for rallies

It says they amount to colourable exercise of power to stifle its political activities and seeks a directive to the Home Secretary to reframe and notify a fresh SOP that is non-discriminatory

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI



Actor-politician Vijay's Tamilaigal Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has filed a writ petition in the Madras High Court challenging two provisions of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) notified by the Tamil Nadu government on January 5, 2026, for permitting public meetings, processions, roadshows, demonstrations, protests, cultural/religious events, and other public gatherings attended by more than 5,000 people.

The party has urged the court to quash clauses 6(c) and 8(g)(1) of the SOP after declaring them illegal, arbitrary, unconstitutional, and violative of the principles of natural justice.

It also sought a consequent directive to the Home Secretary to reframe

by the Election Commission of India over other political parties and organisations.

It further states that priority among the recognised political parties would be given based on their representation in the Legislative Assembly.

'Unconstitutional'
Since the TVK was only a registered political party and not a recognised party and was yet to face any election in order to have any representation in the Legislative Assembly, it contended that such a clause creates an "unconstitutional" classification of recognised and registered political parties and thereby discriminates against the latter in the matter of granting preference in allotment of venues.

The TVK also challenged the validity of clause 8(g)(1), which states that the organisers of events, in which more than 5,000 people participate, should bear full responsibility for crowd safety, regulation, and orderly management.

It contended that the inclusion of such a clause in the SOP amounted to imposition of a disproportionate burden on the organisers.

Filing an affidavit on behalf of the TVK, its deputy general secretary C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar said, "It shifts core State obligations onto political parties and operates as a deterrent to political participation. This also amounts to a colourable exercise of power, designed to stifle the lawful political activities of the petitioner party, in gross violation of Articles 14, 19(1)(a), and 19(1)(b) of the Constitution."

held that the single judge ought not to have passed such orders without affording proper opportunity to the CBFC to file a counter affidavit to a writ petition filed by the production house KVN Productions LLP.

A caveat is filed by a litigant in the High Courts and the SC to ensure that no adverse order is passed against it without it being heard.

held that the single judge ought not to have passed such orders without affording proper opportunity to the CBFC to file a counter affidavit to a writ petition filed by the production house KVN Productions LLP.

Maintaining the petition
On January 27, 2026, the Madras High Court had allowed a writ appeal filed by the CBFC and set aside a single judge's January 9, 2026 order, which had directed the CBFC to issue U/A 16+ certification for Mr. Vijay's much-awaited final movie *Jana Nayagan*.

The First Division Bench of Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G. Arul Murugan

CBFC files caveat in Supreme Court in *Jana Nayagan* case

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has filed a caveat in the Supreme Court seeking that no order should be passed without hearing it in connection with the release of actor Vijay-starrer *Jana Nayagan*.

A caveat is filed by a litigant in the High Courts and the SC to ensure that no adverse order is passed against it without it being heard.

held that the single judge ought not to have passed such orders without affording proper opportunity to the CBFC to file a counter affidavit to a writ petition filed by the production house KVN Productions LLP.

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The First Division Bench of Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G. Arul Murugan

held that the single judge ought not to have passed such orders without affording proper opportunity to the CBFC to file a counter affidavit to a writ petition filed by the production house KVN Productions LLP.

Maintaining the petition
The Bench had also held that the writ petition was not maintainable at all, as it sought a mandamus to the CBFC to issue the certificate, instead of seeking a writ of certiorari to quash an order passed by the CBFC chairman on January 6, 2026, referring the movie to a nine-member revising committee.

CMCHIS application launched for seamless access to information

Serena Josephine M.
CHENNAI

To reduce reliance on physical insurance cards under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS) and to ensure seamless and easy access to information for beneficiaries, the State government has launched a mobile applica-

tion, CMCHIS-ABPMJAY. Simultaneously, efforts are under way to link beneficiary health records on the application.

"There have been instances in which hospitals ask patients to bring their insurance cards. This makes the process difficult as they would have to go back to their villages. With this app, there is no need

for them to produce a physical insurance card, as they can show the digital card," an official said. The Aadhaar-seeded application is available on the Google Play Store for Android users, he said, adding that beneficiaries could enter their Aadhaar-linked mobile phone number to receive an OTP to log in.

process of updating the contact numbers of these hospitals," he said.

The official said work to link beneficiary health records was in progress. "In the months to come, details of pre-authorisation, amount approved and claims information will be available on the app. All these efforts are to simplify processes using technolo-

gy so that beneficiaries can access information easily," he added. Apart from the app, the CMCHIS website also has a feature to generate e-card, he said, noting that the e-card was valid, and there was no need for physical insurance cards. "Back-end work to launch a QR code scanner is also under way," the official said.

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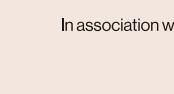
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Photo: S. Suresh

Smithsonian's Museum in U.S. to return 3 sculptures to India

The decision comes after provenance research established that these three bronze sculptures of Nataraja, Somaskanda, and Saint Sundarar with Paravai had been illegally removed from temples

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

The Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, United States, announced on Wednesday that it would return three sculptures – Nataraja, Somaskanda, and Saint Sundarar with Paravai – to the Government of India.

The decision follows provenance research that established that they had been illegally removed from temples. The Indian government has agreed to place one of the sculptures at the museum on a long-term loan.

The Chola-era sculptures of the Nataraja from the 10th Century and the Somaskanda from the 12th Century and Saint Sundarar with Paravai from the Vijayanagara period (16th Century) exemplify the rich artistry of South Indian bronze casting. The Shiva Nataraja, which is to be given on a long-term loan, will be displayed as part of the exhibition, 'The Art of Knowing in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas.'

Under a systematic review of its South Asian col-



The Somaskanda sculpture, belonging to the 12th Century, that will be returned by the museum in the U.S. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

lections, the museum conducted an investigation into the provenance of these sculptures.

In 2023, in collaboration with the photo archives of the French Institute of Pondicherry (Institut Français de Pondichéry), museum researchers confirmed that the bronze sculptures had been photographed in Tamil Nadu temples between 1956 and 1959. The Archaeological Survey of India then reviewed these findings and affirmed that they had been removed in violation of Indian laws.

"The National Museum

of Asian Art is committed to stewarding cultural heritage responsibly and advancing transparency in our collection," Museum Director Chase F. Robinson said in a statement released by the Smithsonian.

The museum and the Embassy of India are finalising arrangements to formally mark the agreement. The return was made possible by the National Museum of Asian Art's provenance team and curators of South and Southeast Asian Art, with the support of the photo archives of the French Institute of Pondi-

cherry. "The decision of the Smithsonian Institution, U.S., to return the sculptures to Tamil Nadu marks a milestone in the international recovery of India's stolen cultural heritage and stands as a clear validation of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)-based recovery strategy pursued by the Tamil Nadu Idol Wing [CID]. We submitted documents and MLAT materials to the institution in 2022 during my tenure. The Somaskanda bronze is a 12th-Century Chola masterpiece, illicitly removed several decades ago from the Vishwanatha Swamy Temple at Alathur village in Thiruvarur district," said K. Jayanth Murali, former Director-General of Police, Idol Wing CID.

In 2017, heritage researcher and India Pride Project founder S. Vijay Kumar published photographic matches using archival records from the French Institute of Pondicherry, conclusively linking all three bronzes to specific Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu. Despite the availability of this evidence, it has taken nearly eight years for institutional action to follow.

Experts at SCARF's meeting discuss various issues affecting mental health of children

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

At a dissemination meeting on project Juveniles Accessing Mental Health Services (JAMS) implemented by the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), a panel including Sheela Jayanthi, Chairperson of Child Welfare Com-

mittee, Chennai (South Zone); P. Chitra, Program Manager of SIAAP; Valavan, Associate Director of Miracle Foundation India; and Sheela Grace of Nalandaway Foundation, spoke about challenges affecting the mental health of children.

According to SCARF Chennai, the project im-

proves access to child-centred mental healthcare for children and adolescents living in child care institutions (CCIs) in Tamil Nadu and Odisha. "The JAMS project has components such as mental health literacy for staff members, administrators, and children and youth-friendly spaces created

within CCIs," added Shiva Prakash S., JAMS Project Co-lead. S. Ramalingam, member, Juvenile Justice Board, guest of honour Andrew Sesuraj, member, Tamil Nadu Empowered Committee on Children Welfare and Special Services, Government of Tamil Nadu, and Padmavati R., director, SCARF, spoke.



NOTICE INVITING TENDER			
HITES on behalf of Institute of Organ and Tissue Transplant, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Kerala, invites online bids through e-tendering from eligible contractors/firms in bid system for following work in EPC mode:			
Name and Description of work	Estimated cost	Completion period	Last date of submission
Construction of Institute for Organ and Tissue Transplant, Chevayur, Kozhikode	Rs. 252,96,98,07/- (Excl. GST)	30 months	24.02.2026

The project is funded by KIIFB. For submission & other tender details, please refer detailed NIT on e-tender portal www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.hilties.com. Correspondence/amenments etc., if any, will be notified on this portal only and separate newspaper advertisement will not be made for this.

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For Detailed Information on Eligibility Criteria, Important Dates, Online Application, Upper Age Limit, Reservation & Relaxation, Selection Process etc., please refer detailed advertisement hosted in the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) website & ICSI Placement portal from 01-02-2026.				
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PUBLIC NOTICE		
This is to inform the public that by SEIAA, Tamil Nadu has issued Environmental Clearance (EC) certificate to M/s The Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University vide letter No. File No: 13034 & EC Identification No: EC25C3804TN5560826N dated: 23.01.2026 for Proposed "Construction of New 750 Bedded Paediatric Super Specialty Hospital" at T.S.No.1 (Part), Block No.6 at Adyar Village, Guindy Taluk, and Chennai District, Tamil Nadu.		
The Environmental Clearance certificate issued by SEIAA, Tamil Nadu (State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority) is available in the official website of SEIAA, TN (PARIVESH) and clearance also available with the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Chennai (TNPBC).		
DIPR/123/DISPLAY/2026		
REGISTRAR (FAC)		

CHENNAI METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, CHENNAI - 600 008. AREA PLANS UNIT, RECLASSIFICATION DIVISION.

NOTIFICATION No. R1/01/2026

Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority(CMDA) has received the following applications for reclassification of land use and the details of the same are furnished below:

SI. No.	NAME & ADDRESS OF THE APPLICANT	CMDA REF. No.	SITE ADDRESS, SURVEY No, VILLAGE NAME, TALUK NAME & DISTRICT NAME	EXTENT OF THE SITE IN HECT. / SQ.M. / ACRE	LAND USE AS PER SECOND MASTER PLAN FOR CMA 2026	CHANGE OF LAND USE REQUESTED BY THE APPLICANT AND ITS PURPOSE	SI. No.	NAME & ADDRESS OF THE APPLICANT	CMDA REF. No.	SITE ADDRESS, SURVEY No, VILLAGE NAME, TALUK NAME & DISTRICT NAME	EXTENT OF THE SITE IN HECT. / SQ.M. / ACRE	LAND USE AS PER SECOND MASTER PLAN FOR CMA 2026	CHANGE OF LAND USE REQUESTED BY THE APPLICANT AND ITS PURPOSE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Tmt. R.Geetha and Thiru. K.Manikandan, No.18/6, Nainiappan Garden 2nd lane, Old Washermenpet, Chennai-600 021.	R2/0053/2025	Survey Nos. 290/2D1 and 290/2D2 of Sadayankuppam Village, Thiruvottiyur Taluk, Chennai District, Greater Chennai Corporation limit	0.24.50 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 0.6019 Ac. (as per document)	Primary Residential Use Zone	Industrial Use Zone to construct Small Scale Industry manufacturing Stainless Steel water bottles with 50 No. of workers and 100HP.	9	Thiru. M.Ravichandran 8/A, Perumal Kovil West Cross Street, Alapakkam, Porur, Chennai - 600 116.	R1/0178/2025	Survey Nos. 104/2D2, Soranjeri (Soranjeri A as per revenue records) Village and 235/2B, Vayalanallur Village, Poonamallee Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Poonamallee Panchayat Union limit	0.73.90 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 1.83 Ac. (as per document)	Partly Agricultural Use Zone and partly Non-Urban Use Zone	Residential Use Zone to develop a residential layout.
2	M/s. The Madras Medical Mission represented by Honorary Secretary, Dr.Jacob and others, No.4-A Dr.J Jayalalitha Nagar, Mogappair, Chennai – 600 037.	R2/0083/2025	Survey No. 130/1A1 & 130/2A, 132/1 and 133/1 of Nolambur Village, Maduravoyal Taluk, Chennai District, Greater Chennai Corporation limit.	1.77.79 Ha. (as per Patta)	Primary Residential Use Zone	Institutional Use Zone for construction of Nursing College and Hostel building.	10	Thiru. J. Senthil Kumar, Old Door No. 5, 6, and 7, New Door No. 17 and 19, Habibullah Road, T-Nagar, Chennai-600 017.	R2/0180/2025	T.S. Nos. 8421/1, 2, 3 and 8421/4, Block No. 109, T.Nagar Village, Guindy Taluk, Chennai District, Greater Chennai Corporation limit.	0.07.92 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 8,522 Sq.ft (as per document)	Primary Residential Use Zone	Commercial Use Zone to construct office building
3	M/s.The Trust Association of the Advent Christian Conference of India Private Limited rep. by its Secretary, Thiru.Panner Doss, No. 163,AAM Compound, Gandhi Salai, Velachery, Chennai-600 042.	R2/0092/2025	Survey No.340/1, Pallikkaranai Village, Sholinganallur Taluk, Chennai District, Greater Chennai Corporation limit.	0.37.65 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 0.93 Ac. (as per document)	Primary Residential Use Zone	Institutional Use Zone to construct church building.	11	Thiru Selvaraj Vanijinath GPA of Thiru.S.Krishnakumar, Plot No. 17, Selaiyur, Chengalpattu-600 073.	R1/0181/2025	Survey Nos. 252/2 and 252/3, Ottiyambakkam Village, Tambaran Taluk, Chengalpattu District, St. Thomas Mount Panchayat Union limit.	0.26.00 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 0.61 Ac. (as per document)	Agricultural Use Zone	Residential Use Zone to develop a residential layout
4	M/s. Transworld Terminals Pvt. Ltd., Door No. 235/3, 4 and 235/5, Mettu Street,Vichoor, Chennai-600 103.	R1/0139/2025	Survey No. 235/2, Vichoor Village, Ponneri Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Sholavaram Panchayat Union limit.	0.91.00 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 2.248 Ac. (as per document)	Agricultural Use Zone	Industrial Use Zone to construct plastic pipe manufacturing industry with 200 HP. and 15 No. of Workers.	12	M/s. City Lubricants Pvt. Ltd. represented by Thiru.Swaminathan Sankaran, No. 14, Thiruneermalai Road, Chromepet, Chennai – 600 044.	R2/0184/2025	Town Survey No. 16, Old S. No. 94/4B & 94/6, Block No.5, Ward – N. Pammal Village, Pallavaram Taluk, Chengalpattu District, Tambaram City Municipal Corporation limit.	1.45.485 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 3.44Ac (as per document)	Special and Industrial Use Zone	Commercial Use Zone to construct office and shopping complex
5	Thiru. G. Mohanal Choudhary and Tmt. M. Rekha Kumari, Door No. 44/30, Plot No. 1, Dewan Rama Road, Purasawalkam, Muttanamallee, Chennai-600 084.	R2/0156/2025	Plot Nos. 43 to 45, 66 to 68 forming part of regularised layout PPD/LO No. 1537/2019 comprised in Survey Nos. 146/1A5A, 12, 13 & 14/16/14, 148/2D1, 2E1, 15 and 148/16, Vadaperumbakkam Village, Madhavaram Taluk, Chennai District, Greater Chennai Corporation limit.	0.11.20 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 13,313 Sq.ft (as per document)	Plots forming part of regularised layout.	Industrial Use Zone to construct PVC insulated copper cable manufacturing industry with 200KW and 12 No. of workers.	13	Thiru.B.C.Vinay Krishna GPA of Tmt.S.Prema and 2 others, B-10, Garden of Hearts, SRCM Road, Manapakkam, Chennai - 600 125.	R1/0185/2025	Village, Kunrathur Taluk, Kancheerupuram District, Kunrathur Panchayat Union limit.	2.65.00 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 6.55 Ac. (as per document)	Partly Agricultural Use Zone and Partly Non Urban	Residential Use Zone to develop a residential layout.
6	M/s. B.T.Enterprises Private Limited represented by its Director, Thiru. Bala Arumugham, A-46, 1st floor, 3rd Avenue, Anna Nagar, Chennai-600 102.	R1/0169/2025	Plot Nos.1 to 8 forming part of approved Layout PPD/LO No. 173/1992 comprised in Survey Nos. 304/2 and 305/1B, Varadarajapuram Village, Poonamallee Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Poonamallee Panchayat Union limit.	0.22.00 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 24,204 Sq.ft. (as per document)	Plots forming part of approved layout PPD/LO No. 173/1992	Commercial Use Zone to construct office building.	14	Thiru.N.Prabhu Anand, Q-86, Firm Namaskar, Q- Block, 2nd Floor, 3rd Main Road, Chennai-600 040	R1/0187/2025	Survey No. 275 part, Mothirambedu village, (Survey No.278/2B, Korattur-B Village as per revenue records), Poonamallee Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Poonamallee Panchayat Union limit.	1.70.00 Ha. (as per Patta) (or) 4.20 Ac. (as per document)	Agricultural Use Zone	

From Page One

Triple murder: police recover woman's body from Perungudi dump

Sathyender was acquainted with Gaurav Kumar, who had approached him for a job. Gaurav Kumar had previously worked as a security guard at Sriperumbudur. The police said that on January 24, promising to arrange a job for him, Sathyender allowed Gaurav Kumar and his family to stay with him on the institute campus. Further investigation revealed that the other two accused – Lalit Yadav, 40, and Vikash Kumar, 24, also of Bihar – worked as a night-time watchman at the ICT and a watchman of an apartment complex at Kottivakkam respectively.

The police said that on the night of the incident (January 24), Gaurav Kumar, Sathyender, Lalit Yadav, and Vikash Kumar were consuming alcohol on the fourth floor of the building where Gaurav Kumar was staying. A quarrel broke out among them, and Sathyender, Lalit Yadav, and Vikash Kumar assaulted Gaurav Kumar, his wife, and their child with iron rods, killing them. The bodies were tied in gunny bags and dumped at different locations the same night. The police also secured CCTV footage showing two suspects transporting a body on a two-wheeler before dumping it.

Sathyender, Lalit Yadav, and Vikash Kumar were arrested and produced before a court on Thursday. The body of the child was recovered from the Buckingham Canal near Madhya Kailash. After being informed by the accused that the body of Gaurav Kumar's wife was dumped in a garbage bin near Modern Bread, Taramani, around 50 police personnel and 25 workers of the Chennai Corporation searched the Perungudi dump for her body. The police said the woman's body was in a decomposed state. It was sent to the Government Royapettah Hospital for a post-mortem. Doctors would determine the cause of death and examine whether she was sexually assaulted.

Gaurav Kumar's body was handed over to his elder brother, Sourav Kumar – a security guard at a sari showroom in Anna Nagar – who took it to their native village in Bihar for the last rites.

IN BRIEF



Association pays tributes to freedom fighters in Chennai

On the occasion of Martyrs' Day, the Tamil Nadu Suthanthira Poratta Veerargal Varisugal Nala Sangam on Friday paid tributes to freedom fighters, including Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, former Editor and Managing Director of *The Hindu*, in Chennai. Over 60 members of the association gathered at Jivana Jyoti on the ICSA premises in Egmore and paid tributes to the decorated portraits of hundreds of freedom fighters and journalists, including V.O. Chidambaram, Subramania Siva, Tiruppur Kumaran and Thiru. Vi. Kalayansundaram. The association also felicitated the heirs of freedom fighters.

50 years ago, on this day, a govt. was dismissed in T.N. for the first time

D. Suresh Kumar

CHENNAI

On the afternoon of January 31, 1976, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi convened a meeting of the Union Cabinet. The Internal Emergency proclaimed seven months ago, severely curtailing political and civil liberties in India, was still in force. Earlier that day, Tamil Nadu Governor K.K. Shah – who once even jocularly remarked his initials stood for Kalaignar Karunanidhi – had sent a lengthy report to the Union government.

Shah, in his report, said he was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which the government of the State could no longer be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. The government was headed by Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi.

The Cabinet recommended the acceptance of Shah's report. That night, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed issued a Proclamation under Article 356 of the Constitution, dissolving the Tamil Nadu As-

sembly and placing the State under President's Rule. The State government headed by Karunanidhi was "deemed to have vacated office" following the Presidential Proclamation.

Governor's report

"This is the first time that Tamil Nadu has been brought under President's Rule. Though the five-year term of the State Assembly was due to expire on March 21, the Centre has taken this action to dissolve it because of the serious situation that has arisen in the State in terms of the Governor's report," *The Hindu*'s New Delhi Correspondent G.K. Reddy reported on the front page of its edition dated February 1, 1976.

"The Governor is understood to have reported that the DMK government had indulged in serious acts of maladministration, corruption and misuse of power for partisan ends, setting at naught all canons of justice and equity, which were the hallmark of any democratic adminis-



Voicing dissent: DMK, Congress (O), Swatantra, and Jan Sangh cadre receiving Jayaprakash Narayan when he arrives at the Madras Central Station from Vijayawada in 1975; (right) M. Karunanidhi staging a protest against the Emergency rule, on Mount Road in Madras (now Chennai). THE HINDU ARCHIVES

tration. He also complained that the DMK administration had disregarded the instructions of the Central government in relation to the Emergency, while misusing the Emergency powers for its own purposes. Under the guise of demanding greater autonomy, he pointed out that the DMK had been encouraging secessionist activities in the State," the report said.

Soon, the Commissioner of Police, Madras, issued a prohibitory order ban-

ning meetings, demonstrations, processions and assembly in the capital city for a period of 14 days. The order would not apply to functions relating to worship, marriage or funeral. The Home Guards were called out.

MGR hails move

M.G. Ramachandran, the general secretary of the ADMK (as AIADMK was known then) hailed the "courageous" action of the Prime Minister in dismissing the "corrupt DMK Go-

vernment." "Our party would support the Prime Minister in any of her actions such as this to safeguard democracy in the country," he said in a press statement. He also urged the Centre to institute a Commission of Inquiry into the charges of corruption.

In Vellore, on hearing about the government's dismissal, ADMK MP G. Viswanathan (now VIT chancellor) took out a procession from the party of the Municipal office

and garlanded the statue of former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai and distributed sweets to the public.

Karunanidhi, however, said the people of Tamil Nadu were staunch believers in Gandhian and Annadurai's ideals. He urged them to maintain peace. He thanked the people and government officials for the cooperation extended to the DMK government during the past nine years.

One-man commission

On February 3, the Centre announced the appointment of Justice R.S. Sarkaria, a judge of the Supreme Court, as one-man Commission of Inquiry to inquire into the allegations against Karunanidhi and some members of the erstwhile DMK Ministry.

The Central government appointed P.K. Dave, Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum, and R.V. Subramanian, Secretary of the Department of Power in the Ministry of Energy, as Advisers to the Governor in administering the State.

The general expectation in Delhi is that a spell

Govt. doctors' body launches next phase of protests

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

With no progress on their long-pending demands, the Federation of Government Doctors Associations (FOGDA) began the next phase of its protests by launching a non-cooperation movement on Friday.

The demands include a review of G.O. 354 related to pay and promotions,

and grant of ₹3,000 allowance to Primary Health Centre medical officers.

In a letter to the Health Secretary, the FOGDA said that during the meeting with the Health Secretary and Special Secretary of the Finance Department regarding pay, allowances, and promotion demands on January 19, the government had promised to take a decision at the earliest.

The FOGDA had already announced a series of protests, starting with a 48-hour token fast from January 28, to draw the attention of the Chief Minister to the issue, but in vain.

The federation said it would begin the protests on Friday by boycotting biometric attendance in all directorates, exiting official WhatsApp groups, and boycotting the conduct of theory and clinical classes for medical and paramedical students.

CM denies charges of dynasty politics, graft, anti-Hindu bias

Anyone can enter politics. But they can win only if they appear before the people and gain their confidence. So the charge of dynasty politics is levelled only by those who could not work on the ground, Stalin says at NDTV Tamil Nadu Summit

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Friday rejected the allegations of dynasty politics, corruption, and anti-Hindu bias levelled against the DMK.

Participating in the NDTV Tamil Nadu Summit in Chennai, he also reiterated his charge that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the State had no principles, and was merely an "alliance of betrayal" forged by "compulsions" and due to the "selfishness of a few people".

Rejecting the allegation of dynasty politics, Mr. Stalin said, "Anyone can enter politics. But they can win only if they appear before the people, gain their confidence, and secure their votes. So this [charge] is levelled only by those who could not work on the ground."

As for the allegation of corruption, Mr. Stalin asked, "Has anyone ever produced any evidence for this?" He went on to ask the BJP, "All those who are with you [in the alliance] are corrupt. The AIADMK [some individuals associat-



All those who are with you [in the NDA alliance] are corrupt. The AIADMK [some individuals in the party] is the one that was punished in a case that went up to the Supreme Court. When you [the BJP] were not in an alliance with them, you listed several corruption charges against them!

M.K. STALIN
Chief Minister

ed with the party] is the one that was punished in a case that went up to the Supreme Court. When you [the BJP] were not in an alliance with them [the AIADMK], you listed several corruption charges against them! Have you made them 'white' with your 'washing machine'?"

Denying the allegation that the DMK was an "anti-Hindu party", Mr. Stalin said the reality proved otherwise. Surpassing any other States ruled by the BJP, the Tamil Nadu government had completed *kudamuzhukku* (consecration) at 4,000 temples during the 1,730 days of the DMK in office. "The real

denied why the BJP was granting funds to States ruled by the party and not to Tamil Nadu, which suffered natural disasters, too. He asked, "When would approval be

granted for the proposals for the Coimbatore and Madurai Metro Rail projects." The Chief Minister further said, "The BJP should realise that India is a Union of States."

Junior partners'

At a discussion on 'What Next for Tamil Nadu?' with NDTV's Rahul Kanwal and T.M. Veeraraghavan, N. Ram, Director, The Hindu Group, shared his opinions on the political situation in the State. National parties such as the Congress and the BJP were "junior partners" in their alliances with the DMK and the AIADMK respectively, he said.

The political parties that came from the Dravidian movement did not use religion for political mobilisation, Mr. Ram pointed out. He recalled former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's statement that Mr. Stalin was the definition of hard work (*Stalin endral uzhai-pu*) and said, "It is true, and I have observed it."

On actor-turned-politician Vijay and his party Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), Mr. Ram said there was no doubt that he drew support from young people and he would get more

votes than late actor-turned-politician Vijayakanth. However, he also maintained that Mr. Vijay "has no experience in politics" and "does not have people on the ground".

Responding to a question on the BJP, he said the national party had recovered the ground lost earlier. "Maybe not in Uttar Pradesh, but certainly in Maharashtra," he said. As for the Congress, Mr. Ram said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was brave and he had to commit himself to the welfare of his party.

Equity, access

At a discussion on 'The Dravidian Economic Model-Is it Really Unique?' with economist Surjit Bhalla, Minister Palanivel Thiagaraja Rajan emphasised the significance of inclusivity, equity, and access. He also recalled specific interventions since the 1920s and said they had helped in the development of the State.

Minister T.R.B. Rajaa, during a chat on 'Inclusive Development and Industrial Growth: Has Tamil Nadu Struck a Balance?', listed the steps taken by the government in the industrial sector.

Stalin unveils Gandhi-Jeevanandham statue, inaugurates memorial hall

The Hindu Bureau
SIVAGANGA

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin unveiling the statue of Mahatma Gandhi and Communist leader P. Jeevanandham at the newly inaugurated memorial hall at Siravayal in Sivaganga on Friday. L. BALACHANDAR

he asked, 'What assets do you possess?' Jeeva replied, 'The motherland is my only asset.' To this, Gandhi remarked, 'You are the asset of India.'

Additionally, he announced that following a request from CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam, a statue of Karl Marx would be unveiled at the Con-

nemara Public Library in Chennai on February 6.

Mr. Stalin further said that the memorial was designed to function not only as a monument but also as a marriage hall.

Following the inauguration, he took part in the centenary celebrations of Kundrakudi Adigalar and paid floral tributes to his statue.

Ministers K.K.S.S.R. Ramachandran, Thangam Thennarasu, K.R. Periaruppan, and M.P. Sami-nathan, MLA A. Tamilaraasi, Mr. Shanmugam, CPI State secretary M. Veera-pandian, and Sivaganga Collector K. Porkodi were present at the event.

BJP begins gathering public opinion for election manifesto

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs L. Murugan and the BJP Tamil Nadu president Nainar Nagenthiran on Friday launched a drive to seek public opinion for drafting the party's manifesto for the coming Assembly election.

Billed as 'Makkalukkaga Makkalidamirundhu' (for the people, from the people), the BJP's manifesto will be drafted by a 13-member committee led by senior leader Tamilisai Soundararajan. The leaders launched the drive by placing suggestion boxes and flagged off vehicles that will tour Assembly constituencies to elicit opinions from the public.

Dr. Soundararajan, BJP national in-charge for Tamil Nadu Aravind Menon, and senior party leaders were present. In a post on X, Mr. Nagenthiran alleged that the law and order situation in the State had worsened under DMK rule.

"Is there any law and order in the State or was it buried? There is no safety in the State capital and even in rural areas," he said, referring to the incident in which a farmer was set on fire by a gang in Cuddalore.



of President's Rule in Tamil Nadu would do a lot of good by reviving its old reputation for efficient administration. The choice of the two Advisers clearly indicates the Centre's desire to concentrate on the implementation of the economic programmes, while maintaining law and order in the State," a report in *The Hindu* said.

It said, according to reports reaching Delhi, the two Advisers took over in Madras soon after the President signed the Proclamation. "They lost no time in coming to grips with the law and order situation to ensure a smooth switch over from the DMK administration to the Centre's," the report said.

One-man commission

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there was an increasing "Brahmin Flavour" to the State government under the President's rule.

According to a Kissinger-era WikiLeaks' U.S. cable – that became public in April 2013 – Murahari, who made several trips to Tamil Nadu, had warned then Congress president D.K. Barooah and Union Minister of State for Home Om Mehta about this. "They agreed that it had been an error to send two Brahmin advisers," Murahari had told the diplomat, referring to Dave and Subramanian. Murahari had claimed due to reshuffling of IAS officers, 12 of the 14 Government Secretaries and 80 per cent of District Collectors were Brahmins. He felt Subramanian was "consciously working in this direction." Even local Congress (R) leaders were disgruntled over this.

The U.S. Consul General, while acknowledging the tilt in favour of Brahmin officers, had, however, informed the American Embassy in New Delhi that Murahari's views could not be accepted "in total".

M CH-CHE

IN BRIEF



Plaint against Karnataka BJP over defamatory post on X

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee legal team has filed a complaint against the State BJP's X account, alleging that it circulated defamatory content targeting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. The account allegedly shared a poster featuring the Chief Minister and other Ministers with the caption "Scam Lord". The post used terms such as "loot" and "scam" to mislead the public, the complainant noted.

A.P. rejects proposal to share Krishna water on 50:50 basis

The A.P. government firmly rejected Telangana's demand for a 50:50 sharing of the Krishna water, stating that the proposal was contrary to the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal awards. It also asserted that the proposed diversion of 200 tmcft of flood and surplus water from Polavaram project will not harm the upper riparian States, while urging the Central Water Commission to issue norms on the allocation of the remaining waters in the Krishna and Godavari river basins.

ED restores properties worth ₹2.55 cr. to PNB in fraud case

The Directorate of Enforcement has completed the process of restitution of five attached immovable properties valued at about ₹2.55 crore to Punjab National Bank (PNB). The properties relate to a money laundering case against Ghanshyamdas Gems and Jewels and its managing partner Sanjay Agarwal. The FIR alleges that Mr. Agarwal induced State Bank of India (SBI) to release 250 kg of gold using forged bank guarantees purportedly issued by PNB.

CPI(M) says Centre in the dark on Kerala rail project

The Hindu Bureau

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) Kerala secretariat on Friday said the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government has received no indication that the Centre will grant sanction for the high-speed railway proposed by 'Metroman' E. Sreedharan.

CPI(M) State secretary M.V. Govindan said Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had told the State government that he was unaware of Mr. Sreedharan's claim that the Centre would sanction the latter's detailed proposal within a fortnight.

Mr. Govindan said Kerala needed a mass rapid transport rail system that provided fast connectivity between Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod. "The CPI(M) is serious and open-minded about any proposal that would resolve the State's connectivity issue. Mr. Sreedharan says his railway project will reduce the travel time between the southern and northern tips of Kerala to four hours," he said.

On K-Rail

Mr. Govindan rejected Mr. Sreedharan's scepticism about the Rapid Railway Transport System proposed in the State Budget. Mr. Sreedharan also denied that he had scuttled the K-Rail scheme, saying he had merely raised doubts about the project's practicality.

Mr. Govindan said: "Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) joined hands to derail K-Rail, sacrificing Kerala's development at the altar of politics".

Prominent builder dies amid Income Tax searches at office

Confident Group founder C.J. Roy shot himself in the chest with a pistol, Bengaluru police say; a team of I-T sleuths from Kerala were conducting raids against the group for the past few days

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

CJ. Roy, 57, chairman of Confident Group, a real estate firm with a presence in Bengaluru, Kerala and Dubai, allegedly shot himself to death at his Langford Town office in the city while Income Tax search and seizure operations were under way at the premises on Friday.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh described it as a "self shooting incident".

He said the police were informed of the incident at around 3.15 p.m.

According to the police, I-T sleuths questioned Roy in the afternoon, following which he went to the ad-



Ground zero: Police officers at the Confident Pentagon building in Bengaluru on Friday. J. ALLEN EGUNZE

joining room, saying he would call his mother.

Minutes later, a gunshot was heard. People in the office and Income Tax officials rushed to his room and found he had shot himself in the chest with a pistol.

They rushed him to Na-

rayana Hospital in HSR Layout, but he was declared "brought dead".

Raids intensify

Raids were on against the group for the past three days by the Income Tax Department, Kerala Region.

There were also raids on the group over a month ago and the ongoing raids on Friday were a follow-up, sources said.

Forensic and ballistic teams of the Bengaluru City Police have collected evidence and recovered the pistol and CCTV footage from the office corridors apart from other evidence, sources said.

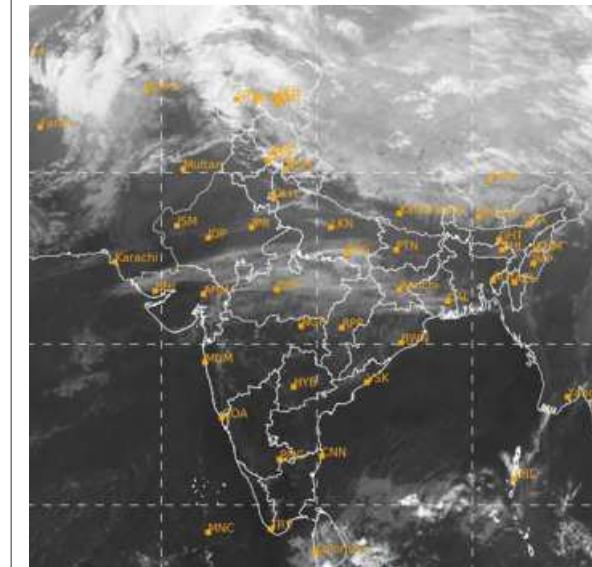
Mr. Singh said the deceased's family was based out of Dubai and they would reach the city by Saturday, and a case would be booked based on their complaint.

The Income Tax Department has not made any public statement.

(For those in distress, counselling is available at TeleMANAS-14416)

WEATHER WATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD; POLLUTION DATA: CPCB; MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.45 HRS)

Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning & gusty winds likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Muzaffarabad. Dense fog likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Bihar, Sikkim, West Bengal, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	27.9	13.5	4	Kozhikode	32.0	24.7	
Ahmedabad	28.0	15.9		Kurnool	32.8	20.2	
Atizawl	28.2	11.0		Lucknow	20.3	11.9	
Allahabad	21.4	11.6		Madurai	33.0	19.6	
Bengaluru	28.9	16.6		Mangalore	33.3	22.5	
Bhopal	24.6	9.8		Mumbai	33.4	22.0	
Bhubaneswar	30.0	17.1		Mysuru	30.4	17.0	
Chandigarh	22.2	7.7		New Delhi	22.6	7.7	
Chennai	30.3	20.3		Patna	21.3	14.0	
Coimbatore	31.4	19.0		Port Blair	30.6	25.2	
Dehradun	24.8	9.2		Puducherry	28.4	20.3	
Gangtok	17.2	7.3		Pune	32.0	20.9	
Goa	32.2	21.8		Raipur	30.3	17.4	
Guwahati	27.0	19.0		Ranchi	25.5	15.0	
Hubballi	32.0	17.0		Shillong	16.5	6.1	
Hyderabad	29.2	19.1		Shimla	17.6	5.2	
Imphal	24.1	7.7		Srinagar	10.0	1.3	
Jaipur	23.1	10.0		Thiruvananthapuram	34.6	22.4	
Kochi	31.4	24.4		Tiruchi	30.7	19.6	
Kohima	18.0	7.8		Vijayawada	29.4	20.2	
Kolkata	26.6	17.5		Visakhapatnam	29.8	21.3	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.84	.74	50	122	155	■
Bengaluru	.5	.21	37	174	170	■
Chennai	.14	.11	253	113	239	■
Delhi	.11	.23	71	323	239	■
Hyderabad	.9	.38	56	135	127	■
Kolkata	.6	.127	49	215	162	■
Lucknow	.6	.33	64	150	288	■
Mumbai	.22	.92	55	119	142	■
Pune	—	.32	35	275	190	■
Visakhapatnam	.11	.88	18	253	229	■

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 303 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 166.

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

SO₂: 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.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.

Diaspora crucial to Kerala's development'

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said that Kerala must be re-envisioned as 'Global Kerala' by fully integrating the State's expatriate population into its development process.

Emphasising the need for collective participation in building a 'new Kerala', he said resident and non-resident Keralites played an equally important role in shaping Kerala's society, culture and future.

Inaugurating the fifth Loka Kerala Sabha on Friday, he pointed out that India, like China, had one of the largest expatriate populations, and added that meaningful engagement with the diaspora would significantly contribute to national growth. Practical policy measures would be more effective than symbolic events such as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, he said.

Drawing attention to China's 'Chunhui Programme' designed to encourage Chinese talent abroad to return home, the Chief Minister said the return and participation of overseas professionals was crucial in strengthening knowledge-based industries.

Future-proofing

Similar proposals had emerged at the platform and suggested that diaspora-driven knowledge and innovation projects could be included in Kerala's 15th Five-Year Plan beginning in 2027-28. According to him, among the 28 proposals se-

lected from the previous Loka Kerala Sabha, 10 had been implemented, 13 were under various stages of implementation, and five referred to the External Affairs Ministry.

He also listed the initiatives adopted by the State government, including the Pravasi Mission set up to focus on the economic reintegration of return migrants, decentralised NORKA (nodal agency for non-resident Keralites) services, and rehabilitation planning.

'Make SIT report on Dharmasthala case public'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Senior BJP member and former Karnataka Minister S. Suresh Kumar on Friday demanded that the report of the special investigation team (SIT) that probed the alleged mass burial case at Dharmasthala be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Speaking during the discussion on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address to the State legislature, Mr. Kumar sought details of the probe and questioned the delay in making the report public.

The investigation has been completed, but the report has not been presented yet. Should the image of Dharmasthala continue to be tarnished? The report must be placed before the House," he said.

Question of faith

Mr. Kumar said the Sri Manjunatha Swamy temple and its deity were a source of faith for lakhs of devotees. He alleged that vested interests were attempting to tarnish the reputation of the holy place through campaigns on social media and urged the government to disclose the SIT findings to restore public confidence.

Mr. Kumar also criticised the Congress government, alleging that people in the State were fed up with the power struggle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar.

"They have entertained the people without collecting entertainment tax," he remarked, and called upon the government to introspect its performance over the past two years.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



We regret to inform the passing of **Mrs MINAKSHI PATTABHIRAMAN (93)**

on the 22nd January 2026.

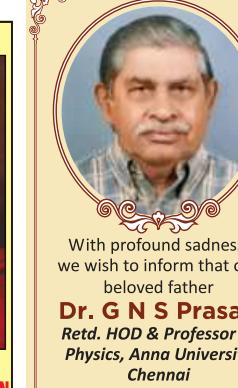
Deeply mourned by

Bhavani & Kumar, Chikka & Ramya,

Grandchildren, Great Grandchildren,

Siblings and their Family.

DEATH





A job well done

The Survey has laid out an ambitious economic and governance plan

Through his Economic Survey 2025-26, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anand Nageswaran has once again shown the value of level-headed analysis while eschewing sensationalism. With the global economy in flux and the Indian economy displaying stability, the need of the day is pointed analysis of current data for future policy. In this, the Survey has delivered. It has charted out a broad framework for a medium-term economic and governance strategy, highlighting the concept of an 'entrepreneurial state' that is more risk-taking, agile, and willing to experiment. The CEA is pushing for a forward-looking dynamic shift to policymaking that is willing to fail and learn in the quest for much-needed growth acceleration. Now past the turbulent COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to look ahead with policy filling the economy's sails. The Survey acknowledges that this will not be easy. Indeed, it assigns a 10%-20% probability to the global economy, in 2026, descending into a crisis worse than that in 2008. Even its best-case scenario is a worsening of conditions as they were in 2025. Yet, the Survey does paint a favourable picture of India's economy, backed with facts and figures. It also does not shy away from pointing out some emerging risks and developing problems.

At the macro level, it points out that the falling rupee does not reflect India's economic fundamentals, and the depreciation is due in large part to capital flowing to countries with more developed AI industries and to safe-haven assets. A weak rupee is good for exporters, but India predominantly depends on imports – and those have become more expensive. If trade negotiations have revealed anything, it is that India is not strategically vital to any merchandise supply chain. To address this and other structural weaknesses, the Survey outlines an ambitious plan to focus on strategic resilience and, eventually, develop "strategic indispensability". It also argues for greater fiscal flexibility for the Centre to address geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainties, but, simultaneously, cautions States against fiscal populism. The reasoning is clear: while the Centre has managed to more than halve its fiscal deficit ratio in five years, an increasing number of States have fallen into revenue deficits in this period. This cannot be ignored, despite the political attractiveness of unconditional cash transfers. It is noteworthy that four major States go for elections this year, only one of which is currently led by the BJP. The Survey points out several other emerging problems, such as the impact of ethanol production on food security, the real costs of the ongoing shift to renewable energy, the lack of adequate fodder, and, not insignificantly, the impact of "compulsive scrolling" on smartphones. Each of these merits attention, and the Survey has done its job well by highlighting them.

Stay the course

Equity rules may need modifications, but they are essential

In Thursday, the Supreme Court of India stayed the University Grants Commission (UGC)'s Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions rules, calling them "too sweeping". Notified in January, the rules sought to address all forms of discrimination, in particular caste-based, on campuses after years of activism, litigation and tragic suicides such as Rohith Vemula that shocked the nation's conscience. The Court had mandated the UGC to draw up these rules. The 2012 UGC framework on this issue had been almost completely ignored by HEIs. Caste and caste-based discrimination is a persisting reality and addressing it should be a political, social and educational priority. Many students have faced it, leaving lifelong scars, and sometimes ruining lives. UGC figures show that the number of such complaints in HEIs has more than doubled in the last five years. The draft rules were made public last year for discussion and the rules have been notified with changes. There is a case that the new rules are a dilution of the 2012 framework that identified many more and pressing forms of discrimination, and had separate sections that dealt with problems faced by SC/ST students such as not fulfilling reservation norms. But what is different is that the new rules seek to implement the setting up of equal opportunity centres, equity committees, equity helplines and squads, and time bound complaint resolution through better monitoring, oversight and representation in the inquiry committees. An HEI's non-compliance with these rules can invite UGC action, potentially bolstering compliance.

Campuses in parts of northern India have seen protests against the new rules on two counts. The rules defend caste-based discrimination as only those against SC/STs and OBCs, and there is no provision for action against false complaints. At one level, the former may seem unfair to general category students who appear to have been denied recourse. Though it is self-evident that caste-based discrimination is almost exclusively against lower castes, the Court could consider leaving out the explicit definition. This may mar the political signalling in the context of what led to the original Court directive but could be considered so as to achieve the overall goal of the new rules. Also, the draft rules of 2025 offered provisions for addressing false complaints. Putting them back in could have a chilling effect on complainants from marginalised sections. But a solution could ensure that only complaints proven to be motivated to frame someone were actionable, not all complaints that were merely unable to prove discrimination.

Green steel can shape India's climate goals trajectory

India stands at a defining moment. Last year, while addressing COP30 delegates in Belém, Brazil, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav committed the country to submit a revised, more ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). This is an opportunity for the country to position itself as a leader – not just with a revised pledge, but with clear plans for the economy-wide decarbonisation needed to meet it, including in those sectors that are hardest to decarbonise.

No industry is more critical here than steel.

A chance to lead

As one of the largest growing economies, the steel sector is the cornerstone of India's growth, driving infrastructure and industrial development. In fact, to reach the country's latent potential, steel production would need to more than triple from the current approximately 125 million tonnes a year to more than 400 million tonnes by mid-century. This is unprecedented growth in the given time and will surely come at a cost. The sector accounts for around 12% of the country's carbon emissions today, largely due to its continued reliance on coal.

Much like other emerging economies, India faces a twin challenge of ensuring continued development, while meeting long-term climate targets.

Vital to achieving both of these goals will be avoiding locking in high carbon infrastructure. The investments made in the steel sector today will determine the long-term outlook of the steel industry. Absence of ambition on the transition could lock in billions of dollars of carbon inefficient technologies. This would not only be environmentally disastrous but also render the Indian economy unattractive in the medium to long term.

Global markets have spoken. Around the world, we are seeing countries take important strides to transition the steel sector. China, for example, is slated to ramp up its scrap-based secondary steel making production and investment in green hydrogen to reduce reliance on coal in steel making.

Meanwhile, the European Union has been on the de-carbonising journey for around two decades. Its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is driving the shift to cleaner steel making for those exporting steel to the region.

Countries unable to demonstrate low-carbon production will face steep border charges, risk losing access to premium export markets and being called out as laggards in energy transition that the world really needs to make. Early movers in green steel will secure a decisive competitive advantage. India's steel sector cannot afford to



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delay. These warnings have long been noted by India's steel sector, which is already taking steps in the right direction. Tata Steel has piloted injection of hydrogen in blast furnaces, scaled renewable power purchase agreements, and explored carbon capture solutions. Meanwhile, JSW Steel and JSPL are exploring green hydrogen integration, while the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) is modernising blast furnaces and exploring low-carbon production routes.

This change has been driven from the very top of companies. It requires bold strategic choices and sustained investment in innovation. And while this progress is important, the sector can and should be doing more.

It must move quickly from pilots to demonstration plants, and then to full-scale near zero technologies. Small- and medium-steel manufacturers also have to adapt to the reality of climate emergency by adopting best available technologies and raw materials to produce more carbon efficient steel.

The sector should no longer be investing in business-as-usual high carbon intensive blast furnace technology. All new capacity needs to be low to near zero carbon, as soon as possible.

Policy progress so far

Making these bold moves requires responsible executives and boards to have confidence in the trajectory of the sector. This is where consistent policy signals to guide long-term industrial planning come into play.

India has made important strides to set direction for the steel sector. The release of the government's Greening Steel Roadmap in September last year set a practical pathway for the sector's decarbonisation. This publication of Green Steel Taxonomy in December 2024 made India the first country to formalise such a definition. The National Green Hydrogen Mission, expanding renewable capacity and carbon emission intensity targets for 253 steel units under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), demonstrates momentum.

Yet, a year on from the Taxonomy launch, the policy incentives to really shift investment away from coal-based blast furnaces are yet to materialise and India risks being the only country to continue to add expensive age-old technologies in its economy.

The barriers to green steel are significant but solvable: limited supply and the high cost of green hydrogen; insufficient renewable energy dedicated to industry; limited availability and the informal nature of the scrap market in India; consistent and assured availability of reasonably priced natural gas as the transition fuel; identification and development of natural carbon sinks for sequestration; lack of long-maturity, low-cost debt for green steel projects and the

need to de-risk them; and the need for workforce upskilling and technology support. Many of these are challenges of policy and investment, areas where India has demonstrated rapid transformation when it wanted to, as seen in renewable energy over the past decade.

To seize this opportunity, we need the government to act as a fair regulator for the sector and set clear, stringent short-, medium- and long-term carbon emission targets for industry to plan its capital investments. This would include rolling out the carbon price regime at the earliest, which would provide an appropriate mechanism for dispersing this cost of green steel through the value chain.

In Europe we have seen that near zero emission technologies could become viable only after the carbon price reached \$90-\$100 a tonne of CO₂. India can learn from this experience when it comes to scheduling its own carbon emission targets.

We need to see the Green Steel Taxonomy socialised well, creation of a domestic market through a public procurement policy for green steel and promotion of greener products with appropriate certification mechanisms and labelling in place.

Natural gas will be a transition fuel for the steel industry as it moves towards hydrogen-based production. The government needs to make natural gas availability for the steel sector a priority. Companies would find it difficult to afford infrastructure for green electricity, green hydrogen or pipelines for natural gas or pipelines for evacuation of captured CO₂ on their own. The government needs to set up hubs in key areas for development of green steel where costs of this infrastructure can be shared.

With low-carbon manufacturing capacities having a capital intensity which is approximately 30% to 50% higher, these policies are expedient and become urgent in the Indian paradigm. Steel producers may need some fiscal support too, to make this transition possible. The smaller players will definitely need some additional support to ensure that the transition is equitable.

A strategic imperative

Green steel can no longer be optional. It is central to India's climate goals, economic future, and global leadership in sustainable industrialisation. India has already demonstrated global leadership in renewable energy deployment, climate diplomacy, and clean-tech scaling. Steel is now the next frontier: a critical test and an unprecedented opportunity.

By combining decisive corporate action with a robust, market-aligned policy framework, India can decarbonise steel, secure economic competitiveness, and shape global industrial standards.

Locking in billions of dollars in carbon inefficient technologies will be environmentally disastrous and harm the Indian economy.



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At the core of constitutional governance lies what English jurist A.V. Dicey famously described as the rule of law, a doctrine premised on the absence of arbitrary power, equality before the law, and the central role of independent courts as sentinels of rights. In Dicey's conception, the law exists to restrain authority, with courts serving as the institutional bridge between power and liberty. It is precisely this equilibrium that the PCA unsettsles.

By diluting the Supreme Court's position as the final arbiter of constitutional questions and vesting that authority in a newly-constituted FCC, the PCA risks weakening institutional independence. Courts, in Dicey's framework, are not mere forums for adjudication but constitutional guardians tasked with keeping executive power within bounds.

The federal constitutional court question

It is in this constitutional light that Pakistan's creation of the FCC warrants scrutiny. While specialised courts are not inherently problematic, removing constitutional adjudication from the Supreme Court unsettles a balance that was carefully restored by the 18th Constitutional Amendment. It sought to depoliticise judicial appointments by strengthening the Judicial Commission of Pakistan and also insulated the judiciary from executive dominance.

What is more troubling is the scope that it creates for executive influence over the FCC's composition and functioning. Constitutional courts derive legitimacy from independence, not mere existence. When constitutional interpretation is shifted to a newly constituted forum that is vulnerable to executive preferences, judicial review risks becoming an extension of power.

In early 17th century England, King James I asserted that, as sovereign, he could personally adjudicate disputes. This claim was firmly resisted by Sir Edward Coke, then Chief Justice, who declared that the king was subject to the law and could not sit in judgment. Coke's refusal to allow royal intrusion into judicial proceedings

marked a defining moment in constitutional history.

This episode established a principle that continues to animate modern constitutional democracies, that is judicial authority must remain independent of executive will. Courts cannot function as neutral arbiters if they operate under the shadow of political power. The struggle between Coke and James I was not merely personal. It was foundational, affirming that the rule of law requires courts to be insulated, even from well-intentioned rulers.

Why it matters for India

The latter half of the 20th century marked the birth of new nations, as societies emerging from colonial and monarchical pasts embraced written constitutions and republican governance. Constitutional texts became instruments of restraint, designed to bind power. The 21st century, however, presents a more unsettling picture. Across regions, republics are increasingly reshaping their constitutions not to deepen democratic guarantees but to legitimise concentration of power.

The PCA reflects this troubling shift. By reconfiguring judicial authority under the shadow of executive influence, it risks transforming the Constitution from a shield into a tool of governance. In inter-war Europe of the 1930s, democratic breakdown did not occur through abrupt coups but through formally valid legal changes that steadily hollowed out institutions. Power was acquired electorally, and then consolidated by rewriting constitutional checks in the name of stability and necessity.

For India, the lesson is not one of comparison, but of caution. Constitutional democracy does not survive on text alone but on the continued independence of courts, respect for institutional boundaries, and a shared commitment to restraint. How republics treat their Constitutions today will determine whether this century is remembered for democratic renewal, or for the quiet dismantling of the spirit of constitution from within.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Censorship and democracy

The order remanding the issue of grant of censor certificate to the film *Jana Nayagan* will only further delay its release. Apart from the producers of the film being hurt, people too would lose an opportunity to get to know what the film is all about. Freedom of expression, particularly in movies, is important for the dissemination of ideas and views. It is a right guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. The landmark judgment of the Supreme Court, in *S. Rangarajan vs P. Jagjivan Ram* (1989), emphasises in more than one place that

freedom of expression cannot be suppressed on account of threats of violence. The Court further held that such an act would "tantamount to negation of the rule of law and a surrender to blackmail and intimidation. It is the duty of the state to protect the freedom of expression since

it is a liberty guaranteed by the State." Though a reasonable restriction can be placed under Article 19(2), it cannot supersede the right itself. The way the situation is going about, it appears as if the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression is subordinate to

the restrictions imposed upon it.
N.G.R. Prasad,
Chennai

Legends never quit
Novak Djokovic has done it again after four hours and nine minutes of tennis that pushed his body and mind to the limit. It was a

testament to resilience, focus, and relentless determination. In those high-pressure moments, Djokovic did not just survive. He thrived.

A.P. Thiruvadi,
Chennai

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

GROUND ZERO



Students protesting against the 2026 UGC regulations at Delhi University. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Cracks on campus

Students from the general category or upper castes believe that the UGC's 2026 regulations, introduced mainly to address caste discrimination on campuses, will create a divide and villainise them. They worry about several of its provisions, including the lack of protection against false complaints. While the Supreme Court has stayed the regulations, anger has not yet subsided, report **Abhinay Lakshman** and **Mayank Kumar**

On a crisp January morning, 22-year-old Amit Mishra from Ballia, a first-year student at Lucknow University, marched from the faculty of law to gate number 3 of the campus – a 3-kilometre walk. He was joined by 60 others. The banners they carried did not bear logos of political parties or student unions or associations.

The students had come together to protest the 2026 regulations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), a statutory body that regulates higher education in India. Called the Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026, these rules were introduced primarily to address caste discrimination on campuses across the country.

As protests at the university picked up, demonstrations against the UGC's new regulations intensified – not only in parts of Uttar Pradesh, but in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand as well. Claiming that the regulations would “divide” campuses along caste lines and “villainise general category students,” the agitators demanded that they be rolled back immediately.

“We cannot permit the future of our upcoming generations to be jeopardised,” Mishra said.

What the new regulations say

The 2026 UGC regulations, notified in early January, replaced the version in effect since 2012. In the new regulations, the UGC, for the first time, introduced the term ‘caste-based discrimination,’ defining it as discrimination on the basis of only caste or tribe against members of “Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)”. This was also the first time that the UGC was explicitly protecting OBC students from caste discrimination. The representation of OBC students on campuses has been rising ever since reservations for the category were introduced in higher education in 2006 and operationalised in the subsequent years.

The UGC introduced this term, along with stricter provisions for grievance redressal mechanisms and institutional accountability, to address concerns that the previous regulations had been inadequate. In 2019, the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi – students from marginalised caste and tribal backgrounds, who had died by suicide in 2016 and 2019, respectively, alleging caste discrimination – had approached the Supreme Court. They had emphasised that it was essential to revisit the 2012 regulations.

After seven years of hearings in the Supreme Court, the UGC notified the new regulations on January 13, 2026. Immediately, protests broke out. Students belonging to the general category principally took issue with the definition of ‘caste-based discrimination’ and the removal, from the final draft, of provisions to act against complaints believed to be false. They argued that the UGC’s definition of caste-based discrimination made clear who could be a potential victim. This, they claimed, discriminated against “general category” or “upper caste” students by leaving them out of its scope. Several leaders from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also opposed the regulations.

Petitions were filed in the Supreme Court of India, challenging these aspects of the 2026 regulations. On the 16th day of the agitation, a Bench led by the Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya

I entered DU with a score of over 80%. I was told I had ‘gobbled up a seat’ because I had availed myself of SC reservation.

ANIKET GAUTAM
Student
Delhi University

Kant, stayed the regulations, calling for the UGC to revert to the 2012 rules.

But by this time, the regulations and the discourse around them had already exposed a crack inside campuses along caste lines. Widening for over a decade, this crack simply culminated in a flashpoint this January.

Rising anger

One morning, outside the Delhi University (DU) Arts Faculty building in north Delhi, students shouted, “*Tum jaatiavat se todoge, hum rashtravad se jodenge* (You break us with casteism, we will unite us through nationalism)”. With more than a dozen officers of the Delhi Police keeping watch from across the road, students, mostly men studying law, began gathering at the gate. One of them held up a copy of the new regulations, explaining why these should be protested.

Naveen Pandey, a third-year LLB student at DU’s Law Centre 1, pointed to the definition of caste-based discrimination in a copy of the new regulations. “Does the UGC mean to say that caste discrimination is always going to be committed by general category students?” he asked. “Are they saying that general category students do not face caste discrimination?”

Another student said, “This will only create further division on campus. Reading this, students from the general category may hang out only with other students from the same category, fearing false complaints.”

In front of Lucknow University’s Vivekananda Dwar, 489 km away, Mishra said, “These regulations allow swift action against accused students without sufficient safeguards. Our concern is not with acting against genuine offenders; it is that in the absence of provisions, those making false allegations will not be penalised.”

Vishal Singh, a sociology student at Lucknow University, added, “As per the regulations, a supposed victim’s identity will be kept confidential if requested. This is a big loophole. It will be exploited by divisive elements on campus. It is against the concept of natural justice.”

In front of DU too, protesters argued that the secrecy of the complainant’s identity would prevent them from defending themselves.

Students agitating against the regulations in Delhi, Lucknow, Varanasi, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, and Meerut said that the protests began to

take shape after solidarity groups emerged on social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and X, where a “simple gist of the loopholes in the UGC regulations and their likely adverse consequences” were shared.

Outside the DU’s Arts Faculty gate, Pandey pointed to one such chat group. “We left access to the group open so that students from all walks of life could join the protests,” he said. “But let me show you what happened within hours of setting it up.” He scrolled through the chat till he arrived at one message. It read, “*Jisko UGC se appati ho, vo gurukul taraf chale jaye. Wahan toh Dronacharya ji hain* (Whoever has an issue with UGC can just go to a gurukul, or traditional Indian residential education system. There you will also find a Dronacharya).”

Pandey looked up. “What would you call this,” he asked. “Is this not caste discrimination against those of the general category and upper castes?”

The message referred to the gurukul run by Dronacharya, a master archer and teacher of warcraft, in the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*. Dronacharya was precluded from teaching anyone but the royal Kshatriyas of the kingdom of Hastinapur. The obligation forced him to refuse training to Eklavya, who belonged to a caste considered lower than the Kshatriyas.

He then scrolled further till he found another message, by a fellow student of the law centre, mocking the reservations for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), introduced in 2019 by the Union government. Pandey said, “They call it the Sudama quota and make fun of us by calling us ‘Sudama quota wale’. [Sudama, a poor Brahmin, is known as Lord Krishna’s childhood friend in the *Mahabharata*.] Can we file a complaint against this under ‘caste-based discrimination?’”

In one of the petitions filed before the Supreme Court challenging the 2026 regulations, Mrityunjay Tiwari, a post-doctoral researcher at the Banaras Hindu University, has cited slogans and graffiti in higher educational institutions as signs of caste discrimination against general category students or upper castes. The petition referred to slogans such as ‘Brahmins leave the campus’ being graffitied in December 2022 on a wall inside Jawaharlal Nehru University, and ‘Brahmin-Baniyawad Murdabad (Down with Brahminism-Baniyawad)’ being raised at Ashoka University in Haryana in 2024.

It also recalled chants by the Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students’ Association in Jawaharlal Nehru University last year, echoing the Mandal-era slogan “*tilak-taraazu-aur talwar, inko maaro joote chaar*” – which means that the vermillion mark representing Brahmins, the balance scales representing the Baniyas or trading community, and the sword representing the Kshatriyas or warrior class should be hit with shoes.

“I can promise you that the students chanting these slogans do not understand the difference between Brahmanwad (Brahminism) and Brahmins,” Pandey said, asserting that there is only one way of perceiving these slogans – hostility towards upper caste people. “How will these regulations help us report these complaints as caste-based discrimination?”

Neha Upadhyay, a first year LLB student at DU, who was among the few women at the protest, added that these new regulations “are further dividing the campus into caste categories”. Explaining why she was at the protest, Upadhyay pointed to an incident she had seen on social media. “In Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), a reserved category student complained of caste discrimination when a general category woman he had asked out on a date rejected him. How is this okay,” she asked.

On January 29, the SRCC put out a public statement. Acknowledging the rumours circulating on social media, it clarified that “no such alleged act/incident has been reported in the college”.

Being ‘casteist’

While the protests highlight the divide between the reserved and unreserved categories, this rift

has been shaping experiences of students across higher education campuses for a few decades now. The death of Vemula in 2016 accelerated the formation and activism of student groups such as the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Student Circle, which advocate for stricter implementation of the 2012 anti-discrimination guidelines.

Even as Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi students narrated their lived experiences of caste discrimination – manifested in derision towards reserved categories, caste-based questioning, and “casteist” remarks passed off as “ice-breakers” – those from the unreserved category, or students from the general category or upper castes, said that it is they who are facing discrimination on campuses.

A 2019-20 student survey conducted among about 550 undergraduate students in the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, had found that 11% of respondents across the SC, ST, OBC, and general categories reported knowing professors or administrative staff who had made casteist remarks. The survey added that 6% of general category respondents, 9% of OBC respondents, and 26% of SC and ST respondents had reported this.

Observing the protesters chanting slogans outside the DU campus, Aniket Gautam, a postgraduate student at the political science department, said, “I come from an SC background. I entered DU with a score of over 80%. I remember the remarks I had received for ‘gobbling up a seat’ because I had availed myself of the reservation. Some people even said they wished they could get SC certificates to enter college campuses.”

Gautam, who is associated with the Students’ Federation of India, a Left-affiliated outfit, added, “If they want to label these casteist remarks ‘banter,’ should we also say that referring to ‘Sudama quota’ is banter? How is the EWS quota anything but a reservation for upper castes?”

Yet, a few dozen metres away, Pandey asked, “With these new regulations in place, would we ever be able to have free and democratic political discourse? We are terrified of what will happen when universities like DU hold student union elections. Will allegations made by some general students in the heat of campaigning be understood as caste discrimination?”

Drawing comparisons

While the agitation largely centred on the claim that the 2026 regulations divide campuses, some protesting students have also called for explicit representation of the general category in the monitoring and accountability mechanisms that the UGC plans to establish as part of the regulations.



They [students who are not in the general category or who are not upper caste] call the quota for Economically Weaker Sections the Sudama quota and make fun of us by calling us ‘Sudama quota wale’. Can we file a complaint of caste-based discrimination?

NAVEEN PANDEY
Student, Delhi University

However, largely, the protesting students said that the 2012 regulations are better than the 2026 ones. Other sections of society also believe this, though for the opposite reason: they argue that the new regulations have diluted the definition of ‘discrimination,’ leaving its determination open to interpretation.

The 2012 regulations had defined ‘discrimination’ and covered varied forms of it, including specific types of discrimination faced by SC and ST students. On the other hand, the 2026 regulations have introduced the term ‘caste-based discrimination’ and shortened the definition of ‘discrimination’. They have eliminated a sub-section on the types of discriminations faced by SC and ST students at various stages of their university education, such as admissions and interviews.

The 2026 regulations have provided for institutions to set up equity squads and equity committees, calling for fair representation in these mechanisms of SCs, STs, OBCs, minority groups, women, and persons with disabilities. The 2012 regulations had provided for the assignment of just one official as a liaison officer on campuses to monitor implementation of regulations.

The 2026 regulations also have stricter accountability measures, prescribing punishments for institutions found not following these rules. These include loss of accreditation and being debarred from offering degrees. These provisions were absent in the 2012 version.

While hearing petitions seeking the strengthening of the 2012 regulations, the Supreme Court was informed about the status of their implementation, including the establishment of SC/ST Cells and Equal Opportunity Cells (EOCs). According to an affidavit submitted to the Court by the UGC, only 3,522 higher educational institutions out of more than 50,000 in India had responded to the regulatory authority’s call for reporting. Of these, 3,067 had set up an EOC and 3,273 had set up an SC/ST Cell.

But even as the Court stayed the 2026 regulations, the anger has not subsided. There are calls for a Bharat Bandh, or nationwide strike, on February 1, demanding a full rollback of the 2026 regulations. This anger has largely been directed towards the BJP by upper caste groups in parts of North India, particularly U.P., which is heading towards Assembly elections in 2027.

As Asad Rizvi, a Lucknow-based political observer, noted, “Upper castes are the core voter base of the BJP and the key driver of the party’s success in the State. Upper caste office bearers of the party have even resigned from party posts in some districts, expressing displeasure with the UGC regulations. If they think the ruling party is not protecting their broader interests, it may negatively impact the BJP regime.”

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Protests against the regulations in Lucknow. SANDEEP SAXENA

From Page One**SC: menstrual health in schools an integral right**

Schools must establish 'MHM corners' equipped with, spare innerwear, spare uniforms, disposable bags and other necessary materials to address menstruation-related exigencies.

"A girl child's expectation to manage her menstruation in privacy with dignity is legitimate. In such circumstances, the lack of resources cannot be permitted to govern her autonomy over her own body," the court noted. It said MHM was not limited to traditionally understood sanitation, but included bodily autonomy and decisional freedom.

"The denial of adequate facilities, appropriate sanitary products, or privacy effectively compels a girl child to manage her body in a manner dictated by circumstance rather than choice. Autonomy can be meaningfully exercised only when girl children have access to functional toilets, adequate menstrual products, availability of water, and hygienic mechanisms for disposal," the court observed.

The court said the state cannot force a child to choose between dignity and her education. Such a choice was neither just nor equitable. The failure to provide sanitary napkins created a gender-specific barrier that impedes attendance and continuity in education, thereby defeating the substantive guarantee of free and compulsory education.

In a separate section on the role of 'men in menstruation', the apex court said it was crucial to educate and sensitise male teachers and students about the "biological reality of menstruation" in order to avoid any sort of harassment or invasive questioning of a menstruating student in school.

The court held that the State concerned would be held accountable if government-run schools did not comply with Section 19 (norms and standards for schools, including separate washrooms for boys and girls and barrier-free access) of the Right to Education (RTE) Act.

Similarly, private schools would be de-recognised and face consequences if they did not comply with similar norms prescribed under the RTE Act, the court said.

Terror module planned to hit coffee chain

The Red Fort car explosion was preceded by a 20-day-long probe by the J&K Police to find a "terror module" linked to two terror outfits – the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and the AguH – after a JeM pamphlet surfaced in Srinagar on October 19, 2025.

The poster, which asked local people not to cooperate with the police, and refuse them entry in their shops, led the J&K Police to a cleric in Shopian, and the unravelling of the alleged terror plot and discovery of 2,900 kg of explosive substances and sophisticated weapons during raids in Faridabad on November 9, 2025 and November 10, 2025. The JeM is a banned Pakistan-based terror organisation.

"The accused watched online videos and intended to create bombs from scratch. That is why thousands of kilos of urea bags were recovered from them. They had experimented a lot by mixing various chemicals, ensuring that the bombs are prepared from locally available materials, thereby not raising any red flags," the source said.

Nabi likely hurriedly assembled around 40 kg explosives in the car which exploded near the Red Fort on November 10, 2025, the second official added. The action was likely hastened after other members of his group were arrested.

The case is at present being probed by the National Investigation Agency, which has arrested nine persons so far, including the three doctors.

Earlier, the J&K Police had recovered a 1.20-minute video clip from Nabi's phone, where he is seen talking about the act of suicide bombing.

In the video clip, recovered from one of his phones dumped in a ditch near his house in Pulwama, he is seen speaking about "martyrdom operations" in a heavy English accent. There were multiple such videos in his phone, the second official said.

Will eject infiltrators one by one, says Shah in poll-bound Assam**The Hindu Bureau**
GUWAHATI

Stepping up his attack on the Congress ahead of Assam's Assembly elections this year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday accused the party of changing the State's demography for vote-bank politics and asserted that only the BJP could "eject illegal immigrants, one by one".

Addressing a public gathering in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh after laying the foundation stone for a second complex of the State Legislative As-

sembly and launching multiple development projects worth ₹1,700 crore, Mr. Shah said infiltration posed a serious threat to the State's culture, land, and identity. He indicated that the

Sunetra Pawar set to be first woman Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra

CM says govt. will support NCP decision: Parth Pawar likely to replace his mother as a Rajya Sabha MP; reunification not a priority, says NCP leader Bhujbal, even as some NCP-SP leaders push for it

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

BARAMATI/MUMBAI

Sunetra Pawar, wife of the deceased Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar, is set to become the first woman Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

The NCP plans to hold its Legislature Party meeting at 2 p.m. on Saturday to choose its new Legislature Party leader to replace Mr. Pawar.

A small swearing-in ceremony is likely to happen after that, top sources from the NCP told *The Hindu* on Friday.

Political developments quickened in Maharashtra on Friday, three days after the sudden death of Mr. Pawar, the NCP chief and the State's Deputy CM, in an air crash at Baramati. His wife is currently the party's sitting Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha.

'Unanimous choice'

"There is no question of any other name. We are all unanimous that Sunetra Pawar will have to keep aside her grief and accept the position of Legislature Party leader. We will inform the Chief Minister thereafter. And the swearing-in ceremony for the position of the Deputy Chief Minister will take place," Chhagan Bhujbal, senior NCP leader and State Cabinet Minister told *The Hindu* in Mumbai.



NCP-SP leader Supriya Sule and NCP leader Sunetra Pawar during the last rites of Ajit Pawar in Pune on Thursday. EMMANUEL YOGINI

NCP State president Sunil Tatkare said, "We have called a meeting of our legislature party leaders tomorrow at 2 p.m. We expect that she will remain present. We are going to speak with Sunetra *vahini* tonight. She has been busy with the religious rituals so far." The decision on the national president is not the priority at present, a leader said.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that his BJP-led government would support the NCP's decision. "They held a meeting with me twice. The final decision will be taken by their party. We will support them in whatever decision they take," he said.

NCP leaders Praful Patel, Sunil Tatkare, Chhagan Bhujbal, and Dhananjay Munde met Mr. Fadnavis at his official bungalow earlier in the day on Friday for

a meeting that lasted an hour. "We want to take the decision of appointing a Legislature Party leader soon. There is no difference in the opinion of the party and the public sentiment about who our next leader should be. We want to take this decision at the earliest. Please give us some time to talk with Sunetra Pawar," Mr. Patel said.

Ajit Pawar's elder son Parth Pawar is likely to become a Rajya Sabha MP, replacing his mother.

Reunification rumors

Meanwhile, the NCP seemed split over speculation about the reunification of the party with the NCP-SP, a faction headed by Ajit Pawar's uncle, veteran politician Sharad Pawar.

Maharashtra Minister Narhari Zhirwal was

Local body polls postponed to February 7: SEC

MUMBAI

The Maharashtra State Election Commission has postponed the Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti elections to February 7 from February 5. "Counting of votes will be done on February 9," it said. This is in view of the three-day mourning declared in the State following Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's demise.

among the NCP leaders who expressed their desire that the two NCPs should reunite immediately.

"This was Ajit *dada*'s last wish. Whenever he would meet me, he would say that he was restless that *saaheb* had to go through this pain at this age. He wanted both the parties to reunite," senior NCP-SP leader Ankush Kakde said in Pune. A senior NCP leader close to the Pawar family in Baramati also said that the parties would reunite soon.

Mr. Bhujbal, however,

said he was not aware of any such proposal or sentiments. "Right now, our priority is to appoint a Legislature Party leader. That is what we are going to do as a party," he said. NCP sources hinted that the BJP would have to be consulted before any discussion of reunification.

Kerala for All: 2-day conclave will focus on inclusive tourism**The Hindu Bureau**
KOCHI

'Kerala for All,' a two-day knowledge conclave on inclusive and accessible tourism convened by the Kerala Tourism in partnership with *The Hindu Group*, will begin at the Hotel Grand Hyatt, Kochi, on Saturday.

Policymakers, industry leaders, designers, economists, accessibility practitioners, and travellers will share the stage on the first day as it will bring together policy intent, expert perspectives, lived experience, and design practice to debate the central question of what it will take to make tourism truly inclusive.

Minister for Public Works and Tourism P. A. Mohamed Riyas will deliver the keynote address at 10.30 a.m.

Suresh Nambath, Editor, *The Hindu*, will deliver the welcome address.

The opening session, 'What Makes Tourism Truly Inclusive', will bring together perspectives from design and hospitality to examine inclusion as a principle that must inform every stage of the tourism journey. It will be followed by a session on 'Kerala's Responsible Tourism Legacy', reflecting on the State's commitment to sustainable tourism models.

The session on 'Accessible and Inclusive Reflections' from global best practices for tourism will examine how destinations across the world have built accessible tourism systems.

The session on 'Voices from the Road: Lived Realities' for the event.



obligation on the State to not discriminate against citizens on any of several grounds, including caste. Article 15(2) was adopted to specifically prohibit the discrimination faced by marginalised communities in accessing public services and resources.

In its judgment in the *Sukanya Shantha* case, the apex court, while dealing with caste discrimination within prisons, upheld the principle of substantive equality, that is, the law must endeavour to correct historical injustices.

"The pervasive influence of caste necessitates continuous efforts to ensure equality and justice for all citizens," the Supreme Court had observed.

UGC equity rules flow from Article 15's mandate to remedy historical injustice**NEWS ANALYSIS**

NEW DELHI

The Union government is committed to ensuring justice for all on the issue of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations the BJP said on Friday adding that it would not allow injustice to anyone.

"Since the matter is under consideration in the Supreme Court and the court has issued a stay order, it is not appropriate to comment on it. However, one thing is clear – the party's view is that we will not allow injustice to be done to anyone, and our government is committed to ensuring justice for all," BJP MP and spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said.

They argue that the 2026 Regulations wrongly imagine that only members of Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) are affected by caste bigotry.

The stimulus behind the 2026 Regulations was a pe-

tion filed jointly by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi in the Supreme Court against "rampant" caste discrimination in higher education institutions. Vemula, a PhD scholar at Hyderabad Central University, and Tadvi, a tribal student of the TN Topiwala National Medical College, died by suicide in January 2016 and May 2019, respectively, after being subjected to caste biases on campus.

The oral arguments raised against the new Regulations in the apex court, which led to a stay on January 29, did not cover situations in which Dalit students face discrimination or ostracisation from the faculty and college administration. Lawyers for the



Petitioners have argued that the 2026 Regulations champion reverse discrimination.

petitioners dwelt on upper caste freshers being "ragged" by Scheduled Caste college seniors.

The petitioners have accused the 2026 Regulations of championing reverse discrimination. They argued that the definition of 'caste-based discrimination' in clause 3(c) was

"restrictive and exclusionary", leaving general category individuals unprotected under the statutory framework.

The court has framed questions, including whether the definition of caste-based discrimination in Clause 3(c) bore a reasonable and rational link to the Regulations' objective to promote "full equity and inclusion" in higher education institutions.

However, the 2026 Regulations draw their strength from Article 15 (non-discrimination) of the Constitution. The inclusion of the provision is testimony to the historical oppression faced by marginalised communities for centuries. Article 15(1) imposes an enforceable

PM Modi speaks to Venezuela's acting President Rodriguez**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodriguez on Friday and the two leaders agreed to take the bilateral relations to new heights in the years ahead.

The phone call between Ms. Rodriguez and Mr. Modi was the first since the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife by the U.S.

"Spoke with Acting President of Venezuela, Ms.

Norms modified for IPS officers taking up IG posts at Centre**Vijaita Singh**

NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has made a two-year Central deputation for Indian Police Service (IPS) officers at the rank of Superintendent of Police (SP) and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) compulsory to be eligible for posting as Inspector General of Police (IGP) with the Union Government.

The order applies to IPS officers from the 2011 batch onward.

In a letter dated January 28 to the Chief Secretaries of all States, the MHA out-

lined a "modification in guidelines for empanelment of officers of IPS for holding IG post at the Centre."

The letter conveyed that a minimum of two years of Central experience at SP/DIG or equivalent level will be mandatory for empanelment of IPS officers at IG/equivalent level at the Centre from the 2011 batch onwards.

The Ministry asked States to bring the clause to the notice of all IPS officers posted in their cadre.

The modification to the guidelines comes days after Union Home Secretary

Govind Mohan wrote to States urging them to send more IPS officers on Central deputation, noting that though the State Governments send names for senior-most ranks, they do not propose names for appointment to the posts of SP to IGP.

Before an AIS officer is called for Central deputation, his or her concurrence and a clearance from the State government are required. As of December 23, 2025, of 229 sanctioned SP-level posts, 104 are vacant. At the DIG-level, of 256 sanctioned posts, 69 were vacant.

Will eject infiltrators one by one, says Shah in poll-bound Assam**The Hindu Bureau**
GUWAHATI

Stepping up his attack on the Congress ahead of Assam's Assembly elections this year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday accused the party of changing the State's demography for vote-bank politics and asserted that only the BJP could "eject illegal immigrants, one by one".

Addressing a public gathering in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh after laying the foundation stone for a second complex of the State Legislative As-

sembly and launching multiple development projects worth ₹1,700 crore, Mr. Shah said infiltration posed a serious threat to the State's culture, land, and identity. He indicated that the

'Labour intensive sectors to benefit from EU-India FTA'

Commerce Minister says India only negotiating FTAs with developed countries, no question of rethink on RCEP; while the European Union indicated the agreement sent a political message to the U.S., he says India's only message is its growth story; Goyal adds that the EU-India FTA would be implemented in calendar year 2026 and the government has concluded eight FTAs covering 37 countries

INTERVIEW

Piyush Goyal

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

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Union government has only done free trade agreements (FTA) with developed economies and countries that complement India, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said, contrasting them to the ASEAN-led RCEP that he blamed the UPA government for beginning negotiations with. Mr. Goyal said the FTA with the EU was done quickly because he has the "confidence and guidance" of the Prime Minister. Edited excerpts:

Did the EU-India FTA get fast-tracked because of [concerns over] U.S. measures like tariffs?

Not at all. We are able to do

[FTA deals] fast because we are very clear in our mind. We don't have any ambiguity in our thinking or in the leadership. We completed deals with the UAE and New Zealand quickly, and there was no pressure there.

Prime Minister Modi is very confident that India should become a developed country by 2047. If we have to be a developed and prosperous country, we have to open and engage with the world. No country in the world has become a developed country by shutting its doors or looking inward.

The EU FTA engagement started in 2021 and in mid-2022, we launched and [began negotiations]. So, they took the decision way before any other circumstances came up, to speed up the FTA.

EU leaders said that the FTA is a "political message" to those who are increasing their tariffs right now... Don't they mean the U.S.?

They may look at it that

way, we don't look at it that way. The growth story of India is the message. We don't have to give any new messages beyond that.

The deal also includes a provision on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). How was that worked out?

We all discussed and worked on this deal with a spirit of accommodation and trust in each other. Today, they trust the political stability they've seen in India and that trust helps us to speak as friends, even jostle and argue and fight as friends, but knowing full well that it's all in the best interests of both countries and expanding engagement between both countries.

Would it be correct to say this is a pragmatic deal, but maybe not the "mother of all deals"? It leaves out issues like sensitive agricultural products...

All my deals are pragmatic.



SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

over agricultural issues?

No, no. All 27 countries have welcomed it. France is in fact at the forefront of demanding that we close this deal quickly. They have demanded it. They are demanding that we operationalise it fast, so there's some talk that we should use AI to translate it to 24 [European] languages.

Are you hopeful that many exporters of apparel and jewellery hit by the U.S.'s 50% tariffs will be able to benefit now from the FTA with the EU?

Do you expect the same kind of trouble that they've had with the Mercosur FTA, with France, for example,

The potential [of the EU

FTA] on labour intensive sectors, where we've got huge wins, is about \$35 billion. Out of the \$35 billion, \$33.5 billion will become 0% duty on day 1.

All these years, there have been questions of why Bangladesh earns \$30 billion in exports to the EU and India cannot do it, why Vietnam has such high exports to EU. The logic was simple. Bangladesh had 0% duty, being a Least Developed Country (LDC) and Vietnam had an FTA.

Will the EU-India FTA be wrapped up in 2026?

Yes, it will be implemented in calendar year 2026.

In fact, while we [Indian and European teams] were having informal discussions over lunch, that's when this issue came up: We should look at faster operationalisation, they said. We are ready to operationalise. We've already got Cabinet approval.

Is it now time to reassess India's walkout from the Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership (RCEP)?

RCEP was the most stupid decision that the UPA government had thrown India into. It was an anti-national act to throw us under the bus and put us through RCEP negotiations.

Originally, RCEP never included India. It was China, the 10 nations of ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. We already had an FTA with ASEAN, Japan, and Korea, all very poorly negotiated. Till date, we have not been able to grow our exports there.

RCEP was basically an FTA between China and India, which would have demolished India's manufacturing sector, it would have demolished the MSMEs. We would today have been an importing nation, with no jobs in manufacturing. We would have become a B-team of China, as have many other RCEP nations which have seen a huge increase in imports from China post-RCEP. There's no question of revisiting our decision.

We are doing deals with developed nations. We have done eight FTAs in this government, covering 37 countries. All of them are with developed nations. We have not done deals with our competitors.

Regarding the UAE FTA, there was a lot of promise but the latest studies say that exports have remained more or less the same while imports have doubled...

The imports have increased in what we are in any case going to import: oil and gold. We have given a concession to them in gold because there was no other way we could balance the FTA. They have nothing to offer us except dates, nothing that they can export.

Regarding our exports, look at the figures the day the FTA came into force and today, and you'll see a massive increase in non-gold and non-petroleum exports. So, our interests are in those sectors because those are the job-creating sectors.

Modi opposed MGNREGA as it was associated with the Mahatma: Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday stepped up its attack on the Union government over the repeal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not want a law associated with Mahatma Gandhi to endure or guarantee people a legal right to work.

The charge was made by Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh at a protest held at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) office. Senior party leaders and workers had taken out a march from 24 Akbar Road, towards Gandhi Smriti, protesting what they described as the "constitutional right to work being snatched away by the Modi government". The march, however, was stopped by the Delhi Police before it could reach its destination.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Ramesh said, "The Modi government has scrapped the MGNREGA



Congress leaders take part in a march against the repeal of the MGNREGA, in New Delhi on Friday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

by running a bulldozer over it."

"MGNREGA was a constitutional right, providing a legal guarantee of employment to the people. This law strengthened panchayats. For the first time, money was delivered to every family through DBT [direct benefit transfer]," Mr. Ramesh said, adding, "But this law has been scrapped because Narendra Modi does not want this law, connected with Mahatma Gandhi ji, to continue for long. He does not want people to get their rights."

Congress media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said the par-

ty was firmly resisting the move. "A government that insults the country's farmers, labourers, and youth cannot remain in power for long. Narendra Modi should understand that his government will have to pay the price for this," he said.

Mr. Ramesh further argued that while the MGNREGA had benefited lakhs of families by conferring a legal right to employment, its provisions were now being "eroded". The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) scheme, he said, diluted the "original spirit" of the UPA-era legislation.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas cannot be erased, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Friday said Mahatma Gandhi was "not just a person, but a way of thinking" that an empire, forces of hatred, and the "arrogance of power" had tried but failed to erase.

Paying tributes on Martyrs' Day, the Opposition leader said Mahatma Gandhi was the "immortal soul of India". "Mahatma Gandhi is not just a person, but a way of thinking that an empire, an ideology of hatred, and an arrogance of power have all unsuccessfully tried to erase at different points in time,"

Mr. Rahul Gandhi said in a post on social media platform X. The Father of the Nation had bequeathed to India the principle that "the power of truth is greater than the power of authority", and that "non-violence and courage are greater than violence and fear", he added.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said that the Father of the Nation's



Rahul Gandhi pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary, in New Delhi.

path was the antidote to division. "The hatred that separated us from Bapu, its solution also lies in Bapu's path. The light of truth, the power of non-violence, and the compassion of love," Mr. Kharge said in a post on X.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh recalled letters written in 1948 by Jawaharlal Nehru and Saradar Vallabhbhai Patel to Syama Prasad Mookerjee, sharply criticising the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination.

His personality and deeds will continue to inspire people: PM

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary, saying his call for *swadeshi* was the fundamental principle for a developed India.

Mr. Modi said Mahatma Gandhi always laid strong emphasis on *swadeshi*, which was also a fundamental pillar of the government's resolve for a developed and self-reliant India. "My tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, on his death anniversary," Mr.

Modi said in a post on X. "His personality and deeds will forever continue to inspire the people of the country to walk the path of duty," he added.

Later, Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan and Mr. Modi attended a prayer meeting at Gandhi Smriti. After the prayer meet, Mr. Modi wrote on X that Bapu's life gave hope to millions.

Is it RTI's turn to get murdered, asks Kharge as Survey suggests a relook

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday accused the Narendra Modi-led government of systematically weakening the Right to Information (RTI) Act, a day after the Economic Survey called for a "re-examination" of the transparency law.

The Economic Survey argued that the RTI Act may require re-examination. It suggested exempting confidential service records and exploratory or draft policy discussions from disclosure by introducing a possible "ministerial veto".



He said these recommendations reflected an intent to dilute public accountability.

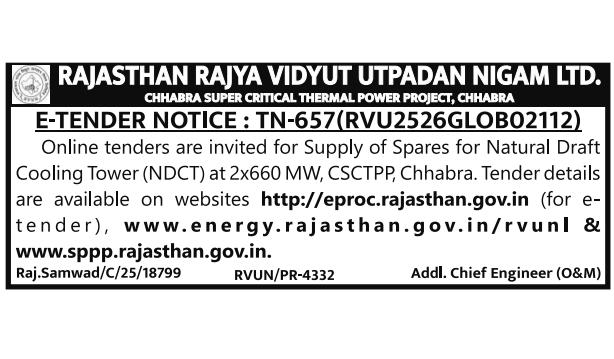
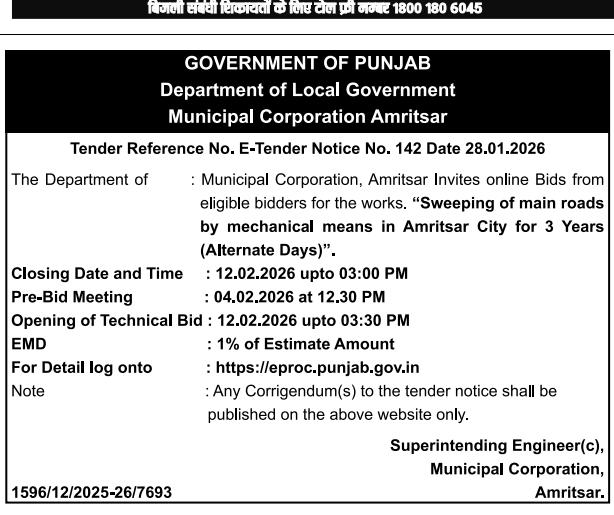
He alleged that the BJP government had been weakening the RTI framework since coming to power in

2014. He pointed to the pendency of over 26,000 RTI cases as of 2025 and recalled amendments introduced in 2019 that allowed the Centre to determine the tenure and salaries of Information Commissioners, which, he claimed, undermined their independence.

Mr. Kharge also criticised the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, saying it diluted the RTI Act's public interest clause. According to him, the law had been used to "weaponise privacy" to block information and shield wrongdoing from scrutiny. Referring to institutional vacancies, Mr. Kharge

said the Central Information Commission (CIC) had functioned without a Chief Information Commissioner until December 2025, marking the seventh instance in the past 11 years when the post was left vacant. He described this as a deliberate attempt to weaken the transparency regime.

Drawing a parallel with the Centre's approach to welfare schemes, Mr. Kharge asked whether the RTI Act would meet the same fate as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. "After killing MGNREGA, is it RTI's turn to get murdered?" he asked.



IN BRIEF



2 Wow Momo managers held in Kolkata warehouse fire case

Two officials of the Wow Momo restaurant chain were arrested on Friday in the Anandapur warehouse fire case which left 25 dead and several missing. Wow Momo manager Raja Chakraborty and deputy manager Manoranjan Sheet were arrested in connection with the fire at Anandapur's Nazirabad locality in Eastern Kolkata. The decorator who owned a godown at the site, Gangadar Das, was arrested on January 28. The Prime Minister has condoled the tragedy and announced an *ex-gratia* of ₹2 lakh for the families of the deceased, ₹50,000 for the injured.

Unions question SC comment on industrial stagnation

Central Trade Unions, in separate statements on Friday, condemned a Supreme Court Bench's recent observation blaming "aggressive trade unionism" for industrial stagnation. The trade unions said the right to association is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19(i)(c) of the Indian Constitution. "This right is regulated by the Trade Unions Act, 1926 (together with subsequent amendments), which provides for registration and legal immunity for union activities. It enables collective bargaining and representation of workers' interests," said Centre of Indian Trade Unions general secretary Elamaram Kareem. The All India Trade Union Congress, also firmly rejected the observation.

Farmers' body set to campaign against India-EU trade deal

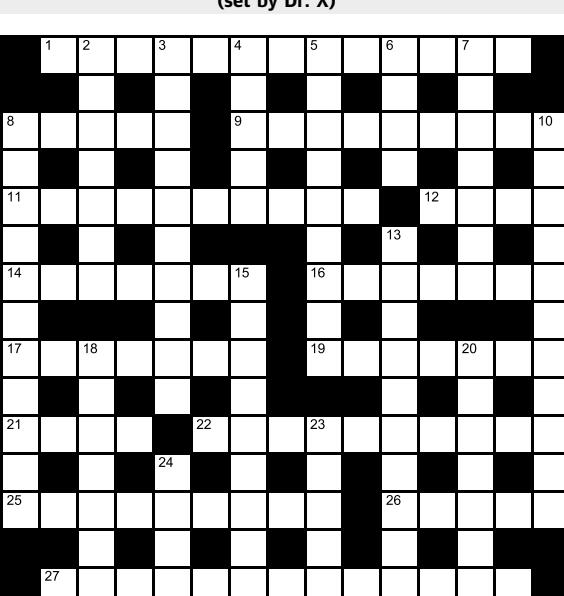
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Terming the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) a blueprint for economic colonisation, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmers' organisations, on Friday announced campaigns against it. The FTA would lead to systematic capture of the vast Indian market by corporates, decimate domestic agriculture and industry, and ruin employment opportunities in India, the SKM said in a statement.

The Government of India has agreed to completely eliminate import duty on olive oil, margarine and other vegetable oils, fruit juices and non-alcoholic beer, processed food (breads, pastries, biscuits, pasta, chocolate, pet

food), and sheep meat, and reduced import duty on wine from 150% to 20% & 30%, spirits from 150% to 40%, beer from 110% to 50%, kiwis and pears from 33% to 10%, and sausages and other meat preparations from 110% to 50%. Though the agriculture sector is not as open as claimed by the GOI, the opening of the processed food market will have a larger and disastrous impact on domestic agriculture production and small farmers," the SKM said.

The Prime Minister and Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal yielded to the EU pressure to maintain its expensive sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) barriers to block agricultural exports from India, while using the FTA to dilute India's own standards to ease the entry of their produce, the SKM said.

TH CROSSWORD
(set by Dr. X)

Across
1/24 What sports inventor might create a completely different situation (1,5,3,4,4)
8 Weaken in club, overwhelmed by a drug (5)
9 After having grass, one perhaps gets most ravenous (9)
11 Stoned on dope outside room, associate shows tongue in a European country (4,6)

Govt. hiding information on Nicobar project: Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday accused the Narendra Modi government of "bulldozing" the Great Nicobar infrastructure project by bringing in private players even as key details are withheld from the public on the grounds of national security.

Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh, in a post on X, shared a media report that claimed the Centre is moving ahead with its plan to develop the Galathea Bay International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands under a public-private partnership (PPP) framework.

Mr. Ramesh, a former Environment Minister, said the project was being pushed through despite mounting evidence that it would have "disastrous ecological impacts" and petitions challenging the alleged flouting of environmental and other laws are pending in the courts. "There is absolutely no mystery of which private conglomerate the Ministry has in mind while making this recommendation," he said.

Stem cell therapy cannot be offered as a clinical service for autism: Supreme Court

The SC says without scientific evidence on efficacy and safety of such therapy, informed consent not possible; it questions the Centre for not acting against those promoting such 'miraculous cure'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Stem cell 'therapies' cannot be offered as a clinical service for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), outside of an approved and monitored clinical trial or research setting, the Supreme Court held in a judgment on Friday.

A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan criticised the Union government for its failure to act against those offering such therapies, which has led parents and guardians to seek an unproven method of treatment for their children suffering from ASD at a huge financial cost.

The court directed the government to constitute a dedicated authority for regulatory oversight over stem cell research across the country.

The Bench held that the therapeutic use of stem cells in ASD cases, based on uncertain scientific knowledge or evidence

about its effectiveness as a cure or the possible repercussions, would fail the "reasonable standard of care" that doctors owed their patients.

"There is a dearth of established scientific evidence on the efficacy and safety of therapeutic use of stem cells in ASD. As a result, the doctors do not have 'adequate information' to provide their patients in the first place," the court observed.

The court clarified that parents, guardians, and caregivers cannot demand that stem-cell therapy be administered as a clinical service.

Besides, the court said, 'consent' means an "informed authorisation, grounded in adequate dis-

closure of the nature, procedure, purpose, benefits, effects, alternatives, substantial risks; and adverse consequences of refusing treatment".

The judgment came on the basis of a series of petitions raising concerns about the rampant promotion, prescription and administration of stem cell therapy for the treatment of ASD by clinics across the country.

The petitioners argued that though stem cell therapy itself is in an experimental stage, it was being touted as a 'treatment' and 'cure' for ASD.

They noted that people diagnosed with ASD and their caregivers place their implicit faith in centres offering stem cell therapy in the hope of a "miraculous cure".

The petitioners argued that there was also a lapse on the part of the government in allowing such stem cell therapies, which were in violation of the New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules, 2019.

AI summit is attracting global interest, says Vaishnav

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, being organised by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) from February 16 to 20, has received a phenomenal response from across the world, and is shaping up to be the biggest such event so far globally, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said on Friday.

At a press conference, Mr. Vaishnav referred to the recent interactions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with industry leaders, developers, and innovators working across the AI value chain, including models, applications, and infrastructure, noting that these engagements reflect the systematic progress of India's AI ecosystem and a strong focus on deployment-led solutions.

Leading IT companies had developed over 200 focused and sector-specific AI models, which were expected to be launched during the summit, the Minister said.

Investments worth nearly \$70 billion were already flowing into the AI infrastructure layer, the Minister said.

High tap coverage under Jal Jeevan scheme, but lower usage, reliability

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Almost 98% of rural households covered by the Har Ghar Jal scheme now have taps, but the numbers are significantly lower when it comes to usage and reliability of these taps, according to a periodic survey on public satisfaction with the scheme, commissioned by the Jal Shakti Ministry.

The survey, called the Functionality Assessment of Household Tap Connections, was undertaken in 2024 by private firm IPSOS. It is the third periodic evaluation of the scheme, which effectively started in 2020 and comprises a detailed survey of a small section – 2.37 lakh households – of the 19.3 crore rural households that the scheme covers across India.

The Har Ghar Jal scheme aims to provide 55 litres of potable water per



The scheme's website says 2.72 lakh of India's 5.8 lakh villages are 'Har Ghar Jal' villages.

person everyday. Except for Tripura (43%), the overwhelming majority of States reported more than 85% satisfaction with water quality.

Low water flow

Nearly all, or 98% of households in the sample, said water was "available," meaning they had a tap to receive water. However, only 83% said they had actually got water through

that tap at least once in the seven days prior to the survey. Goa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and several Union Territories reported over 97% availability, while Bihar (61%), Uttar Pradesh (72%), and Nagaland (74%) were at the lower end.

Only 80% of households reported getting the sanctioned minimum of 55 litres of water, with Sikkim (24%) and Gujarat (58%) reporting the lowest rate among States. When e-coli, total coliform, and pH levels of the water were tested, only 76% of households met the qualifying criteria. Thus, an assessment of the overall functionality of the scheme, looking at regularity, availability, and cleanliness, showed that just 76% of households were benefiting from the scheme as intended, the report underlined.

An important caveat is that the current edition of the survey only investigat-

ed villages which are certified as 'Har Ghar Jal' villages, meaning that the State administration had reported that all households, anganwadis, and administrative buildings in these 19,812 villages had been supplied water through taps. There are, as per the scheme's official dashboard, about 2.72 lakh HGJ villages out of 5.8 lakh total villages in India.

Not comparable

In the previous such assessment in 2022, 2,98 lakh households in 13,303 villages were sampled; of these, 40% or 5,298 were Har Ghar Jal (HGJ) villages. "This report is not directly comparable with previous rounds of functionality assessments due to the varying methodological, and environmental circumstances that might have been encountered on the ground," the Jal Shakti Ministry said in a statement.

businessline quiz prelims draw over 6,000 contestants

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Over 6,000 contestants participated in the online test for the 22nd edition of *The Hindu businessline* Celebration Corporate Quiz 2026. Registrations have closed, and the regional finals begin on Saturday.

The first regional final will be held at M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women in Chennai on January 31, followed by Hyderabad regional final at the Institute of Public Enterprise, Sharmipet, on February 1.

All the regional finals will be held between 10 a.m. and 1.30 p.m.

National finals
The Bombay Stock Exchange will also host the national finals at 3 p.m. on February 21. The regional finals of six cities will compete. The winner will get ₹75,000, the runner-up ₹50,000, and the third prize is ₹25,000.

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

SOME	BODY	PAUPER						
P	U	A	O	S	N	R	A	
L	U	C	K	N	O	H	T	
I	K	G	N	O	R	M	S	
G	H	I	A	S	I	L	O	
E	N	L	N	T	S	A		
C	O	N	T	R	F	R		
A	S	R	H	N	O	S		
C	A	U	S	E	C	L		

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

God never forgets devotees

Like a mouse falling into a trap, tempted by a piece of coconut, humans fall prey to worldly pleasures, losing sight of the path to God. Elders recommend that one walks in the path of the four (*Naalvar*), the Fathers of the Saivite faith, who showed the efficacy of *dasya bhakti* (service to the Lord), said Damodhar Deekshithar.

Everyone has a wish list that they place before God, but they also forget Him. However, God never forsakes His devotees, as exemplified by His protection of Sundaramoorthy Swamigal. As Alalasundaranar, the latter had been a servitor of Siva but was sent from heaven to earth by Siva in order to rid himself of the worldly attachments. When Alalasundaranar wondered what would happen if he forgot Siva, Siva promised He would intervene and enslave him. Accordingly, Alalasundaranar was reborn on earth in Navaloor. Soon it was time for him to get married. At the marriage hall, an old servitor of Siva arrived, saying he had come to claim him as his slave. Arooran sought proof of his enslavement, and the old man produced a palm leaf document. Arooran called him a madman. During the angry exchange, the script was damaged. The servitor suggested they all journey to Tiruvannamalai, where the original script was kept. The original did state that Arooran of Navaloor and his descendants would perform hereditary service to the great sage of Vennainaloor. The old servitor led them to Tiruvarathur, the temple in the town, and vanished. When Nambiarooran called out, Siva appeared in the sky and said, "Thadutthu attikollavandhom" (We came to take you to our bosom). Deeply moved, Arooran sang the famous verse, "Pithhaa, Pirai soodi".

Across

- 1/24 What sports inventor might create a completely different situation (1,5,3,4,4)
- 8 Weaken in club, overwhelmed by a drug (5)
- 9 After having grass, one perhaps gets most ravenous (9)
- 11 Stoned on dope outside room, associate shows tongue in a European country (4,6)
- 24 See 1 Across

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	FRIDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	82,270	-0.36
US Dollar	91.93	0.07
Brent oil	70.83	4.02

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2020.40	1.20
Adani Ports	1419.80	2.00
Apollo Hosp	6960.50	159.50
Asian Paints	2428.30	12.30
Axis Bank	1370.40	6.70
Bajaj Auto	9597.50	85.50
Bajaj Finserv	1952.60	4.50
Bajaj Finance	929.85	5.30
Bharat Elec.	449.00	4.50
Bharti Airtel	1968.70	0.80
Cipla	1324.00	3.10
Coal India	440.75	-15.00
Dr Reddy's Lab.	1218.10	9.20
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	DE*
Eicher Motors	7122.50	66.00
Etihad	273.60	-1.75
Grasim Ind.	2819.00	-12.70
HCL Tech	1695.60	-26.00
HDFC Bank	929.25	-6.25
HDFC Life	731.00	3.90
Hindalco	962.60	-61.45
Hind Unilever	2373.00	20.40
ICICI Bank	1355.00	-28.60
IntGlobeAvi.	4596.50	-24.50
Infosys	1641.00	-18.50
ITC	322.15	3.55
Jio Financial Services Ltd.	254.50	0.00
JSW Steel	1214.40	-23.10
Kotak Bank	408.00	4.40
L&T	332.30	-0.60
M&M	3431.80	47.40
Maruti Suzuki	14599.00	97.00
Max Healthcare	956.80	4.20
NestleIndia	1332.40	44.50
NTPC	356.00	-2.15
ONGC	268.96	-6.43
PowerGrid Corp	256.50	-4.00
Reliance Ind.	1395.40	4.40
SBF Life	1998.50	2.20
State Bank	1077.15	10.95
Shriram Finance Ltd.	1020.00	-2.80
Sun Pharma	1595.30	6.00
TataConsumerProduct	1133.90	26.70
Tata Steel	193.13	-19.19
TCS	3123.90	-20.50
Tech Mahindra	1743.10	-25.30
Titan	3977.40	37.70
Tata Motors PV	350.05	-1.75
Trent Ltd.	3785.50	-38.30
UltraTech Cement	12694.00	-23.00
Wipro	236.90	-2.90

DE: Demerged Entity

Airtel Africa Q3 PAT jumps

Bharti Airtel's Africa arm, Airtel Africa, logged an over twofold rise in profit after tax to \$586 million in Q3FY26 on higher operating profit and forex gains.



Ola Electric currently employs about 3,500 people.

EV firm Ola Electric to lay off 5% of its workforce

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Ola Electric, a Bengaluru-based electric vehicle firm founded by Bhavish Aggarwal, on Friday said, as part of its ongoing structural transformation, approximately 5% of its workforce would be impacted.

The firm said it was doubling down on speed and discipline through increased automation across front-end operations and was building a leaner organisation.

According to internal sources, Ola Electric currently employs about 3,500 people.

"The company is doubling down on speed and discipline through increased automation across its front-end operations. As part of this ongoing structural transformation, approximately 5% of the workforce will be impacted," it said in a statement.

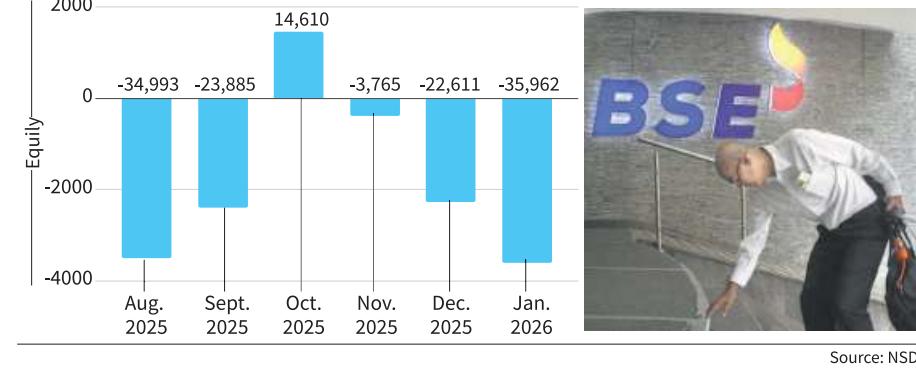
The EV firm further said it continued to focus on its business turnaround, building on the early gains delivered through hyper service and its service-led execution reset, with same-day resolution now being delivered to over 80% of service requests nationwide.

FPI outflows at a five-month high of ₹35,962 crore

Weak earnings and rupee depreciation remain the primary reasons behind foreign institutional investors offloading shares in the market

Taking flight

The ₹35,962 crore equities sold in January this year by foreign institutional investors is the most in a month since August 2025. Graph shows monthly FPI net investments in ₹ crore



Source: NSDL

Ashokamithran T.

MUMBAI

Foreign institutional investors net sold ₹35,962 crore worth Indian equities in January, the most since August, as per National Securities and Depository Ltd. data.

The calendar year began with a continuation of the same trend from the past year where foreign investors have been selling Indian equities. In all, FIIs sold ₹1,66,286 crore in Indian equities in CY2025.

Foreign fund managers, however, were net buyers of equities through the mutual fund route

Foreign fund managers, however, were net buyers of equities through the mutual fund route

ing in equities coincide with the buying of mutual funds signifying a sense of caution on India.

There is a meaningful flow into global emerging market funds, and India has also benefited making the overall flow look better, wrote Sunil Jain, VP at Elara Capital, in a research note.

However, the selling by India-focused funds, those who take a long term view in India, persists. "The current phase has extended into a third consecutive week, with ₹340 million withdrawn this week, following outflows of ₹360

million and \$320 million in the prior two weeks. The pressure remains concentrated in Japan- and Luxembourg-domiciled funds, which have been the primary sources of selling during this period," Mr. Jain wrote in the note.

The primary reason behind the foreign investor selling remains weak earnings and rupee depreciation.

"The Indian market witnessed a decent Q3FY26 earnings season, with aggregate earnings marginally ahead of expectations until now, while beats were 1.3x of misses in the KIE (Kotak Institutional Equities) coverage universe. FPI flows are expected to remain volatile," said Shrikant Chouhan, head, equity research, Kotak Securities.

"You establish standards and standards are important but we also need the infrastructure to apply those standards and enforce them."

'Quality output is established via markets not QCOs'

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

Quality is established in the marketplace through competition not via quality control orders (QCOs), Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran said in an interview to *The Hindu*.

Speaking a day after the Economic Survey 2025-26, authored by him, was tabled in Parliament, Dr. Nageswaran also spoke about how States need to balance the costs of unconditional cash transfers with the needs of growth.

"Quality is established in the marketplace and through competition, not through quality control orders," he said, when asked how to reconcile the Survey's call for greater quality output while the government is revoking QCOs.

"Quality control orders are necessary in important situations and many countries are using those also as an instrument of trade, but it is not necessarily the means through which you establish quality."

"You establish standards and standards are important but we also need the infrastructure to apply those standards and enforce them."

Populism, growth
The CEA also said he was not in a position to spell out a particular political-economy road map or a pathway to tackle the trade-off between populism and growth, but ad-

CEA also spoke about how States need to balance the costs of cash transfers with the needs of growth

ded States must be careful when choosing between the two.

"Yes, cash transfers are important from the point of view of winning elections in democracies, but it is not often turned out to be the case that these alone guarantee victories," Mr. Nageswaran said.

Sustainability matters

"But ultimately, it's about sustainability, it's about finding ways to balance democracy compulsions with growth and development compulsions and that is the balancing act and we should make sure that we don't err too much on one side."

He also said an argument could be made that India has already moved from resilience to acceleration. "First of all, what is resilience and what is acceleration, that is a matter of personal perspective," he said. "If you are able to grow post-COVID at 7-plus percent while everybody is struggling to grow at 5%, you are accelerating compared to others."

"So, I don't know how watertight these compartments [of resilience vs. acceleration] are."

The Economic Survey had upgraded its medium-term growth outlook for India to 7% from the 6.5% it had estimated in 2022-23.

IN BRIEF



NSE receives SEBI's approval for initial public offering

National Stock Exchange (NSE) has received a no-objection certificate from the markets regulator to file for an initial public offering (IPO), according to people with direct knowledge of the matter. The IPO, which had been in a limbo, for nearly a decade due to regulatory and legal issues, has now been given SEBI nod to go ahead and initiate the processes to file an IPO. "This is a significant milestone in our growth journey", said Srinivas Injeti, chairperson, NSE.

Bank of Baroda Q3 net profit grows 4.5% to ₹5,055 crore

Bank of Baroda Ltd. reported a 4.5% year-on-year (YoY) growth in net profit at ₹5,054.63 crore for the for the third quarter ended December 31 aided by an improvement in asset quality. Net interest income rose 1% to ₹1,800 crore from ₹1,786 crore a year earlier. Global net interest margin stood at 2.79% (3.04%). Gross NPA ratio improved to 2.04% from 2.43% while net NPA ratio reduced by 2 bps YoY to 0.57%. Domestic advances rose 13.6% to ₹10,96,557 crore.

Coromandel Q3 net dips 4% to ₹488 cr. on 26% income rise

Agriculture solutions provider Coromandel International reported consolidated net profit for the December quarter declined almost 4% to ₹488 crore year-on-year. The lower net profit came on an almost 26% rise in total income to ₹8,863 crore. The firm declared an interim dividend of 9¢/equity share. "Coromandel delivered a resilient performance in the quarter despite challenging business environment," MD and CEO S. Sankarasubramanian said.

SOUTH INDIAN BANK

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Closure of Long-Term Dormant Accounts

It has been observed that some customer accounts in the Bank have remained dormant for more than 10 years without any customer-initiated transactions and with no available balance. To ensure the safety of such accounts and to prevent any inherent risk, the Bank has decided to close these long-term dormant accounts.

All customers whose accounts fall under this category are hereby requested to update their KYC details or activate/upgrade their accounts at their respective branches on or before 02/03/2026.

Please note that accounts not activated by the above date will be closed without further notice.

For any clarification or assistance, customers are requested to contact their home branch.

Place: Ernakulam
Date: 31/01/2026

s/d-
The South Indian Bank Ltd

RAJASTHAN STATE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT CORPORATION LTD.

(A Rajasthan Government Undertaking)

Udyog Bhawan, Sez Ph I & II, Ramchandraji Marg, Jaipur-302005, Phone: 0141-2227511, 4593201

E-mail: ricon@rajasthan.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE

RICO invites sealed tenders/bids through e-procurement system for the following works/services/supply etc.

Sr. No. Office & Type of Work Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lacs)

1. Unit Head, Balotra Identification No: 122,89

14/2025-26 Dt. 21.01.2026

1. Provision for pumping arrangements, External power supply with power back up and Automation works in connection with the work "Augmentation of source with storage facilities and pumping arrangements and other ancillary works for implementation of water supply to Balliguda MAC under AMRU 2.0 (SWAP—III)"

2. Unit Head, Bhiwadi-II

2. Survey and Demarcation of New Planned Shops and Construction of CC Roads along Shops, Paving Road Shoulders with Interlocking Blocks and Construction of Box Culvert Drain and Approaches and Covering of Drains at Industrial Area

Sarekhur, Bhiwadi-II, N.I.C (B)

3. Upgradation of Drainage Network and Widening of BT Road 2 Lane to 4 Lane at Industrial Area Agro Food Park, Sriganganagar. UBN-RDC2526WLOB01639</

WASHINGTON

Iran wants to make a deal to avoid military action, reiterates Trump



U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday he believed Tehran wanted to make a deal to avoid military action. "If we do make a deal, that's good. If we don't make a deal, we'll see what happens." Mr. Trump declined to say whether, if Iran did not reach a deal, he planned a repeat of the dramatic operation in Venezuela. AFP

WASHINGTON

Trump picks ex-U.S. Fed official Warsh as next central bank chief



U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday that he would nominate Kevin Warsh, a former Federal Reserve governor, to be the next U.S. central bank chief. The decision caps a closely watched search for a successor to Jerome Powell, whom the President has lambasted for not cutting interest rates more swiftly. AFP

WASHINGTON

Former CNN anchor Don Lemon arrested over Minneapolis protests



Former CNN anchor Don Lemon, now an independent journalist, has been arrested over coverage of protests in Minneapolis, his lawyer said on Friday. Mr. Lemon was held on charges that he violated federal law during a protest at a church in a case rejected last week by a magistrate judge, the *New York Times* reported. AFP

BEIJING

China coast guard patrolled islands held by Japan almost daily last year



China's coast guard patrolled Japan-administered islands in the East China Sea almost daily last year, it said on Friday. The patrols near the tiny islands — known as the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China — could add to tensions as both nations are embroiled in their biggest diplomatic dispute in more than a decade. REUTERS

Hamas should join PLO, subscribe to its 'mandate': Palestine Minister

We are for peace and non-violence to achieve our liberation; we need to respect the agreements signed with Israel; we need to be committed to a vision of One Palestine, one govt., one people, and one armed wing, says Foreign Minister Shahin

Kallop Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Hamas should join the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), and commit to non-violence to attain independence for an 'undivided Palestine', said Varseen Aghabekian Shahin, Foreign Minister of Palestine. Speaking to *The Hindu* in an interview, Ms. Shahin said Hamas needs to subscribe to the 'mandate' of the PLO, which includes recognition of the state of Israel.

"The PLO is the umbrella organisation of all Palestinian factions. Whoever wants to be part of the Palestinian political structure needs to join the PLO and whoever wants to join the PLO needs to subscribe to



Gaza and the West Bank should not be viewed separately from each other, says Varseen Aghabekian Shahin. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the mandate of the PLO," said Ms. Shahin. Hamas has been in de facto control of the Gaza Strip since 2006 when it defeated the Fatah party of President Mahmoud Abbas in an election. Ms. Shahin said Gaza and the West Bank should not be viewed sepa-

rately from each other and the need of the hour was for all factions of Palestinian struggle to unite.

"We are for peace and non-violence to achieve our liberation and independence. We need to respect the agreements signed with Israel. We need

to be committed to a vision of One Palestine, one government, one people, one law and one armed wing under the legitimate authority of Palestine," said Ms. Shahin. She said the conflict in Gaza has left at least 72,000 Palestinians dead, 1,72,000 injured and 15,000 to 20,000 missing.

The visiting Minister said that many Palestinians in Gaza with prevailing health conditions were "forced to die" as Israeli blockade did not allow required medicines and health facilities to reach them during the conflict. "Israel used water and food as weapons of war triggering malnourishment that will be felt in the generations to come."

The Minister, who met External Affairs Minister S.

Jaishankar at the Hyderabad House on Friday, said 85% of infrastructure of the Gaza Strip, including two schools built with Indian assistance, have been destroyed in Israeli bombing. Responding to a question on the 'Board of Peace' that has been constituted under U.S. President Donald Trump, Ms. Shahin said the 'Board of Peace' should adhere to the UNSC Resolution 2803 of November 2025 and the "real peace in the region" would entail ensuring the "right of self-determination of the Palestinian people". Ms. Shahin said India has been a consistent supporter of the two-state solution for ending Israel-Palestinian conflict and called upon India to help in the reconstruction of Gaza Strip.

Sri Lanka to stick to IMF path despite cyclone blow

Meera Srinivasan

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka will press ahead with the ongoing International Monetary Fund's (IMF) programme — criticised by sections for imposing painful austerity on ordinary people — despite the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah that struck the island nation in late November 2025.

Following President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's meeting with a visiting IMF delegation earlier this week, his office said that the Fund pointed to Sri Lanka moving "in the right economic direction despite facing a severe disaster situation" and stated that there would be "no changes to the agreement", on the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme.

Cyclone Ditwah is the worst climate shock event the island has witnessed since the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. The torrential rains, record flooding, and multiple landslides have claimed at least 649 lives until now, while as many as 173 persons remain missing for two months. With huge losses to public infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods, the devastation is widely seen as a huge setback for a country getting out of a grave economic crisis that spiralled in 2022.

Early that year, then President Gotabaya Rajapaksa sought the IMF's help to cope with a serious balance of payments problem, as his government ran out of dollars to import essential items, including food grains. Forced to contend with long power cuts, food and medicine shortages, citizens took to the



A worker removes mud accumulated around buses after Cyclone Ditwah, in Mampanna, Sri Lanka in December 2025. AFP

streets demanding that Mr. Gotabaya quit office. In April that year, his government announced Sri Lanka's first sovereign default. In March 2023, the IMF approved \$2.9 billion for Sri Lanka then helmed by President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Economic stability

President Dissanayake, who was elected to office in September 2024, promised not to derail the IMF programme aimed at achieving macroeconomic stability, even as some in Sri Lanka flagged austerity measures linked to the programme, including a drastic drop in value of ordinary people's pension funds, tax hikes, rise in fuel and electricity prices, and a high cost of living as a consequence.

In the wake of the cyclone, over 70 civil society groups and activists across Sri Lanka called for the renegotiation of the IMF deal, accusing the Dissanayake government of becoming a "prisoner" of the IMF programme. The IMF controlling government spending not only restricts the ability of the government to respond to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, but severely impedes in-

vestment in infrastructure, recuperating livelihoods, and adapting to further climate change impacts," they contended.

In his recent interaction with the Fund's representatives, Mr. Dissanayake noted the disaster had most severely affected poor rural communities, with infrastructure and livelihoods suffering extensive damage. A total of LKR 500 billion had been allocated to protect rural livelihoods and restore income-generating activities, he told them, emphasising that this measure did not

"in anyway signify a departure from proper financial management or fiscal responsibility". Both the IMF and the Sri Lankan government agreed to continue implementing the EFF programme without making any changes to the existing agreement, the statement issued by the Presidential Media Division said.

Meanwhile, following a request from Colombo, the IMF's Executive Board also approved around \$200 million under its Rapid Financing Instrument facility to "help address urgent balance-of-payments and fiscal pressures" arising from the catastrophic Cyclone Ditwah.

Russia halts strikes on Kyiv until tomorrow at Trump's bid

Reuters

KYIV

Russia has agreed to a request from U.S. President Donald Trump to halt air strikes on Kyiv until February 1 amid harsh winter temperatures, and Ukraine said it was ready to reciprocate as Washington pushes for a diplomatic solution to end the war.

But as the Ukrainian capital braces for another bitterly cold spell from Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Friday there was no formal truce between the two countries. He added that Russia had shifted to hitting



Ukrainian logistics. Russia has bombed Ukraine's roads and railways in recent days.

The Kremlin said President Vladimir Putin had accepted Mr. Trump's request to stop bombing Kyiv to create "favourable conditions" for peace talks. Russian strikes on energy infrastructure in Kyiv have left hundreds of thousands of people without heating as temperatures dipped below minus 15 degrees Celsius.

Mr. Zelensky said on Friday there was no formal truce between the two countries. He added that Russia had shifted to hitting

At least 170 killed in Myanmar air strikes during election: UN

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

At least 170 civilians were killed in more than 400 military air strikes in Myanmar in the weeks surrounding its widely-criticised elections, the United Nations said on Friday.

Myanmar's month-long, three-phase vote, which wrapped up on Sunday, was imposed by the military in what democracy

watchdogs dismissed as an attempt to rebrand army rule. The UN rights office warned on Friday that they had failed to respect fundamental human rights and that military attacks on the population had continued unabated.

The UN said "credible sources" had verified that at least 170 civilians were killed in some 408 military aerial attacks during the voting period".

Sport

Not the end of the road for Manpreet, others: HI

Uthra Ganesan

NEW DELHI

After 'resting' certain senior players for the FIH Pro League, Hockey India is categorical that it is not the end of the road for Manpreet Singh and others who have not been picked. *The Hindu* had reported that the decision to exclude Manpreet and Krishan Pathak from the 33-member core probables for the Pro League next month had more to do with off-field issues than anything else.

With them being the seniormost players in the side, both the federation and selectors, in consultation with coach Craig Fulton, felt it was necessary to send a message to the rest

of the players. While the duo, along with Dilpreet Singh, won't figure in the first two legs of the Pro League, HI officials have made it clear that the decision does not mean an end to their playing careers.

"It will be the end of their careers only if they announce their retirements. Other than that, as long as they meet the fitness standards, no one can say it's their end," HI secretary general Bholanath Singh said.

Federation officials confirmed that the issue during the team's South Africa tour in December had been serious enough to warrant an enquiry with the players concerned, including Dilpreet. "It was a serious offence, but the fact that they

inadvertently included another player makes it worse. Any further decision will be taken after consulting all concerned parties. But this is definitely not the end for any of them," a senior official insisted.

Federation sources also said that HI could be looking at working a way out to allow an honourable exit for the players, especially Manpreet, by including them for the Asian Games. "That will not only give them time to reflect on their actions but also the chance to plan their exit on a big stage without the ignominy of being dropped. It will also put to rest all rumours of sabotaging the international caps record (of Manpreet)," sources added.

SNAPSHOTS

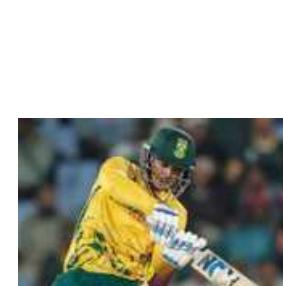
De Kock's ton fashions SA's series win

Opener Quinton de Kock scored a series-clinching century for South Africa in the second T20I against the West Indies at SuperSport Park in Centurion on Thursday.

The scores: WI 221/4 in 20 overs (Hetmyer 75, Rutherford 57 n.o., King 49) lost to SA 225/3 in 17.3 overs (de Kock 115, Rickletton 77 n.o.); **Toss:** SA; **POM:** de Kock.

Chotranji, Anahat in quarterfinals

Veer Chotranji stunned fourth seed Baptiste Masotti of France 11-6, 7-11, 8-11, 11-1, 11-9 to make the men's quarterfinals of the Squash on Fire Open in Washington. Velavan Senthilkumar lost 11-4, 5-11, 9-11, 11-9, 8-11 to second-seeded Mexican Leonel Cardenas. In the women's section, seventh seed Anahat Singh beat



De Kock. AFP

South African Hayley Ward 11-5, 11-8, 12-14, 11-5.

Real to play Benfica

Real Madrid was handed a quick rematch with Jose Mourinho's Benfica in the draw for the Champions League play-off round. The play-off ties will take place in February (first leg on 17-18, second leg on 24-25).

The draw: Bodo/Glimt vs. Inter Milan; Monaco vs. PSG; Qarabag vs. Newcastle; Galatasaray vs. Juventus; Brugge vs. Atletico Madrid; Borussia Dortmund vs. Atalanta; Olympiacos vs. Bayer Leverkusen.

Devika stuns Supanida, enters semifinals

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India

BANGKOK

Devika Sihag pulled off an upset at the Thailand Masters Super 300 badminton tournament, stunning home favourite and top seed Supanida Katethong 21-19, 21-18 to reach the women's singles semifinals here on Friday. Isharan Baruah bowed out after losing to Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching.

The results (quarterfinals):

Women: Devika Sihag bt Supanida Katethong 21-19, 21-18; Wong Ling Ching bt Isharan Baruah 18-21, 21-16, 21-13. **Men:** Zhu Xuan Chen bt Tharun Manneppalli 21-11, 21-17.

Dangal Warriors in last-four stage

PWL

Sports Bureau

NOIDA

Delhi Dangal Warriors sneaked into the Pro Wrestling League semifinals with a 5-4 win against Punjab Royals in the final league match of the season.

While Punjab was already assured of a spot in the top four, Delhi, tied on points with UP Dominators but lagging in bout wins, leapfrogged from fifth to second spot to eliminate the UP team.

Tied 4-4 against Punjab, Delhi was handed the match when Dinesh Dhankar forfeited his 125kg bout against Ronak in the final fight of the night. Tied 4-4 against Punjab, Delhi was handed the match when Dinesh Dhankar forfeited his 125kg bout against Ronak in the final fight of the night.

The result:

Delhi Dangal Warriors bt Punjab Royals 5-4 [Men: 57kg]: Shubham Kaushik (Delhi Dangal Warriors) bt Chirag Chhikara (Punjab Royals) 9-0; **65kg:** Sujeet Kalkal (Delhi Dangal Warriors) bt Anuj Kumar (Punjab Royals) 10-1; **74kg:** Turan Bayramov (Delhi Dangal Warriors) bt Chandermohan (Punjab Royals) 18-8; **86kg:** Vafaeipour Hadi Bakhtiar (Delhi Dangal Warriors) bt Sandeep Maan (Punjab Royals) 20-7; **125kg:** Ronak Dangal (Delhi Dangal Warriors) bt Dinesh Dhankar (Punjab Royals) by Forfeit. **Women: 53kg:** Meenakshi (Punjab Royals) bt Saarka (Delhi Dangal Warriors) 12-3; **57kg:** Rajni Jangra (Punjab Royals) bt Karla Godinez Gonzalez (Delhi Dangal Warriors) 5-1; **62kg:** Ana Godinez (Punjab Royals) bt Anjali (Delhi Dangal Warriors) 11-7; **76kg:** Priya Malik (Punjab Royals) bt Anastasiya Alpyeyeva (Delhi Dangal Warriors) 2-0.

RESPECT

Rybakina is an incredible player, says Sabalenka ahead of the final



Fire will meet fire when the hard-hitting Aryna Sabalenka clashes with the big-serving Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open women's final in Melbourne on Saturday. "Rybakina is an incredible player. We had a lot of great battles, we played a lot of finals. I'm looking forward to battling this power," Sabalenka said.

GAME PLAN

'Serve is important since we both are very aggressive players'



Reflecting on their 2023 Australian Open final, Elena Rybakina said both she and Aryna Sabalenka had improved and changed as players since. But one thing remains the same — their power. "Since we are both very aggressive players, the serve is important. Hopefully the serve is going to help me," said Rybakina.

REIGN CONTINUES

Gadecki-Peers first in 37 years to defend AO mixed doubles crown



Australians Olivia Gadecki and John Peers beat France's Kristina Mladenovic and Manuel Guinard 4-6, 6-3, [10-8] to become the first pair in 37 years to retain the Australian Open mixed doubles title. The last pair to do so was Jana Novotna and Jim Pugh while the last Australian duo was Margaret Court and Ken Fletcher in 1964.

BACKING CLASS

We always knew Suryakumar would score runs, says Kotak



He (Suryakumar Yadav) has been, for a long time, the world's best T20I batter. So we always knew that he would score runs. And of course, it is nice that he has had those two good innings in the New Zealand series, before the T20 World Cup — India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak.

Djokovic dethrones Sinner, sets up historic final with Alcaraz

The 10-time champion turns back the clock to win a marathon five-setter and make his first Major summit clash since 2024; the Spaniard overcomes cramps to outlast third seed Zverev in a long-drawn slug-fest lasting more than five hours

AUSTRALIAN OPEN**Agence France-Presse**

MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic stunned reigning champion Jannik Sinner to set up a blockbuster Australian Open final with Carlos Alcaraz after the Spaniard survived a five-set clash of his own with Alexander Zverev.

The 38-year-old Serbian turned back the clock to keep alive his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam crown, and a record-extending 11th title, by upsetting the Italian 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 in a grueling 4 hours and 9 minutes contest at the Laver Arena.

World No. 1 Alcaraz needed even longer to tame Zverev, spending a titanic 5hrs, 27mins on court, overcoming cramping and a fifth-set deficit to win 6-4, 7-6(5), 6-7(3), 6-7(4), 7-5.

Surreal

"I'm lost for words right now, to be honest," said Djokovic, who dropped to his knees and was emotional when the match ended. "It feels surreal."

Djokovic, who had lost

Day 13 in numbers

1 Alcaraz is the youngest man to make the final of all four Majors

1 Alcaraz (22y 258d) surpasses Sinner (23y 318d) to become the youngest man to reach four or more consecutive Slam finals

1 Alcaraz vs Zverev (5 hours, 27 minutes) is now the longest Australian Open semifinal in history, and the third-longest match at Melbourne Park

1 The 38-year-old Djokovic is the oldest men's finalist at

the Australian Open

2 Both semifinals at a Grand Slam went to five sets for the first time since Wimbledon 2018 (Anderson vs Isner and Djokovic vs Nadal) and for the first time Down Under since 2017 (Federer vs Wawrinka and Nadal vs Dimitrov)

7 Djokovic goes past Rosewall for the most Slam finals reached after turning 35

20 Djokovic equals Nadal (at Roland-Garros) for the most top-10 wins at a single Grand Slam since the ATP Rankings were published in 1973

Compiled by ANIRUDH VELAMURI

Saturday's Pick**WOMEN'S SINGLES FINAL**

1-Sabalenka vs 5-Rybakina



his last five encounters with Sinner, thanked him for "allowing me at least

one win in the last couple of years".

"The level of intensity,

and I guess the quality of tennis, was extremely high, and I knew that was

the only way for me to have a chance to win tonight."

The win propelled Djokovic into a 39th Grand Slam final and made him the oldest man in the Open era to reach the title match in Melbourne, where he has won 10 times. It will be his first final appearance since Wimbledon in 2024.

Against Zverev, Alcaraz only narrowly avoided crashing out after a huge fright at 4-4 in the third set when he pulled up in pain with what appeared to be cramp. He was allowed to have treatment at the changeover, leaving Zverev furious and angrily remonstrating with officials.

Alcaraz said afterwards he thought he might have hurt his right abductor and it was the physio who decided to have a timeout.

The top seed played on with his movement hampered and he lost his first set of the tournament. But after swigging some pickle juice, he clawed back from a break down in the fifth set as the crowd roared their approval.

The results: Semifinals: Men:
1-Alcaraz (Esp) bt 3-Zverev (Ger)
6-4, 7-6(5), 6-7(3), 6-7(4), 7-5;
4-Djokovic (Srb) bt 2-Sinner (Ita)
3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Giants break MI jinx, seal spot in Eliminator



A tale of two captains: Harmanpreet's brilliance was not enough to deny Gardner & Co. PTI

WPL-4**SCORBOARD**

GUJARAT GIANTS
Beth Mooney c Sajana c Ismail 5 (8b), Sophie Devine c Kerr b Sciver-Brunt 25 (21b, 3x4), Anushka Sharma c Ismail b Kerr 3 (31b, 4x4, 1x6), Ashleigh Gardner st. Rahila b Kerr 46 (28b, 7x4, 1x6), Georgia Wareham (not out) 44 (26b, 4x4, 2x6), Bharti Fulmani (not out) 5 (6b); Extras (lb-2, w-7); 9; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 156.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-23 (Matthews, 4.3), 2-23 (Sajana, 5.6), 3-37 (Sciver-Brunt, 6.5), 4-82 (Kerr, 11.5), 5-126 (Amanjot, 16.6), 6-127 (Sanskriti, 17.2), 7-155 (Poonam, 19.5).

GIANTS BOWLING
Renuka 2-0-11-0, Kashvee 2-0-12-1, Rajeshwari 4-0-46-1, Devine 4-1-23, Wareham 4-0-26-2, Gardner 3-0-26-1, Tanuja 1-0-11-0.

MUMBAI INDIANS
Sajeevan Sajana c Fulmani b Kashvee 26 (25b, 4x4, 1x6), Hayley Matthews b Devine 6 (8b, 1x4), Nat Sciver-Brunt c Anushka

Kerr lent some support in a 45-run stand, but she was caught behind off Wareham in the 12th over.

Harmanpreet picked her moments to find the boundary and ease the pressure, but with support not forthcoming from the other end, she was left with too much to do in the end.

Missed chance
Giants could have sealed the contest in the 16th over had Beth Mooney collected a leg-break from Wareham cleanly to stump Harmanpreet on 38.

Considering the high

Final tune-up for Team India, Kiwis

NZ IN INDIA**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Next week, the Men in Blue will begin their defence of the T20 World Cup in Mumbai. Before that though, they have some unfinished business in this smaller, quieter coastal city.

They may have sealed the five-match T20I series against New Zealand in the shortest way possible: winning the first three games. But, after that they suffered a reverse in the fourth match at Visakhapatnam.

They would be determined to win the final game at the Greenfield Stadium here on Saturday and thus go into the World Cup opener against the United States with momentum on their side.

After conceding the ODI series to the Kiwis 1-2, the Indians showed in the first three T20Is how good they could be in the shortest format. They have shown, in particular, how their batters could take the game away from the opposition in no time.

Two of the three fastest T20I fifties for India have come during this series.



The big quest: Samson, left, will be keen to get among the runs in front of his home crowd. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Abhishek Sharma scored the second fastest in the third match at Guwahati - off 14 balls, two balls more than his mentor Yuvraj Singh, whose record from the inaugural T20 World Cup in 2007 is still intact, remarkably enough.

In the fourth match, Shivam Dube struck a 15-ball fifty, as he raised hopes of an unlikely win after half the side was back in the dugout by the 11th over, chasing a daunting target.

The all-rounder's 23-ball 65 should have gladdened the team management, which had experimented a bit in that game.

Focus on Samson

This is of course the one last chance for both the teams to experiment, and to fine-tune their ideal eleven for the World Cup.

For someone like Sanju Samson, this is even more important as he didn't get going even once in his four visits to the middle.

And this is the hometown of the wicketkeeper-opener.

While the breathtaking display of clean hitting from the other end by Abhishek ensures the PowerPlay goes India's way more often than not, the team surely will want both the openers to fire in the World Cup.

As for Mitchell Santner's men, they would be keen to replicate their effort from the fourth game, which they won rather comfortably in the end - by 50 runs, thanks in no small measure to opener Tim Seifert's 36-ball 62.

It would be interesting to see if they try out the hard-hitting Finn Allen, who joined the squad on Thursday.

Teams (from): India:

Suryakumar Yadav (Capt.), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan, Shreyas Iyer, Rinku Singh, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravarthy and Ravi Bishnoi.

Kotak throws his weight behind Samson**P.K. Ajith Kumar**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Sanju Samson's lack of runs has been a talking point in the T20I series between India and New Zealand. His scores read 10, 6, 0 and 24. But India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak is not reading too much into Samson's recent form. "We all know what Sanju is capable of," Kotak said.

"He probably has not scored as many runs as everybody would have liked, but that's part of cricket. Sometimes, you have five innings in a row where you score so many runs, and sometimes, you go through a little rough period. So it's all up to an individual on how to keep his mind strong. Obviously, our job is to keep him in a good frame of mind. He practises and works hard," Kotak added.

About Abhishek Sharma's batting, Kotak said: "He plays a lot of shots, but his shots don't seem like slogging. When you are an aggressive batter, you are trying to play maximum shots on the merit of the ball."

QUICK SINGLES**Curran claims hat-trick as England beats Lanka**

Sam Curran performed a hat-trick as England beat Sri Lanka by 11 runs under the DLS method in their rain-marred opening T20I in Pallekele on Friday. The left-arm seamer became the second Englishman after Chris Jordan to claim a hat-trick in T20Is as England bundled out Sri Lanka for 133 with four deliveries still left in the innings. England was 125 for four in 15 overs when rain stopped play with the visitor comfortably ahead of its target at that stage.

The scores: Sri Lanka 133 in 16.2 overs (Curran 3/38, Rashid 3/19)



Curran. REUTERS

lost to England 125/4 in 15 overs (Salt 46) by DLS Method.

USA and UAE announce T20 WC squads

The USA and UAE

announced their squads for the T20 World Cup on Friday.

The squads:

USA: Monark Patel (Capt.), Jessy Singh (Vice-capt.), Andries Gous, Shehan Jayasuriya, Milind Kumar, Shayan Jahangir, Saiteja Mukkamala, Sanjay Krishnamurthi, Harmeet Singh, Nosthun Kenjige, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Saurabh Netravalkar, Ali Khan, Mohammad Mohsin and Shubham Ranjane.

UAE: Mohammad Waseem (Capt.), Alishan Sharaf, Aranyak Sharma, Dhruv Parashar, Haider Ali, Harshit Kaushik, Junaid Siddique, Mayank Kumar, Muhammad Arfan, Muhammad Farooq, Muhammad Jawadullah, Muhammad Zohaib, Rohit Khan, Sohaib Khan and Simranjeet Singh.

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NOTICE INVITING SHORT TERM e-TENDER
e-Tender Notice No.51/CE6/ 022729 /2025 dt.30.01.2026.
 e-tenders are invited for the following works from the Registered contractors upto 2.00 P.M on 11.02.2026 and will be opened on 12.02.2026 at 11.30 A.M.

Sl.No	Name of work	E.M.D in Rs
1.	Construction of New Taluk Operational Godown of 6000 MT capacity (2x300M.T) in Survey No.417/43 to an extent of 1.66.50 Hectare, in Pattinamkathan Village in Ramanathapuram Taluk and District.	6,70,000.00

Schedule: Downloading from website by Free of Cost- From **02.02.2026** to **11.02.2026** up to **2.00 P.M**.
 Last Date for receipt of online tender:- **11.02.2026** upto **2.00 P.M**.
 Date of Opening of Online tender:- **12.02.2026** at **11.30 A.M.**.
 For further details please visit website:- www.tntenders.gov.in.

DIPR/ 606 /TENDER/2026

MANAGING DIRECTOR

TIRUPPUR CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Notice for Inviting Short E-Tender

Est.No. 606 / 2025-26 / Z2 / CE,TCMC Date: **28.01.2026**

- E-Tenders are invited from the eligible bidders for 1 Work of Restoration of BT Surface Package No.10 under TURIP 2025-26.
- Total Project Cost Rs.182.00 Lakhs.
- The details of the tender shall be obtained from web portal <https://tnntenders.gov.in>.
- The tender documents shall be downloaded from **30.01.2026** to **05.02.2026** through the portal <https://tnntenders.gov.in>.
- Pre Bid Meeting will be Held on **03.02.2026** at **11.00 A.M** at concerned Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation Office.
- The Last date for downloading the tender document and the last date for uploading / submission of filled up tender document is upto **3.00 PM** on **05.02.2026**.
- The received tenders will be opened at **3.30 PM** on **05.02.2026** at the Office of Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation, Municipal Office Road, Tiruppur - 641 604.
- The value of each works and the details of Earnest Money Deposit and the Eligibility of bidders are given in the concern work tender document.

Commissioner,
Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation

DIPR/617/TENDER/2026

THE HINDU

Air Surcharge as applicable:
 New Delhi - Rs. 15/-;
 Port Blair - Rs. 20/-

CENTRAL RAILWAY
OPEN TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T), 1st Floor, Parcel Office Building, above P.F. No. 14 & 15, Central Railway, Mumbai CST-400 001, for and on behalf of the President of India invites (Two Packet) Open tenders from the reputed contractors. **Tender Notice No.: CR/BB/S&T/South/ 2026/08**
Name of work: Replacement of overaged AFC's at Bhandup, Mulund and Parsik stations and Mid life rehabilitation of Axle counters in Mumbai Division of Central Railway. **Approximate Cost:** Rs. 15.40 Crore **Date of Opening:** 23.02.2026 **EMD:** Rs. 9.20.300/- **Validity:** 60 Days **Completion Period:** 12 Months. This tender complies with Public Procurement Policy (Make in India) Order 2017, dated 15-06-2017. Complete detail of tenders are available at Central Railway Official website www.reps.gov.in the complete tender documents can be downloaded from the website. The complete details of tenders are also available in the "Notice Board" of the Divisional Railway Manager (S&T)'s Office, Mumbai CST. **DE-857**
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2-Day Conclave | 40+ Speakers | 20 Sessions

A Knowledge Conclave by Kerala Tourism & The Hindu Group



Inaugural address by
Shri Pinarayi Vijayan
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala



Keynote address by
Shri P A Mohamed Riyas
Hon'ble Minister for Public Works Dept. and Tourism, Govt. of Kerala

DAY 1

January 31, 2026

10:30 am - 11:00 am
Welcome Address by Suresh Nambath, Editor, The Hindu
Keynote Address by Shri P A Mohamed Riyas, Hon'ble Minister for Public Works Dept. and Tourism, Govt. of Kerala

11:00 am - 11:50 am
What Makes Tourism Truly Inclusive
Akash Hingorani & Keshav Suri in conversation with Soma Basu

11:50 am - 12:40 pm
Kerala's Responsible Tourism Legacy
Rupeshkumar K, Mini Sukumar & Soity Banerjee in conversation with S Anandan

12:40 pm - 1:10 pm
Accessible and Inclusive Reflections (AIR) from Global Best Practices for Tourism
Presentation by Gaurav Raheja

1:10 pm - 2:10 pm
Lunch

2:10 pm - 3:00 pm
Voices from the Road: Lived Realities of Diverse Travellers
Joby Mathew, Divyanshu Ganatra & Ekta Bhyan in conversation with Vijaya Kumar K C

3:00 pm - 3:20 pm
The Role of Industries in Advancing Inclusive and Accessible Tourism in Kerala
Special Address by Shri P Rajeev, Hon'ble Minister for Law and Industries, Govt of Kerala

3:20 pm - 4:10 pm
Integrated Inclusive Tourism: Economic Impact, Community Participation and Policy Synergy
Mini Sukumar & D Dhanuraj in conversation with Vijaya Kumar K C

4:10 pm - 5:00 pm
Accessibility First: Designing Tourism without Barriers (A Broader View on Accessibility)
Priyanjali Prabhakaran, KJ Sohan & Kavita Murugkar in conversation with S Anandan

5:00 pm - 5:40 pm
Integrating Accessibility and Inclusion into Sustainable Tourism: Challenges, Gaps, and the Way Forward
Neha Arora in conversation with Soma Basu

5:40 pm - 6:30 pm
Designing Accessible Spaces: Infrastructure, Transport and Public Areas
Manoj Kumar Kini, Biju Kuriakose & Sheetal Uday Harpale in conversation with Vijaya Kumar K C

6:30 pm - 7:00 pm
Shinkari Melam by Team Poombatta
Performance by Kerala's first inclusive percussion ensemble

DAY 2

February 1, 2026

11:00 am - 12:30 pm
Inaugural Address by Shri Pinarayi Vijayan, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala
Keynote Address by N Ram, Director, The Hindu Group

12:30 pm - 1:20 pm
Vision Kerala for All: Shaping the Future of Kerala Tourism
Suman Billa IAS & Biju K IAS in conversation with S Anandan

1:20 pm - 2:20 pm
Lunch

2:20 pm - 3:00 pm
Seeing Travel Differently: Navigating the World without Sight
Tiffany Brar in conversation with Vijaya Kumar K C

3:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Accessibility Isn't Charity, It's India's USD 1 Trillion GDP Booster
Presentation by Sminu Jindal

3:30 pm - 4:20 pm
Gender Inclusivity at the Heart of Tourism
Sikha Surendran IAS, Dr Peeja Rajan, Monolita Chatterjee & Soity Banerjee in conversation with Saraswathy Nagarajan

4:20 pm - 4:50 pm
Inclusive Tourism through a Neurodiverse Lens
Presentation by Najmul Melath & Sivadas A K

4:50 pm - 5:40 pm
International Spotlight: How Leading Countries Built Accessible Tourism Circuits
Chironjit Ganguly & Priyantha Peiris in conversation with Varghese K George

5:40 pm - 6:30 pm
Digital and Tech Innovation in Inclusive and Accessible Tourism
Anoop Ambika, Saidarshan Bhagat & Robin Tommy in conversation with Soma Basu

6:30 pm - 7:20 pm
Accessible Hospitality: Rethinking Hotels, Resorts and Public Venues
Ganga Dilip, Jose Dominic & Dileep Kumar PI in conversation with Saraswathy Nagarajan



Scan to watch the event live or log into
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Day 02: <https://newsth.live/KFALS0>

Event Location: Kochi

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IN BRIEF



Haryana women emerge National kabaddi champions

Haryana bagged the gold medal at the 72nd women's senior National kabaddi championship, beating defending champion Indian Railways 39-37 in a hard-fought final at the GMC Balayogi Stadium in Hyderabad on Friday. Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the two losing semifinalists, took home the bronze medals.

Focus was on bowling a lot of dot balls: Hemchudeshan

J. Hemchudeshan, the 17-year-old from Tiruchi, possesses a clean, classical action and relies heavily on accuracy in line and length, which he showed consistently over the first two days in Salem against Baroda. "We wanted to keep it tight and not get desperate. The focus was on bowling a lot of dot balls," Hemchudeshan said about his approach. "I got good support from Sai Kishore at the other end. He kept bowling maidens, which helped me pick up the two set batters today." Reflecting on the difference between junior and senior cricket, Hemchudeshan explained that the higher level demands more patience. "In juniors, once one wicket falls, you often get three or four in a cluster. At the senior level, that doesn't happen, and the batters also play a lot more shots. It really tests your patience, and that's something I have learnt."

S. Dipak Ragav

Three Indians among umpires for T20 WC

Elite Panel umpire Nitin Menon will officiate in his fourth T20 World Cup, while fellow Indian K.N. Ananthapadmanabhan will make his debut in the ICC event. The third Indian in the list announced on Friday is J. Madanagopal who would be taking part in his second T20 showpiece.

LIVE TELECAST

Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 3, 5 & LIV, 6.30 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: JioHotstar, 8.45 a.m.
Men's U-19 World Cup: SS Select 2 & JioHotstar, 1 p.m.
India vs New Zealand: 5th T20I, Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 8.30, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)

Vimal, Athish help TN fight back after Atit's ton

The openers take the host to 118 for no loss at stumps; Hemchudeshan scalps six wickets

RANJI TROPHY

S. Dipak Ragav
SALEM

Atit Sheth led from the front for Baroda with a stodgy century (109, 241b, 11x4) and steered his side to a first-innings total of 375 against Tamil Nadu on day two of the final Ranji Trophy league (Elite Group A) encounter here at the Salem Cricket Foundation ground on Friday.

For the hosts, 17-year-old off-spinner J. Hemchudeshan was the pick of the bowlers, scalping six wickets (36.3-5-120-6) – his maiden five-for – while skipper R. Sai Kishore accounted for the rest.

In reply, TN openers R. Vimal Khumar (66 batting) and S.R. Athish (42 batting) showcased their free-flowing strokeplay to take the home team to 118 without loss at stumps.

Vimal punched regally off the back foot for a few boundaries, while the aggressive Athish ramped the pacers over slips and charged down the track to loft Ninad Rathva over the ropes.



Top show: Atit and Hemchudeshan were the day's star performers. E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

TN's approach was in stark contrast to Baroda's earlier in the day.

Unlike on the opening morning, there was no assistance from the pitch for the TN bowlers on Friday, despite a new cherry at their disposal.

The placid conditions made life easier for overnight batters Atit and Suktir Pandey, but the duo were content to score at a glacial pace, showing little urgency.

Atit, who received a reprieve on 14 on day one, compounded TN's misery through his solid defence. He picked up the occasional boundary, driving with assurance when the bowlers overpitched.

It was only late in the opening session that the home team got a break-



Top show: Atit and Hemchudeshan were the day's star performers. E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

through when Sai Kishore had Pandey (84) stumpied, ending their 124-run stand.

Post lunch, Atit first reverse-swept and then cut Hemchudeshan to the fence to bring up his fourth first-class century.

At the other end, Akshay More supported his skipper and took on the spinners, lofting Hemchudeshan over midwicket for a maximum.

The youngster, though, had the final say, first casting More and then trapping Atit in front to complete his five-wicket haul.

The scores: Baroda – 1st innings: Jyotsnil Singh c Andre b Hemchudeshan 10, Shivalik Sharma c Andre b Hemchudeshan 35, Shashwat Rawat st. Atith b Hemchudeshan 5, Sukirt Pandey st. Atith b Sai Kishore 84, Vishnu Solanki c Andre b Sai Kishore 9,

Ninad Rathva lbw b Sai Kishore 66, Atit Sheth lbw b Hemchudeshan 109, Akshay More b Hemchudeshan 40, Mahesh Pithiya c Nidhish b Hemchudeshan 12, Bhargav Bhatt c Andre b Sai Kishore 0, Babashafi Pathan (not out) 0; Extras (lb-4, nb-1); 5; Total (in 141.3 overs): 375.

Fall of wickets: 1-25, 2-50, 3-55, 4-72, 5-157, 6-281, 7-351, 8-368, 9-369.

Tamil Nadu bowling: Sonu Yadav 16-5-48-0, Govirthan 17-5-38-0, Hemchudeshan 36.3-5-120-6, Sai Kishore 38-7-90-4, Vidyuth 26-7-50-0, Pradosh 5-1-14-0, Nidhish 3-0-11-0.

Tamil Nadu – 1st innings: S.R. Athish (batting) 42, R. Vimal Khumar (batting) 66; Extras (b-9, nb-1); 10; Total (for no loss in 36 overs): 118.

Baroda bowling: Babashafi 7-0-19-0, Pithiya 12-2-30-0, Bhatt 5-0-19-0, Atith 5-0-19-0, Rathva 6-1-14-0, Jyotsnil 1-0-8-0.

TAMIL NADU ROUND-UP

TN qualifies for Santosh Trophy quarters

Tamil Nadu advanced to the Santosh Trophy quarterfinals after a 1-0 win over Uttarakhand in its Group A match in Silapathar, Assam, on Friday. TN finished second in the pool, behind leader West Bengal (11 points), with 10 from five games.

The result: Tamil Nadu 1 (Umasankar 68) bt Uttarakhand 0.



claiming six for 84. **The scores:** TN 270 in 69 overs (V.P. Amith Sathvik 48, M. Boopathi Vaishna Kumar 40, R.K. Jayant 45, Sunny Sandhu 59 n.o., Chandraraj Rathod 6/84) vs Saurashtra 64/8 in 19 overs (Sachin Rathi 5/41, P. Vignesh 3/15).

TN in charge after Rathi's five-for

Left-arm spinner Sachin Rathi's five for 41 helped Tamil Nadu reduce Saurashtra to 64 for eight at stumps on the first day of their Elite-C fifth round men's u-23 C. K. Nayudu Trophy match in Rajkot on Friday.

Earlier, Tamil Nadu, opting to bat, made 270 with off-spinner Chandraraj Rathod

ENGAGEMENTS

Cricket: TNCA league, IV-A, Jupiter vs Twentieth Century (PBEL City); B: Galaxy vs Kamuthi Club (Magna 'A'); Venkateswara vs Reserve Bank (Gajan 'A'); Vijay's RC vs Sir Theagaraya RC (Gajan 'B'); Milkyway vs Prithvi (Gajan 'C'); TSR MSC vs Comrades (Jones Krish); Sounder vs Tiger (MIT), 9.30 a.m.; V-A, AISC College (Matt.) vs Globe (Gajan, Matt.), 9.30 a.m.; V-C, Saidapet Gymkhana vs GTUC (Union); Youth Centre vs Universal (Wahe Guru 'B'), 9.30 a.m.; VI-B, Amar vs Anna Universi-

ty SB (Engg.); Ashok Leyland vs Minerva (Jeppiaar), 8 a.m.; YMCA (Royapettah) vs MFL RC (Engg.); Kohinoor vs Halifax (Jeppiaar), 1 p.m.

Cycling: Track Asia Cup, SDAT Velodrome-TNPESU campus (Melekottaiyur), 4 p.m.

General: SNU Cup (State-level invitational tournament for football and basketball), final day, Shiv Nadar University camps, Rajiv Gandhi Salai, Kalavakkam, 9 a.m.

DOG SHOW

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Details contact: Mr. C.V. Sudarsan, President, The Madras Canine Club, Ph: 044-26260693 Mob: 98840 46278

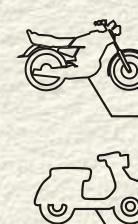
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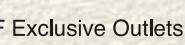
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GETTY IMAGES



Has Man. United found its Mr. Right in Michael Carrick?

The former Red Devils midfielder has made a stunning start to life as caretaker manager, guiding the club to wins over Man. City and Arsenal. Owing to the quality of football on display and the change in mood around Old Trafford, there is already speculation over whether the 44-year-old deserves to remain in the role beyond the end of the season

Reuters
Agence France-Presse

In early January, Ruben Amorim became the sixth permanent Manchester United manager or head coach to be dismissed since the legendary Alex Ferguson retired in 2013. The sacking ended another chapter of woe for the club, which has declined since the Ferguson era.

When Michael Carrick, a vital cog during Ferguson's glory years, was appointed on a caretaker basis, he looked to have been handed a baptism of fire. The former Red Devils midfielder, who returned to Old Trafford to manage a side that had won just once in seven matches, had to face Manchester City and Arsenal in the first two games of his reign.

Memorable results

But Carrick has delivered two memorable victories over the Premier League's top two sides, sparking speculation over whether the 44-year-old deserves to remain in the role beyond the end of the season. He still has plenty to prove but

What happens next? I'm not going to be answering it every week. My job is to keep improving the team and not getting carried away with two massive results

CARRICK

could not have made a better start to his quest to bring Champions League football back to Old Trafford for the first time in three seasons.

United looked transformed during a 2-0 home win over Manchester City – Carrick's first game in his second spell in temporary charge – producing a performance full of attacking verve. The victory seemed to banish the gloom at a stroke, United ripping Pep Guardiola's title contender to shreds with the sort of swashbuckling football that has been beyond it for so long.

Carrick made an excellent first impression – especially since he was up against Guardiola, an all-conquering manager considered one of the best of all time.

"The better team won. There's nothing more to say," Guardiola said. "When a team is better you have to accept it."

Carrick followed that up with a thrilling 3-2 away win over league leader Arsenal. It was United's first Premier League victory at the Emirates since 2017 and helped the Mancunian club climb to fourth on the table. Like Guardiola, Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta, too, was impressed with Carrick. "With Michael coming in, it's bringing new ideas, the intensity rises," he said.

But while the smiles are back on the faces of United fans, Carrick is focusing on the present. He is refusing to engage with questions about his future in the hot seat.

"I'm enjoying it. It's a fantastic position to be in," Carrick said. "What happens next? I'm not going to be answering it every week. From our perspective, it's just about moving forward to the next game. It's just about keeping good habits and good routines. The boys have been fantastic with that. But we can't look too far ahead. We'll finish where we finish by getting the results."

Carrick is only contracted for the remainder of 2025-26 while United weighs up its long-term plans. But he could put himself into contention for a longer deal if he carries on like this.

Both his tactics and man-management have caught the eye. One of English football's best and possibly most underappreciated midfielders in recent years, Carrick was known for his calmness, quiet authority and vision. He appears to be channelling those qualities in reformatting United, building on a simple, clear blueprint, with some bold choices thrown in.

Introducing balance

Carrick has ditched Amorim's preferred three-man defence in a switch that has allowed United to play with more balance in a nominal 4-2-3-1.

He has platformed United's best creative passer, Bruno Fernandes, in the No. 10 role, with a double pivot behind him, which includes Kobbie Mainoo. The 20-year-old Mainoo shot to prominence in 2023-24, but struggled for game time during Amorim's ill-fated 14-month spell. The Portuguese coach defied calls to play Mainoo alongside club captain Fernandes, but Carrick has the young midfielder operating with freedom and technical security.

The 44-year-old's decision to deploy defender Patrick Dorgu in a more advanced attacking role on the left has also paid off with goals against City and Arsenal.

Matheus Cunha might not have started because of Dorgu's repositioning, but has made an impact off the bench. Bryan Mbeumo, known for his penetrative movement as a wide forward, has been utilised as a roaming central striker, a move that has caused backlines all sorts of problems.

Most significantly, the players have responded

to the changes. Cunha, instead of sulking at being relegated to a substitute's role, was quick to point out the difference between Amorim's gloomy reign and Carrick's upbeat presence.

"He knows the feeling, he played here so many years. He knows the feeling for Manchester, he knows the feeling for United. He knows how the fans want to feel," Cunha said. "He tried to show us every single moment, he tried to talk to us to understand moments and say, 'everyone is against us', so I think we feel more together."

Chorus of praise

Centre-back Harry Maguire added to the chorus of praise. "He's brought a fresh energy and the group has really galvanised," said Maguire.

"Two tough games and everyone probably thinks we are going to come away with not many points. But to win both is magnificent."

Carrick commended the players for buying into his vision so quickly. "The boys have been fantastic in terms of taking things on, wanting to do it and investing into it," he said.

"I give a lot of credit to the staff and the players. It is a really collective feeling. We said when we came in that we make every decision for the greater good of the football club. My job is to keep improving the team and not getting carried away with two massive results."

The mood around Old Trafford has transformed, but the larger question remains. Have co-owner Jim Ratcliffe and his army of advisers in the United hierarchy stumbled across a long-term solution or is the sudden up-tick in form just a consequence of the 'new manager bounce'?



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MATHEUS CUNHA
United forward



United dealt with a similar situation in the recent past. Ole Gunnar Solskjær's brilliant start to his interim role as manager in 2019 earned him a three-year deal, which didn't quite work out.

Former United captains Roy Keane and Gary Neville believe the club should go for a bigger, more experienced manager than Carrick, whose only previous full-time job was a three-year stint with Championship side Middlesbrough.

Under Carrick, Middlesbrough played some attractive football, but made the playoffs just once and never earned promotion. Clearly, Ratcliffe and Co. have a tough decision to make if United continues its upswing.

Carrick's eyes, though, are already on his next assignment: Sunday's home fixture against seventh-placed Fulham, which United will start as favourite after the wins over City and Arsenal.

"We've got to ride it and use the emotion, use the energy and use the confidence," he said. "You've got to be humble enough to understand how we could achieve these two big results. It doesn't come easy, so we need to bottle it and use it again."

STACKING UP



ATP Men's Top 15					
#	Player	Age	Points	Events	
1	Carlos Alcaraz	22	12,050	19	
2	Jannik Sinner	24	11,500	18	
3	Alexander Zverev	28	5,105	24	
4	Novak Djokovic	38	4,780	19	
5	Lorenzo Musetti	23	4,105	23	
6	Alex de Minaur	26	4,080	23	
7	Ben Shelton	23	4,000	23	
8	Felix Auger-Aliassime	25	3,990	27	
9	Taylor Fritz	28	3,840	23	
10	Alexander Bublik	28	3,065	29	
11	Jack Draper	24	2,990	17	
12	Daniil Medvedev	29	2,910	25	
13	Casper Ruud	27	2,795	22	
14	A. Davidovich Fokina	26	2,635	26	
15	Andrey Rublev	28	2,600	26	



Top Indians ▶



Sumit Nagal
Rank 281 ▼ 2 spots



Aryan Shah
Rank 400 ▼ 6 spots



Top Indians ▶



Sahaja Yamalapalli
Rank 370 ▼ 3 spots



Shravali Bhamidipaty
Rank 453 ▼ 5 spots

English Premier League Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Arsenal	23	15	5	3	42	17	25	50
2	Man. City	23	14	4	5	47	21	26	46
3	Aston Villa	23	14	4	5	35	25	10	46
4	Man. United	23	10	8	5	41	34	7	38
5	Chelsea	23	10	6	7	39	25	14	37
6	Liverpool	23	10	6	7	35	32	3	36
7	Fulham	23	10	4	9	32	32	0	34
8	Brentford	23	10	3	10	35	32	3	33
9	Newcastle	23	9	6	8	32	29	3	33
10	Everton	23	9	6	8	25	26	-1	33
11	Sunderland	23	8	6	6	24	26	-2	33
12	Brighton	23	7	9	7	33	31	2	30
13	Bournemouth	23	7	9	7	38	43	-5	30
14	Tottenham	23	7	9	7	33	31	2	28
15	Crystal Palace	23	7	7	9	24	28	-4	28
16	Leeds United	23	6	8	9	31	38	-7	26
17	N. Forest	23	7	4	12	23	34	-11	25
18	West Ham	23	5	5	13	27	45	-18	20
19	Burnley	23	3	6	14	25	44	-19	15
20	Wolves	23	1	5	17	15	43	-28	8

Spanish LaLiga Standings

#	Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
1	Barcelona	21	17	1	3	57	22	35	52
2	Real Madrid	21	16	3	2	45	17	28	51
3	Atletico Madrid	21	13	5	3	38	17	21	44
4	Villarreal	20	13	2	5	37	21	16	41
5	Espanyol	21	10	4	7	25	25	0	34
6	Real Betis	21	8	5	34	27	7	32	
7	Celta Vigo	21	8	5	29	23	6	32	
8	Real Sociedad	21	7	6	8	29	29	0	27



It's not very nice to change the country you represent

Khademalsharieh was forced to leave Iran after playing in the 2022 World Rapid and Blitz Championships without wearing a headscarf. She talks about her courageous decision, her life in Spain, the quality of chess in both countries, her experience of competing in the Global Chess League, and dealing with her son's cheeky Spanish

INTERVIEW

Sarasadat Khademalsharieh

P.K. Ajith Kumar

As Sarasadat Khademalsharieh sat down for our interview by the poolside at Trident Hotel on that pleasant morning in Mumbai, a gentle breeze made her dark hair flutter. She had earned that freedom – not to have her hair covered – at a heavy price. She lost her nationality.

Sara Khadem – she is better known these days by that shorter version of her name – no longer represents Iran in international chess

Iran is a big country with a really big history in chess; it is one of the countries that promoted chess to the other side of the world

tournaments. She plays for Spain. After competing in the World Rapid and Blitz Championships in Kazakhstan in 2022 without wearing a headscarf – it was one of the boldest moves ever by a Woman Grandmaster – a warrant for her arrest was issued in Iran. She was given nationality by Spain, where she has been living for the last three years.

The first time Sara came to India, she had made headlines. She finished runner-up at the World Junior Championship in Pune in 2014. Four years later, she finished second at the World Rapid and Blitz Championships, performing much better than her seeding in both tournaments. Excerpts from the interview in Mumbai, where she played for PBG Alaskan Knights in the third edition of the Global Chess League:

How do you look back at that decision not to wear a headscarf for the World Rapid and Blitz Championships at Almaty? You must have been upset by the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody in Iran.

I was. I think everyone in Iran was upset. Before that, I always had this sort of mixed feeling about this whole thing. But after it happened, many of my friends were going to protest in the street, which was very risky. That was the time I just had my son. And I was in Tehran with my husband



I am glad my son is picking up Spanish from school. The other day he told me, 'Quita mama'. I asked one of my friends what it meant, and she was laughing. What my son told me was: 'Get lost mummy'

and my son, who was very little, maybe six months old.

Many of my friends were part of the protest in their own ways. I felt they were taking really serious risks. When I got invited to this tournament in Kazakhstan, I didn't want to go there just to make a move [on the board]. I told my husband, 'If I go there, it doesn't feel right if I go the same way, wearing the scarf, and I know that I have the chance not to wear it.' But I didn't want to go to the tournament to make a scene there.

Was that the first time you were not wearing a headscarf publicly?

Publicly, in an official event, yes, I suppose.

Now reports from Iran suggest that many women do not wear headscarves.

All the girls, they stopped doing that. And they [authorities] cannot control it any more. But the problem in Iran is not only the scarves. There are so many of them.

You are now playing for Spain. Alireza Firouzja, easily the greatest player Iran has ever produced and who Magnus Carlsen said he was keen to play a World title match against, is playing for France...

I was very disappointed when he decided to play for France, but not with his decision. I even remember I gave an interview which got me into lots of trouble at that time. Even when he was younger, when I was having some interviews, I would always say: 'Let us not talk about myself, but talk about him because he is such a great talent'. Even when he was a kid, it was very obvious that he was going to be such a great player. Then, nobody really cared about him.

The first medal that he got at the Grand Prix was under the FIDE flag, because in that tournament, none of the Iranian players got permission to play. He was already living in France at that time. Then I also changed my federation. It's not very nice to change the country you represent. Earlier, I thought maybe something would change. Then later I realised, nothing was going to change. I kept on saying that 'If they don't change, some other top players also could leave'.

Iran has produced so many quality players...

Iran is a big country with a really big history in chess; it



is one of the countries that promoted chess to the other side of the world. When I started playing we already had good players, like Ehsan Ghaem-Maghami and Atousa Pourkashian. They were all doing well in Asian tournaments. When we get a really good player, the others also get motivated and they train a lot. And at some point, we had really good coaches. Our federation had more money earlier and the government was more supportive. So we had lots of players. And I think the outcome was this whole generation. But they stopped that.

You at one stage had a rating of close to 2500 Elo points.

At that time, I had some problems with the government. I had a travel ban, which was for six months. And Covid happened. Then I had my son, so four years just passed in a blink. And it affects you, you don't play as much or professionally as before. Even now, I wouldn't say it is the same as it was when I was 20. Yes, I want to play in more tournaments, but it is harder to manage, with family life and all. But I see many players are managing to do that.

How do you find the Global Chess League?

It is a very interesting event. I had played the first season as well in Dubai, where I was a reserve player. I came in the middle of the tournament, and I played for Triveni Continental Kings [which went on to win the tournament]. The team composition, especially having the junior players along with men and women, and the time control make it more fun to watch.

You have won the Spanish women's championship. What is the state of women's chess in Spain?

It is strong, we have a good team. We finished fourth at the last Olympiad; we tied for third place, in fact [USA claimed bronze with the best tie-breaker].

How do you find life in Spain?

The people are very welcoming. You know I really like Iran too, to be fair, but I would say with a little kid, I prefer living in Spain.

Do you speak Spanish now?

I understand quite a bit, but where I live, it is very touristy. So I think to learn Spanish, you need to put in some serious time. I am glad my son is picking up Spanish from school. Sometimes when he speaks, he says some Spanish words. The other day he told me, 'Quita mama'. I asked one of my friends what those words meant, and she was laughing. What my son told me was: 'Get lost mummy'.

GAME THEORY

LaLiga: goals vs. expected goals

Kylian Mbappe leads LaLiga's scoring charts so far this season and is overperforming his expected goals (xG), which, roughly put, means he has scored more goals than expected based on the type of shot opportunities he has had. Among the top five, only Robert Lewandowski is underperforming his xG. A look at the top goal-scorers in Spain's premier division in 2025-26 and the margin between their tallies and the xG they have generated (xGDiff):

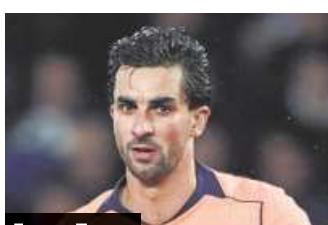
Player	Club	Games	Goals	xG	xGDiff
Kylian Mbappe	Real Madrid	20	21	18.58	2.42
Vedat Muriqi	Mallorca	20	14	12.35	1.65
Ferran Torres	Barcelona	19	11	9.91	1.09
Ante Budimir	Osasuna	20	9	8.97	0.03
Robert Lewandowski	Barcelona	16	9	10.09	-1.09
Alberto Moleiro	Villarreal	20	8	4.18	3.82
Borja Iglesias	Celta Vigo	19	8	7.02	0.98
Cucho Hernandez	Real Betis	19	8	7.61	0.39
Lamine Yamal	Barcelona	17	8	6.96	1.04
Mikel Oyarzabal	Real Sociedad	18	8	9.37	-1.37
Raphinha	Barcelona	13	8	5.73	2.27
Alexander Sorloth	Atletico	20	7	5.91	1.09
Hugo Duro	Valencia	20	7	5.88	1.12
Julian Alvarez	Atletico	21	7	7.35	-0.35
Vladislav Vanat	Girona	18	7	6.13	0.87



Kylian Mbappe



Vedat Muriqi



Ferran Torres

SOURCE: WHOSCORED.COM

PICTURE THIS



Hello,
Earthlings!

In aerial skiing, athletes launch themselves off a ramp, known as a kicker, and perform skill-based tricks before landing. It's a form of freestyle skiing or ski

acrobatics. Skiers travel down a slope to generate momentum for take-off. They can choose from a selection of kickers, varying in height and inclination, depending on the type of jump they wish to perform.

The tricks typically include multiple twists and flips. The jumps are scored based on the

quality of the jump, the skier's form in the air, and the landing, with the degree of difficulty factored into the final rating.

The skis used in aerials – as seen in this photograph from the FIS Freestyle World Cup at Lake Placid, New York – are shorter, and lighter, than other skis. This offers jumpers better control.

The sport, which developed from stunt skiing in the early 1900s, is contested at the Freestyle World Ski Championships and the Winter Olympics.

In summer, aerialists train with water ramps, landing in a swimming pool, as well as with trampolines, on which they can perfect their tricks.

FIDE



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