

SUNDAY
February 8, 2026
CHENNAI
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ON SUNDAY

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

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DAY 01

Inauguration : 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Keynote & Special Addresses

Session 1 : 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM

From Classroom to Cosmos

Session 2 : 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Resilience by Design: Embedding Continuity into Organisational DNA using ISO 22301 & 27031

Session 3 : 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM

Powering India's AI-Future: Data Centres, Capital, and the Race to Scale

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM LUNCH BREAK

Session 4 : 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Cyber Resilience in an AI-Driven World: Balancing Risk, Recovery, and Privacy

Session 5 : 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Data Privacy & Security in Biometric Travel Platforms

Session 6 : 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

The Role of Technology in Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery

Session 7 : 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Resilient GCCs: Continuity and Compliance at Global Scale

Session 8 : 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Governance, Risk and Intelligence: The Next GRC Framework

DAY 02

Session 1 : 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM

AI-First Digital Transformation: Moving From Automation to Intelligence

Session 2 : 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Beyond Compliance: Leveraging ISO 27001 for Integrated Data Security Management

Session 3 : 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

AI, Academia & Resilience: Building Institutions & Talent for an Uncertain Future

Session 4 : 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM

Technology, Governance & Economic Growth: A State Perspective

1:45 PM - 2:30 PM LUNCH BREAK

Session 5 : 2:30 PM - 3:00 PM

From Campus To Corporation: Building Industry-Ready Talent for an AI-First World

Session 6 : 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Data Privacy as a Pillar of Resilience: Building Trust in a Digital Age

Session 7 : 4:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Engineering Continuity: How Integrated IT Services Turn Risk into Resilience

Session 8 : 4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Bridging Academia and Industry: Building the Resilience Talent Pipeline

Session 9 : 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Data Security & Privacy in the Age of AI: Balancing Innovation and Compliance

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FAIRS & FESTIVALS

TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND ANCIENT CULTURES OF TAMIL NADU

Tamils have traditionally celebrated festivals to mark the changing seasons, and these celebrations were not confined to spring alone. Even the summer months were filled with festivals that reflected the rich cultural heritage and customs of the people. Deeply rooted in ancient customs and traditions, many of these festivals gradually assumed religious overtones.

The coffee-table book Fairs and Festivals of Tamil Nadu, vividly captures the history and spirit of these celebrations through eye-catching photographs and engaging write-ups. While urbanisation has diminished the charm of some festivals, their spirit continues to endure. The book inspires readers to travel across the State and experience these vibrant festivals firsthand.

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ICC T20 WORLD CUP

Suryakumar swings it India's way

The skipper's stroke-filled innings revives the host and propels it to a match-winning total against USA

SPORT » PAGE 22

NEARBY



T.N. should give 'zero' seats to NDA in polls: CM

KARIYAPATTI
Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday said the State should give "zero" seats to the NDA in the Assembly election, as the Centre did not fulfil the State's demands. » PAGE 8

Suspension of police personnel may be revoked

CHENNAI
With the notification of the Tamil Nadu Assembly election expected in a month, the suspension of more than 400 police officers and personnel is likely to be revoked. » PAGE 8

CLASSIFIEDS » PAGES 18 to 21
MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES
DOWN TOWN » 8 PAGES (TABLOID)
(IN SELECT AREAS)



INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

ON SUNDAY



SIR puts voters from orphanages in a fix

NEWS » PAGE 12

Araghchi: the diplomat on a tightrope

PROFILES » PAGE 16

Loud music may cause lasting damage

SCIENCE » PAGE 14

India, U.S. unveil framework for deal

Both countries commit to provide each other preferential market access

India intends to buy U.S. products worth \$500 billion over the next five years

Framework reflects trust and dynamism of partnership; will generate jobs: Modi

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

NEW DELHI

India will remove or reduce tariffs on all industrial goods and a "wide range" of agricultural goods imported from the United States, according to the joint statement issued by the two countries on Saturday morning.

In return, the U.S. will reduce its tariffs on Indian imports to 18% from the existing 50% by amending the relevant executive order, the statement said. These commitments are part of the framework the two countries have worked out in an interim agreement on trade.

Notably, the joint statement did not include any mention of India's imports of Russian oil. However, U.S. President Donald Trump separately signed an amendment to an executive order – effective from Saturday – that removed

Deal diary

India and the U.S., in a joint statement on Saturday, announced that the two countries have worked out the framework for an interim agreement on trade

- The U.S. has already removed 25% tariffs; remaining 25% will be lowered to 18% 'next week'
- India to **reduce/ remove** tariffs for U.S. goods only after a formal deal is signed, likely in March
- Sensitive agricultural items and dairy kept out of the deal
- Both countries can modify their commitments if one of them changes the agreed-upon tariffs
- Both countries agreed to continue working towards a larger Bilateral Trade Agreement



Finer details: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal speaking about the details of the deal to presspersons in New Delhi. PTI

the additional 25% tariff on imports from India, which had been imposed in August 2025 as a 'penalty' for India's import of Russian oil.

Phased implementation
Speaking to presspersons on Saturday, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said that the executive order that would reduce the remaining 25% reciprocal tariff to 18% is expected next

week. Earlier, he had said that India will be able to reduce or remove its tariffs on American goods only after the formal interim agreement is signed, which he said is expected to happen in mid-March.

"This framework reflects the growing depth, trust and dynamism of our partnership," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on X. "It strengthens 'Make in India' by opening new op-

portunities for India's hard-working farmers, entrepreneurs, MSMEs, StartUp innovators, fishermen and more. It will generate large-scale employment for women and youngsters."

"India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all U.S. industrial goods and a wide range of U.S. food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains, red sorghum for animal

feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products," the joint statement said.

"The United States and India commit to provide each other preferential market access in sectors of respective interest on a sustained basis," the statement said. "The United States and India will establish rules of origin that ensure that the benefits of the

Agreement accrue predominantly to the United States and India."

"India intends to purchase \$500 billion of U.S. energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next 5 years," it said.

"The Business Advisory Committee will meet to decide the exact number of days of the upcoming Assembly session," the Speaker said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
SKM ANNOUNCES PROTEST
» PAGE 11

T.N. interim Budget to be presented on February 17

The Hindu Bureau

TIRUNELVELI

Tamil Nadu's interim Budget for the financial year 2026-2027 will be presented in the Assembly on February 17, Speaker M. Appavu has said.

Speaking to reporters in Tirunelveli on Saturday, Mr. Appavu said the Assembly session would commence at 9.30 a.m., with Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu presenting the State's interim Budget ahead of the Assembly election.

The Finance Minister would also present in the House the demand for advance grants for the year 2026-2027 and additional expenditure for 2025-2026 for its approval, on February 20, Mr. Appavu said.

"The Business Advisory Committee will meet to decide the exact number of days of the upcoming Assembly session," the Speaker said.

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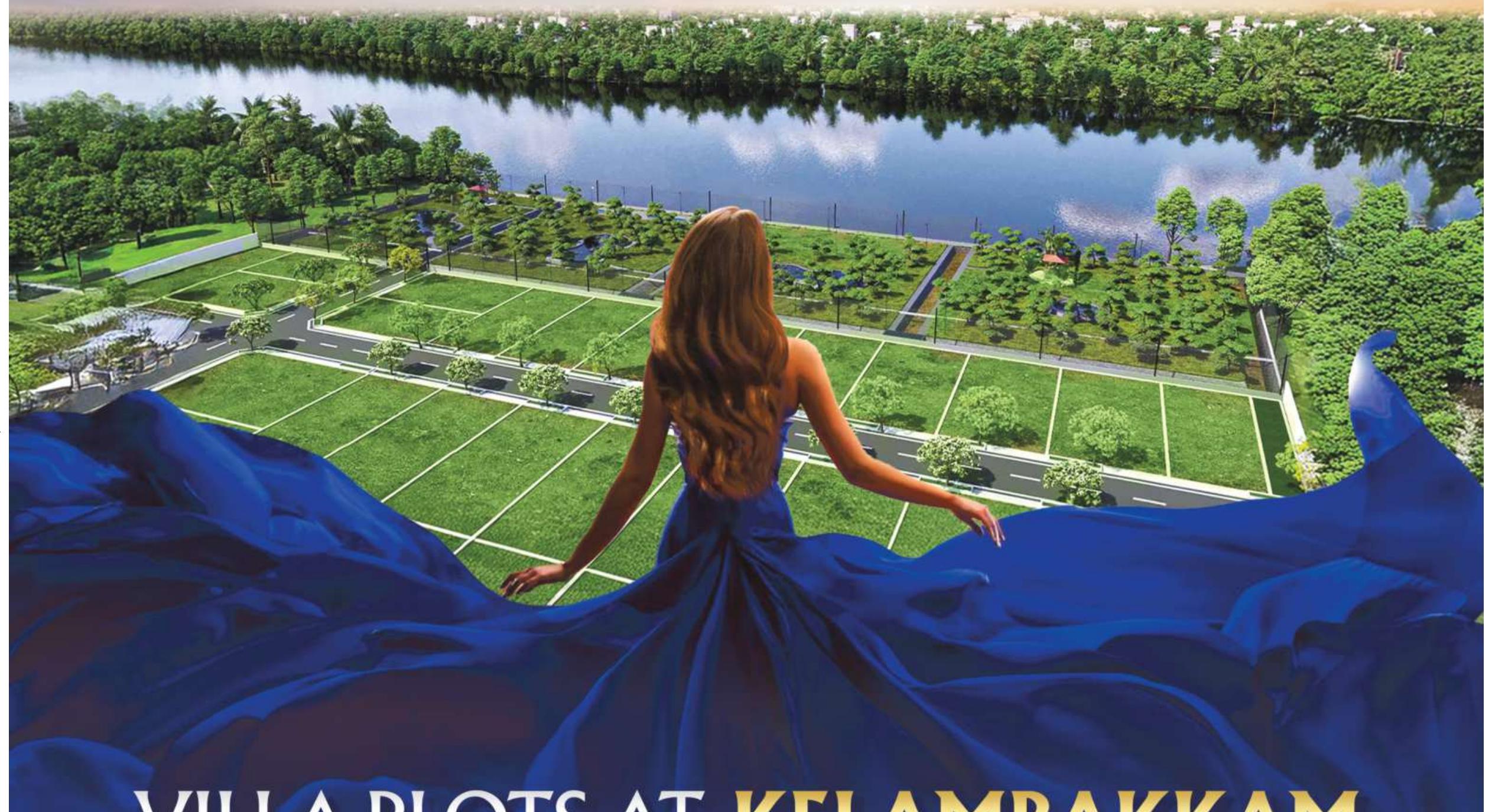
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Customs busts drug racket, seizes huge quantity of ganja

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Customs authorities at the Chennai airport busted a drug racket and seized a huge quantity of ganja from passengers recently.

On January 31, based on spot-profiling and targeted baggage screening, officers of Chennai Customs intercepted two male passengers upon their arrival from Hanoi to Chennai via Kuala Lumpur on Malaysian Airways.

On re-screening, their checked-in baggage was found to contain banned substances.

During preliminary inquiry, both passengers admitted that they were acting as carriers and were to deliver the baggage containing 11 kg of ganja to a person outside the airport. Examination of their mobile phones yielded information regarding one co-passenger.

Joint operation

Thereafter, in a joint operation with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the police, the authorities intercepted the co-passenger about 50 km away from the airport and seized 4 kg of ganja from his possession.

CINEMA ♦ ARTS ♦ EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

Anusham Arts Academy / Karnata Sangha, Ph: 9884190454. Today Ramar Kala Mantapa, 111, Habibullah Road, T.Nagar, 11:00 a.m. Bharathanatyam by Disciples of Guru Bhagavashree Sathish. All are welcome.

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Narada Gana Sabha Trust, Ph: 24993201. Today Main Hall (Satguru Gnananandha Hall) 3 pm - Harinama-Sankeerthanam by Bhagavatha Sammelana Samajam. All are welcome.

VANIMAHAL A/c (Oribi Reddy Hall, 1st Floor, Anna Salai, T.Nagar) TODAY 7.00 pm CRAZY MOHAN'S CHOCOLATE KRISHNA (Non stop laughter) 98410 49386 / 94440 27202 bookmyshow.com / mdnd.in Presented by : Nalli

MISCELLANEOUS

Humour Club International, Triplicane Chapter. Ph: 98411 61196, 9884688390, 98411 52212.

Welcome you for AN ENJOYABLE SPECIAL PROGRAMME 'NAALU PAERUKKU NANDRI' Conducted and Presided by Prof. M. RAMACHANDRAN along with popular speakers at 4 p.m. today at TAG-Mylapore Fine Arts Club Auditorium, Oliver Road, Near St. Isobel's hospital, Mylapore, Chennai - 600004. All are welcome. NEW MEMBERSHIP ENROLLED.

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natyā इकान्तोरुपा Urmila Sathyaranayanan Bharathanatyam Arangetram of Kum.G.K. Mowthika Sree Today 6.01 pm @ The Music Academy (Main Hall) TTK Road, Royapettah Chief Guests Kubera Guru VITHI MATHI THENDRAL (founder of Thendral Foundation, temple interpreter) Nadanamaanami Uma Sathyaranayanan (Bharathanatyam artist/Musician-KSNA and SNA Yuva Puraskar Awardee)

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ASHOKA Nalli

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Milk from Corporation cow sheds becomes a hit among residents of city

A cattle owner says quality feed and veterinary care yield superior quality of milk; a GCC official says the main aim of running shelters is to reduce instances of man-animal conflict on the streets

R. Aishwaryaa

CHENNAI

For residents of the city who have been looking for fresh cow milk and buying it from other sources, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) cattle shelters in 17 locations have emerged as an alternative. Now, they can buy milk during mornings and evenings directly from the sheds, which have also removed the danger of cows and buffaloes feeding on plastics and other garbage.

"It is safe for an infant, so anyone can consume it," says Basheera Begum, waiting to buy milk at the GCC cattle shelter on Peter's Road. "It is sweet even without sugar, unadulterated and healthier than packed milk," she adds.

Prices vary by location. At Peter's Road, milk retails at ₹80 per litre, ₹85 if a customer needs a container as well. Similar prices were noted in Manali as well. Meanwhile, cow milk is sold for ₹60 at the Basin Bridge shed, and buffalo milk for ₹80.

Manoj, a GCC official in



Staying healthy: There are no formal quality checks on milk, but veterinarians conduct daily health screenings on cattle. M. SRINATH

the Royapuram Zone, said the Corporation does not regulate sales or pricing directly, and it is between the customers and the cattle owners. There are no formal quality checks of the produce, but veterinarians conduct daily health screenings, and 12 CCTV cameras monitor the Basin Bridge facility, he noted.

Cattle owner Bala, petting his 'Kutta Maadu', a native breed of the State, says, "Street-roaming cattle eat plastic. But cows here have only bran, oil cakes, and even unsold veggies and fruits from

nearby supermarkets. They are well sheltered and healthy under fans and veterinary care, thus yielding superior quality of milk. We sell an average of 20 to 25 litres of milk every day. The profits are pretty much the same as they used to be before, but the cows, who are like family members, are safer and the quality of milk is better."

Daily rent

Owners must pay a daily rent of ₹10 per head to the GCC. At the Basin Bridge shelter, which houses 550

New steps
A senior GCC official said the response was good from locals over the last seven months at the Royapuram facility – the largest – and at Manali, where the milk is sold for the past three months.

"The primary objective remains clearing streets of stray cattle to mitigate man-animal conflict," the official said.

Despite these efforts, stray cows are still found on the streets of Triplicane and Zam Bazaar. The Corporation, therefore, plans a new shelter at Krishnaram, situated between Mylapore and Triplicane. It is likely to be opened in March.

Kerala actor allegedly harassed at hotel in city

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The police have interrogated a college student in connection with the alleged harassment of a Kerala-based actor.

The police said the 26-year-old actor from Ernakulam was staying at a hotel on Thomas Road in T. Nagar. She found that the intercom telephone in her room was faulty and lodged a complaint with the hotel. Following this, the hotel management sent a staff member to her room to repair the intercom. The staff member, a 20-year-old college student from Alandur, had been working part time at the hotel for the past six months.

After repairing the instrument, the student allegedly tried to hug the actor. Frightened by his behaviour, the actor immediately informed the police as he reportedly continued to harass her.

The Pondy Bazaar police rushed to the hotel and detained the suspect for questioning. During interrogation, the student denied the allegations. He allegedly stated that he repaired the intercom, took the food order, and left the room.

Subsequently, the police questioned the actor, during which she stated that she did not wish to give a written complaint or pursue legal action against the student. Before letting the student go, the police took a written undertaking from him and instructed him to appear for an inquiry when called.

Parts of Ambattur may face sewer issues

CHENNAI: Some parts of Ambattur zone may experience sewage overflow for 36 hours from 10 a.m. on Monday as Chennai Metrowater would be carrying out improvement works at

the Korattur sewage pumping station.

A press release said some of the other sewage pumping stations, including Karukku, Lenin Nagar and Thendral Nagar, will not be operated between 10 a.m. on Monday and 10 p.m. on Tuesday. Residents may call Metrowater engineers at 8144930907/8144930218/8144930257 to register complaints.



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TANUVAS staffer held over embezzlement

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

The Avadi Central Crime Branch has arrested Ethiraj Vadivel, 37, an employee of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences Uni-

versity (TANUVAS) at Madhavaram Milk Colony, on the charge of misappropriating government funds amounting to ₹2.85 crore.

The accused is alleged to have siphoned off the money from the universi-

ty's bank account by forging the signature of the university's director on NEFT forms.

Based on a complaint filed by TANUVAS seeking action against its staff member, the Avadi Central

Crime Branch registered a case, took up the investigation, and arrested Vadivel on Friday.

Subsequently, he was produced before a court and remanded in judicial custody.

Youth held for stalking and threatening 19-year-old

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

The Triplicane police have arrested a 21-year-old youth for allegedly stalking a 19-year-old college student in an attempt to force her to accept his love and threatening to kill if she refused.

The police said the accused, Ameer Ahmed Shah of Mylapore, had been following the woman for the past three months while she commuted to college. Over the last week, he allegedly contacted her repeatedly on the phone and WhatsApp and forced her to accept his proposal.

On Thursday evening, the accused approached her at a bus stop, allegedly grabbed her hand, and verbally abused her. He also threatened to kill her, before fleeing the spot.

Based on a complaint lodged by the student with the Triplicane police, a case was registered under the relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Woman Act, and the accused was arrested. Later, he was remanded in judicial custody.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Notice of Invitation E-Tender
Divisional Railway Manager, N.W. Ry. Bikaner for and on behalf of President of India invites sealed open tender for the following works on the date shown as below. Tender No: SnT-BKN-25-26-30R. Name of Work with its Location: "S&T associated work for extension of existing TMS siding at various stations over Bikaner Division" Approx. Cost of Work: 13093067.48; Bid Security: 215500.00; Date & Time for submission of Tender & opening of tender: Up to 15.00 Hrs. of 27.02.2026; Website from Which complete Tender details can be seen & download: www.ireps.gov.in
198-AN/26
Please join us on /NWRailways

GULATI INSTITUTE OF FINANCE AND TAXATION
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
No.A.008/2026/GIFT
NOTIFICATION
Dated 6 Feb 2026
Applications are invited for the post of full time Director of GIFT as per the Government order vide GO(Rt) No.153/2026/Taxes dated 5/02/2026.
Interested candidates may send their application along with Curriculum Vitae and copy of the relevant certificates to careers.gift@gmail.com
The last date for receiving the application is 23 Feb 2026.
For more details, please visit www.gift.res.in
For Search Committee
Addl. Chief Secretary (Finance & Taxation)

Government of India
NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ACT 1956 (48/1956) SECTION 3E (1)
Public Notice
Announcement of Award for acquisition of land for construction of National Highway for Land Owners/ Persons Interested therein and payment of compensation amount.
Kind attention of all land owners / interested persons is invited to the Notification issued under Section 3A of the NH Act, 1956 for acquisition of land for construction of Balance works of four Lane from km 43+950 to km 61+470 of Tirupati-Tiruttani-Chennai Section of NH-205 and the Notification issued under Section 3D of the NH Act, 1956 as noted below: The above Notifications are published in the following newspapers:
1.Dinathanthi (Tamil) 2.The Hindu (English).

Tiruvallur Taluk							
Sl. No.	Name of Village	3A(1) Gazette Date	3A(3) News Paper Date	3D(1) Gazette Date	3G(3) News Paper Date	Award No.	Award Date
1.	Kakkalur	15.10.2024	20.10.2024	11.02.2025	27.02.2025	006/2025	10.09.2025
2.	Perumalpattu					008/2025	30.09.2025
3.	Veppampattu					009/2025	05.12.2025

It is informed that the undersigned has announced the Award in respect of the said land under Section 3G of the NH Act, 1956 vide order dates as mentioned above. The land acquiring agency (MORTH / NHAI) has placed the requisite amount of compensation at the disposal of the undersigned. Notices have also been issued to the concerned land owners / interested persons as required under Section 3E of the NH Act, 1956.

Accordingly, as per provisions of the section 3E(1) of the National Highways Act 1956, all the concerned land owners / interested persons are hereby informed / notified through this Public Notice that the claimants entitled to receive the Compensation amount may collect their amount of compensation from the office of the undersigned 3/4 Lal Bahadur Shastri Street, Periyakuppam, (Near to Thulasi Theatre), Tiruvallur-602001 on any working day between 10.00 AM to 05.45 PM within a period of 60 days and surrender or deliver the possession of the subject land to the undersigned, failing which the possession of subject land will be taken with police assistance on expiry of the period of 60 days. If not, action will be taken as per section 3E(2) (a) (b) of National Highways Act 1956.



Competent Authority and
Special District Revenue Officer (LA)
National Highways - 205, Tiruvallur.

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TAMIL NADU



Hotbed of indignity: Earlier, bonded labourers worked in stone quarries and brick kilns. But the practice is now more prevalent in spinning mills, construction sites, hotels, and resorts. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Shackles, barely broken

Tomorrow, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act will turn 50. Despite the efforts to abolish the inhuman practice, the system of 'modern slavery' remains alive and kicking in Tamil Nadu. While the State has made efforts to rescue bonded labourers, delayed justice and inadequate rehabilitation undermine the Act, pointing to the need for its stringent implementation, finds **Meghna M.**

It started with ₹5,000. Shanmugam, of Tiruttani in Tiruvallur district, needed the money for his sister's wedding. The eldest and only brother in the family, he had to arrange the weddings of all his three sisters. A relative invited to the wedding in 2009 asked him how he planned to fund the event. "Through loans from the village," Mr. Shanmugam responded. The relative then recommended a wealthy person who could give him a loan that he could work off.

After the wedding, Mr. Shanmugam, a member of the Scheduled Tribe, began working off his debt at a brick kiln in Vellore. He was given a place to stay and a weekly wage of ₹300. He was then told to bring his family; so, his wife Latha and their three-year-old son and six-month-old daughter joined him. As Mr. Shanmugam worked, his son would help by throwing sand on the bricks to help them dry. Ms. Latha, who was not paid any wage, also toiled at the kiln every day and performed domestic work at their employer's house. "I thought I would have some money left after the deduction for the loan. But, at the end of one year, when I asked my employer how much I had to repay, he told me that it was ₹19,000 with interest," said Mr. Shanmugam, who soon realised that there was no way out.

Retrospective effect

February 9, 2026 will mark 50 years since the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was brought in. Though the Act was passed in February 1976, it was given retrospective effect from October 1975. According to the Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Labour, Textile, and Skill Development for 2024-25, 2,95,795 people have been rescued from bonded labour since 1978. A rescued person is entitled to an initial compensation of ₹30,000, a release certificate, and provision of land, voter ID, and Aadhaar card for rehabilitation. Once their cases result in conviction, they will receive the final compensation of ₹1 lakh to ₹3 lakh.

However, human rights activists point to the gaps in the implementation of the legislation, rehabilitation, and delivery of justice. The Global Slavery Index 2023 estimates that nearly 49.6 million people worldwide are living in modern slavery, including 11 million in India. According to a government policy note, in 2024-25, 120 people were rescued from bonded labour in Tamil Nadu, but activists say the practice is often under-reported in the State. "It took us at least 30 years after the Act came into force to fully understand it; but, as the world grows, the system has also evolved. And the Act no longer keeps pace with it. We need better monitoring mechanisms to address new forms of bonded labour," says Bala Murugan Palaniyandi, a human rights activist.

What has changed?

With no end in sight, Mr. Shanmugam called up his father to explain the situation and asked him to bring him some money. His father sold his two goats and brought him ₹12,000. His employer, however, refused to let Mr. Shanmugam go. "He told me that I could leave only if I paid off the whole sum. We did not know what to do; my father too went back with the money."

Mr. Shanmugam's day would start at 3 a.m. and end at 10 p.m. His entire family ate only one meal a day, which was mostly *kanji* (congee). "We had to buy the rice from the employer with the



It took us at least 30 years after the Act came into force to fully understand it; but, as the world grows, the system has also evolved. And the Act no longer keeps pace with it. We need better monitoring mechanisms to address new forms of bonded labour

BALA MURUGAN PALANIYANDI,
human rights activist

wages he gave us. We could not talk to anyone from the village, and no one was allowed to speak to us. There were four other families like us," he said.

Ms. Latha recalled falling sick at the brick kiln. She was vomiting blood and her stomach ache was unbearable. "I could not go to work. I went to the employer to ask for money to buy medicines, but he said he did not have any cash. As I could not eat food on time, my pain only got worse." On the way back to the brick kiln, she collapsed on the road, but her employer did not want to send his vehicle to take her to hospital. "I was crying in pain. Under pressure from passers-by, he agreed to take me to hospital. Much later in the evening, he finally sent me to a doctor. I thought I was left for dead," she added.

Freed at last

In 2014, through intervention of an NGO and government, the family and other bonded labourers were rescued. "We were so happy," Mr. Shanmugam said. However, finding work turned out to be more difficult than he had imagined. Though they were issued a release certificate, the family received only ₹1,000 of the initial rehabilitation amount of ₹20,000. Today, the sum has been increased to ₹30,000 through the Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer in 2021.

"Nobody would hire me in my village or nearby. They were afraid that I would lodge bonded labour cases against them," he said. Mr. Shanmugam did not receive the other rehabilitation entitlements either. But, with an NGO's help, he learnt how to make bamboo products and started his own company. "I make it a point to hire other released bonded labourers who need jobs to survive. I do not want anybody else to fall into this trap and suffer like us," he emphasised.

"When the law was formulated, there were more bonded labourers in agriculture, stone quarries, and brick kilns. But labour exploitation has taken a different shape now," says Kandasamy Krishnan, secretary, National Adivasi Solidarity Council. "Today, it is more prevalent in spinning mills, textile factories, construction sites, hotels, apartments, and resorts. Previously, those exploited were generational bonded labourers, but now they are mostly trapped through 'advance debt' or are intra-State or inter-State migrants trafficked by middlemen."

Experts note that while Tamil Nadu has been making considerable efforts to implement the Act, they are far from enough. The execution falls on the shoulders of the Collectors. They must identify, rescue, and rehabilitate the labourers and ensure that justice is delivered. Further, vigilance meetings are held monthly under the chairmanship of the Collector to track the progress of inspections and other measures.

Mr. Bala Murugan says the official machinery, however, remains reluctant to file cases under the legislation. "They use other clauses under the labour law to penalise employers and do not report it as a case of bonded labour. How will bonded labour be abolished? They also do not understand the severity of the issue and take proactive steps to address it."

Children in bonded labour

Dhanraj (*name changed*) was 12 years old when he was picked up by a stranger from his school gate one morning in Theni in 2019. The man said

In Tamil Nadu, in 2024-25, 120 people were rescued from bonded labour, but activists say the practice is often under-reported in the State

he was sent by his parents to take him to work so he could pay for his ailing father's treatment. "He seemed to know everything about my family and said he was a distant relative. So, I believed him," said Dhanraj, now 19.

"The man handed me over to a couple, got ₹5,000 from them, and told me this money would be delivered to my mother to help with my father's surgery," said Mr. Dhanraj. "I believed him, but I kept asking him to call my mother so I could speak with her. He made convincing excuses of her not being available. I had no choice," he said.

The couple moved the boy to their confectionery in Bengaluru where he sometimes packaged or assembled things. "I would work from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. and be given food twice a day. I would ask about my salary and about my mother, but the owners would say my wages were given to the stranger and they do not have my mother's contact [number]," he said.

Mr. Dhanraj said he had no idea that he was kidnapped. "I really believed that my parents had sent me to work. Only when I was rescued a year later did I realise it. My parents had taken loans to search for me," he said. Today, he is pursuing a degree near his home town.

The one-year break in his education, however, demotivated Mr. Dhanraj. "I understood nothing. I was having a hard time concentrating. I even wished to return to the factory instead of studying. There was no one to guide my learning," he said, adding that he was enrolled in a government school after his rescue.

Failure of the government

A Chennai-based child rights expert says when a child becomes a labourer or gets into bonded labour, the denial of education becomes the biggest failure of the government. "In today's world, everything is skill-based. A person cannot get a good job if he or she has no education. When a child is rescued and does not find good employment, it is not only the child who suffers but also generations after him/her. They will be confined to meagre wages with no mobility," he says.

Recently, four children aged 13 to 17 of the Irular community were rescued from a brick kiln in Minnal village near Arakkonam in Ranipet district by officials led by Sub-Collector and Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) T. Ramesh.

Labour Department officials say that there are bonded labourers in remote tribal areas in the Javadi Hills, covering Vellore, Tirupattur, and Tiruvannamalai districts, where tribal people are forced to work in inhuman conditions without wages, and are subjected to verbal abuse and caste discrimination. They are also not allowed to leave their worksite. The officials say many landlords take advantage of the remoteness of these tribal hamlets, where there are no jobs for locals, to enrol tribal families as bonded labourers.

Activists note that there have been increasing cases of inter-State migrants, saddled with debts, coming to the State and getting caught in the bonded labour system. "We have estimated that four million people migrate. The source States and receiving States need to work together further."

er with the Centre to tackle bonded labour involving these migrants. The destination State must also take responsibility for their protection," says Bernard D'Sami, senior fellow, Loyola Institute of Social Science Training and Research. Mr. Krishnan calls for help desks to tackle the problem effectively. "They can be established in places such as railway stations as trains are the workers' primary mode of travel," he says.

Legal gaps

It has been 12 years since Mr. Shanmugam and his family were released, and they still await justice. Mr. Dhanraj's case ended in conviction in 2025. This means he can now receive his final rehabilitation amount. But he says there has been no information regarding this for over three months. Like them, there are many rescued workers who wait for compensation.

"As this process takes longer, with assistance and rehabilitation dependent on the outcome of the case, there is a very high risk of the released labourer getting back into bondage," says Mr. Krishnan.

In 2019, Tamil Nadu issued a Standard Operating Procedure to end bonded labour. Rights advocates say this decision has helped reduce the time required to complete a rescue, file a first information report (FIR), and submit the chargesheet. However, there is much to be done before the case can be completed. While the filing of the chargesheet would usually take at least two years, the time frame has been reduced to a year – a marginal improvement, they say.

"Many times, the police do not add provisions of other Acts such as the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, or the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, which have their own procedures. So, when the chargesheet is filed without these provisions, the judge would ask the police to add them. As a result, the cases get delayed further," says M. Raja, legal advisor, Released Bonded Labourers Association.

Further, coordination among various departments is required to ensure the disbursal of the final settlement. The police are required to keep the Labour Department updated on all the cases. This, however, is not done meticulously, leading to a further delay in rehabilitation, because it is the Labour Department that has to send the proposal to the government.

Noting the absence of a State-level database that tracks cases and compensation, legal experts and rights activists opine that this leads to many gaps going unaddressed.

Recognising the increasing delay in delivering justice to the victims, a senior official of the Department says officials are working with other departments to ensure speedy justice. In July 2016, the Union government informed Parliament that it would achieve "total abolition of bonded labour" by 2030, a sentiment echoed by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in 2023.

Activists, however, point out that with the current state of implementation, this would be unrealistic. But there is a glimmer of hope for Tamil Nadu. "It is possible to end 70% of bonded labour in the State by 2030. This can happen if the government is serious and makes sure that there is coordination between the departments, and rehabilitation is provided without delay," says Mr. Krishnan.

(With inputs from D. Madhavan in Vellore)

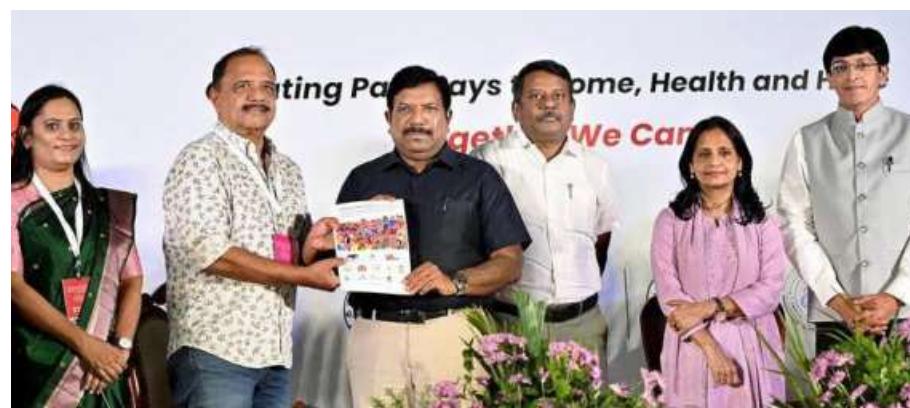
'Govt. keen to expand programme to support mentally ill to all districts'

State studying impact of Home Again programme; Chief Secretary highlights need to focus on mental healthcare; says govt. is ensuring that residents of all homes for the mentally ill get services such as ration cards, Aadhaar, and pensions

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government is studying the impact of the Home Again programme run by The Banyan, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), in collaboration with the government and in partnership with other NGOs, in five districts. Based on this, it would like to take the programme to all districts of the State, Chief Secretary N. Muruganandam has said.

Speaking at an event held to launch the impact report of the Emergency Care and Recovery Centre (ECRC) and Home Again programmes on Saturday, he said halfway home initiatives were also being run, supported by the Department for the Welfare of the Differently Abled, and their impact was also



Striving for wellness: Chief Secretary N. Muruganandam at the launch of the impact report, along with senior officials of the Tamil Nadu government and The Banyan. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

being studied.

Mr. Muruganandam said the government was ensuring that residents of all homes for the mentally ill were being provided with services such as Aadhaar cards, pensions, and ration cards, and priority was being given to them for housing and skill training.

He highlighted the need

to focus on mental health-care in the backdrop of the rising incidence of mental illness across the country.

Continuity in funding Supriya Sahu, Environment and Forests Secretary, stressed the need for continuity in funding and community engagement in order to sustain any initiative, including the

ECRC programme.

J. Radhakrishnan, Chairman and Managing Director, TNEB, and Chairman, TNPGCL, underscored the need for attention in times of disasters when vulnerable people were the worse affected.

Families reunited Health Secretary P. Senthil Kumar said 32 districts

had functional ECRCs and seven more were in the pipeline, highlighting the challenges of mobilising resources and the need for further strengthening of systems.

M. Lakshmi, Commissioner for Welfare of the Differently Abled, said the Home Again programme had helped reunite several people with their families, while many more had managed to find livelihood opportunities and reintegrate into society.

Archana Padmakar, chief executive officer, The Banyan, speaking on the impact report, noted the creation of 1,091 beds over five years for the homeless mentally ill, 138 Home Again houses across the country, and, significantly, the fact that 50% of those who accessed these services had gone back to their families, with re-admission rate being only 2%.

Water supply to be affected in two zones

CHENNAI: Residents of two zones in north Chennai will not receive piped water supply on February 9 as Chennai Metrowater will carry out pipeline interconnection work at Madhavaram.

A press release said residents of areas such as Kargil Nagar, Manali New Town, Ernavoor, Andarkuppam, Mathur, and Sadayankuppam, falling under the Tiruvottiyur and Manali zones, will not receive piped water supply for 12 hours, starting from 10 a.m. on February 9.

THE HINDU
Air Surcharge as applicable:
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Port Blair - Rs. 15/-



By CEE/P/JBP स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD INVITATION OF BIDS – ITEM WAR (Two Cover System) Short Term-e Submission			
IFB No.	26/F. UGSS to Ambur -Mgty AA /D/OC/E /VLR (2026 /D/05.02.2026		
Eligibility	Registered Class I Contractors (Civil)		
Tender Invitee	Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, No.8, 1 st East Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Vellore-60		
Downloading Period	12.02.2026 upto 19.02.2026	15.00 Hours	
EMD Payable	Online Mode or e-BG through e-Tendering Website https://intenders.gov.in		
Pre Bid meeting	16.02.2026 up to 15.00 Hours duly Digitally signed through e-Tendering Website https://intenders.gov.in		
Bid Submission	19.02.2026	15.00 Hours	duly Digitally signed through e-Tendering Website https://intenders.gov.in
Bid opening	20.02.2026 at 15.30 Hours through e-Tender Portal		
IFB No.	Name of work	Approximate value (incl. GST 18%) (Rs. in lakhs)	Bid Security (Rs. in lakhs)
26	Providing UGSS to Newly Added Areas of Govindapuram (Ward-5 Part) and JJ Street (Ward-32 Part) in Ambur Municipality at Thirupattur District - Construction period of 12 months, Trial run 6 months and Paid Maintenance period-1 year	5.56	4.17
DIPR/ B13 /TENDER/2026	Chief Engineer (I/c), TWAD Board, Vellore-6		

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THE HINDU GROUP

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL PRINCIPAL BENCH FARIDKOT HOUSE, COPERNICUS MARG NEW DELHI - 110001

National Green Tribunal invites applications to fill up the following posts on deputation basis:-

Sr. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Posts	Pay Matrix Level
1.	Principal Private Secretary	01	PML-11
2.	Private Secretary	13	PML-8 (1 post is against lien)

Interested persons may submit their application in the prescribed proforma, available on the website: www.greentribunal.gov.in, through proper channel so as to reach on or before 09/03/2026 (5.00 PM). CBC 13141/12/0001/2526 Registrar General

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TIRUPPUR CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Notice for Inviting E-Tender
Roc.No.E1/5846/2025 Date:05.02.2026

1. E-Tenders are invited from the eligible bidders for 3 Work under in 15 CFC (Tied Grant) 2025-26.
2. Total Project Cost Rs.620.00 Lakhs.
3. The details of the tender shall be obtained from web portal <https://intenders.gov.in>
4. The tender documents shall be downloaded from 10.02.2026 to 25.02.2026 through the portal <https://intenders.gov.in>
5. Pre Bid Meeting will be Held on 17.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M at concerned Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation Office.
6. 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 25.02.2026.
7. The received tenders will be opened at 3.30 PM on 25.02.2026 at the Office of Tiruppur City Municipal Corporation, Municipal Office Road, Tiruppur – 641604.
8. 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/825/TENDER/2026

Office of the Executive Engineer
Road Construction Department,
Road Division, Garhwa

e-Procurement Notice
For National Competitive Bidding
(Short Term Tender)
e-Tender Reference No.: RCD/GARHWA/121/2025-26 (3rd Call)
Date:- 06.02.2026

1. Name of the work	Improvement of Riding Quality work of Kharsoota More to Kasnap More road (Total Length- 23.30 km.) under Road Division, Garhwa
2a. Approximate Value of Work	Rs. 15,06,38,769.00 (Rupees Fifteen crore Six Lakh Thirty Eight thousand Seven hundred Sixty Nine) only.
b. Bid Security*	Rs. 15,07,000.00 (Rupees Fifteen Lac Seven Thousand) only.
3. Time of Completion	05 (Five) Months.
4. Date of Publication of Tender on website	13-02-2026, 10.30 A.M.
5. Last date/Time for receipt of bids	20-02-2026, 12.00 Noon
6. Name & address of office Inviting tender	Executive Engineer, RCD, Road Division, Garhwa Pin Code - 822114
7. Contact no. of Procurement officer	06561-295161
8. Helpline number of e-Procurement cell	0651-2401010

Note :- The Bid Amount & Bid security will be decrease or increase. Further details can be seen on website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>
Executive Engineer
Road Construction Department
Road Division, Garhwa

PR 372529 Road (25-26)_D

KARNATAKA HOUSING BOARD
Office of the Executive Engineer, No. 52, B.S.R. Layout,
Konasandra, Jigani, Suryanagar 4th Phase, Bengaluru - 560105.
Email: khbsrph4@gmail.com Ph: 080-24482702

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the public that STATE LEVEL ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY, KARNATAKA (Constituted by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India) has issued the Environmental Clearance to Karnataka Housing Board vide File No. SEIAA 126 CON 2025 and EC identification No. EC25B3812KA5496641N dated 27.01.2026 for Modification in the existing Environmental Clearance and Expansion of Development of Sites and Service Scheme at Suryanagar 4th Phase, Swami Vivekananda Layout (Pradhana Mantri Township) in Sy. Nos. 29/1A & Others of Konasandra Village, Sy. Nos. 41/1 & Others of Bommandahalli Village, Sy. Nos. 1/1 & Others of Kadujakkahalli Village, Sy. Nos. 9/1 & Others of Indlawaii Village, Sy. Nos. 1,2/1 & Others of Baggandoddi Village, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District. The Environmental Clearance issued by the State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority, Karnataka can be accessed at the website <https://parivesh.nic.in>

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
KHB, Suryanagar 4th Phase, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/NC/5343/2025-26

IN BRIEF



'Govt. must consider demands made by noon-meal workers'

Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) leader Anbumani Ramadoss on Saturday urged the Tamil Nadu government to consider the slew of demands, including retirement benefits, put forth by noon-meal workers. In a statement, he said the noon-meal and anganwadi workers have been protesting for nearly five days demanding that the State government consider their demands, including pension benefits and a hike in gratuity. Instead of holding talks with them to find an amicable solution to their demands, the State government's attempt to detain them during the protest was highly condemnable, he said, and added that the State government should immediately hold talks with the protesters.

CM pays tribute to Devaneyya Pavanar on birth anniversary

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Saturday paid tributes to Tamil scholar Devaneyya Pavanar, who is fondly referred to as *Mozhi Gnayiru*, on his birth anniversary. In a post on X, Mr. Stalin recalled the words of Pavanar, who said: "Parithimaar Kalaigal sowed the seeds for the Pure Tamil movement. Maraimalai Adigal helped the movement to grow like a plant. I am the one nurturing it into a tree." Mr. Stalin said Pavanar devoted his life to the Tamil lexicon project called *Agaramudhal Thittam* and worked tirelessly to preserve Tamil's uniqueness.

Ahead of Assembly poll, suspension of over 400 policemen likely to be revoked

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

With the notification for the Tamil Nadu Assembly election expected in about a month, the suspension of more than 400 police officers and personnel is likely to be revoked in the State.

In a note sent to senior police officers across the State, Director General of Police and Head of Police Force (in charge) G. Venkataraman said of the 439 police personnel under suspension as of December 31, 2025, in corruption, disciplinary, criminal, and departmental cases, 202 had been under suspension for more than a year.

The note said the government had reiterated the need to strictly adhere to the prescribed time limits for processing disciplinary proceedings and to avoid unwarranted delays



G. Venkataraman

in their completion.

Exercising restraint

Prolonged suspension, it said, resulted in the government paying an employee without any work being taken from him or her.

"Hence, the power to order suspension should be exercised carefully and with restraint. Suspension shall not be resorted to unless the authority concerned, after considering

all relevant factors, records a reasoned conclusion that such action is necessary and in public interest," the note said.

Mr. Venkataraman directed senior police officers to review all suspension cases under their respective jurisdictions on a case-by-case basis and take a decision on revoking the suspension of police personnel.

Priority should be given to cases where personnel have been under suspension for a prolonged period, as many such suspensions had been quashed by courts on technical grounds. Preference could also be given in cases where no grave delinquency or serious misconduct was involved, and where the nature of the charges did not warrant continued suspension or prejudice disciplinary proceedings

or public interest beyond a reasonable period.

In cases where criminal charges involved complicated questions of law and fact, and where the disciplinary authority was not in a position to conclude proceedings - particularly cases based on vigilance reports pending before courts without explicit reasons for delay - the competent authority may, in consultation with the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, decide to revoke the suspension.

Reinstated police personnel should be posted to non-sensitive posts until their complete exoneration. Senior police officers have been instructed to take immediate steps to revoke the suspensions and submit a compliance report to the DGP's office by February 13.

Speaking to reporters here, he said seeking a higher number of seats was the Congress party's right.

"The DMK and the Chief Minister have a large heart and the capacity to accommodate allies. They have implemented world-class welfare schemes in Tamil Nadu," he said.

When asked whether the Congress would also seek a share in governance, he said that all such decisions would be taken

by the party's high command.

The TNCC president was in Tiruchi to take part in a nationwide protest organised by the Congress against the withdrawal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. As part of the protest, party workers staged a demonstration

near the Gandhi statue close to the Main Guard Gate-Marakkadai stretch in Gandhi Market, followed by a public meeting at Marakkadai.

'Protest will continue'

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Selvaperunthagai criticised the Union government and Prime Minister

As Union govt. gave 'nothing' to T.N. in Budget, NDA should be given a 'zero' in polls: CM

Tamil Nadu has been ranked number one in the Centre's ratings under DMK rule; despite this, the BJP-led Union govt. has not offered the poll-bound State any benefits in the Budget, says Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
KARIYAPATTI

DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Saturday that Tamil Nadu should give "zero"-seat tally to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the Assembly election as the BJP-led Union government had given "zero" to Tamil Nadu in the Union Budget and did not fulfil the genuine demands of the State.

Addressing the South Zone DMK Youth Wing conference near here, Mr. Stalin said Tamil Nadu had been the 'numero uno' State in the country in all departments during the last five-year rule of the DMK. "It has been ranked number one in the Union government's ratings and also by national and international magazines. Tamil Nadu's progress has no parallel," he said.

However, Tamil Nadu has got nothing in the Union Budget, belying the anticipation that the poll-bound State would get



Scathing attack: DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin greeting supporters attending the party's South Zone Youth Wing conference in Kallakurichi on Saturday. R. ASHOK

some benefits from the Union government. Mr. Stalin said all that Tamil Nadu demanded was more funds for disaster management, Metro Rail, drinking water schemes, and railway projects, permission for the new airport in Hosur, 50% devolution of Central funds to the State, exemption from NEET, expedited construction of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Madurai, and the promise of not reducing the number of Lok Sabha seats under delimitation.

But nothing has been granted by the Union government. "They gave us zero. The BJP-led NDA should be given zero in the Assembly election, similar to what they got in the 2024 Lok Sabha election," Mr. Stalin said.

He ridiculed AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami for claiming that he was the head of the NDA in the State. However, the BJP has made the AIADMK a branch of the national party, and he was not raising

his voice in the interest of Tamil Nadu, he alleged.

Mr. Stalin also criticised the AIADMK's proposed protest against the DMK for preventing the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) scheme. "Does Mr. Palaniswami even know the name of this new scheme? The Union government did not give [funds for providing] jobs even for 50 days when the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme guaranteed jobs for 100 days. How will the Union government ensure that the jobs are given for 125 days as promised, this when the States have been made to contribute 40% of the funds towards the scheme?" he asked.

The BJP that has tasted only defeat in the State and the AIADMK, which has seen multiple defeats, should not only be defeated again in the Assembly election but also with a bigger margin to make the State more progressive, the Chief Minister added.



Amit Shah

Karaikal, a senior BJP functionary said the alliance remained strong and both parties were working with enthusiasm.

According to police sources in Karaikal, Mr. Shah is expected to arrive by helicopter in Thirunallar and attend the public meeting. He may also visit the Thirunallar temple before departing on the same day. The detailed itinerary is expected to be finalised in the coming days.

Around 500 police personnel, including those from the Puducherry Police, are expected to be deployed. Security arrangements will be monitored by the Puducherry Deputy Inspector General of Police. Routine and street-level patrolling will be intensified. Checks along the Tamil Nadu-Karaikal border will be enhanced from Monday.

Seat-sharing talks with DMK progressing smoothly, says TNCC chief at Tiruchi rally

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUCHI



TNCC president K. Selvaperunthagai and other party leaders and cadre taking out a rally in Tiruchi on Saturday. R. SELVA MUTHU KUMAR

The DMK and the Chief Minister have a large heart and the capacity to accommodate allies. They have implemented world-class welfare schemes in Tamil Nadu

K. SELVAPERUNTHAGAI

TNCC president

Narendra Modi and said the Congress would continue its agitation until Gandhiji's name was restored in the Act. He recalled Gandhiji's contributions to India's freedom struggle and the circumstances that led to the enactment of the MGNREGA, which he said had won international appreciation as a landmark legislation aimed at supporting the poor and the marginalised.

Finance Commission identifies T.N. as one of top 3 States suffering heavy losses from public sector enterprises

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has been identified as one of the top three States in the country that suffer from heavy losses incurred by State Public Sector Enterprises (SPSEs).

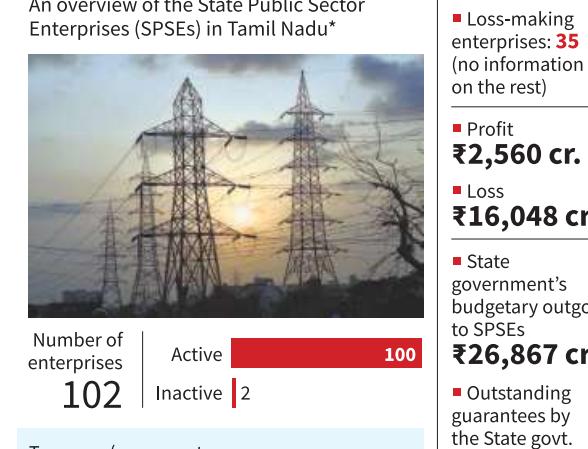
For the year 2022-23, the top three States in this category were Uttar Pradesh (₹32,430 crore), Rajasthan (₹18,814 crore), and Tamil Nadu (₹16,048 crore), according to the volume 1 of the main report of the 16th Finance Commission.

These States come under the broad group of non-northeastern and hilly (non-NEH) States.

As in the case of other non-NEH States, a substantial portion of the losses were concentrated in the power sector. In the year in question, the now-defunct Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corpora-

Mixed results

An overview of the State Public Sector Enterprises (SPSEs) in Tamil Nadu*



A substantial portion of the losses were concentrated in the power sector

one of the successors of the Tangedco, at ₹2,073 crore. But this had become possible due to the State government's largesse - the provision of tariff subsidy of ₹15,772 crore and the takeover of loss of ₹16,107 crore.

More significantly, the accumulated deficit of the TNPCL went down to ₹19,153 crore in 2024-25 from ₹1,66,944 crore of the Tangedco in 2023-24, thanks to the unbundling of the latter.

Describing the poor financial performance of SPSEs as "a burden on State budgets," the Finance Commission stated that the State governments had to incur budgetary expen-

diture in the form of subsidies, grants, equity investments, and loans. Besides, they had to provide guarantees against the loans raised by the SPSEs.

The financial support extended by State governments to SPSEs in the form of equity, loans, and grants/subsidies through the budget during the year 2022-23 amounted to ₹2.5 lakh crore.

The Commission recorded that for 2022-23, the budgetary outgo of the Tamil Nadu government to the SPSEs was ₹26,867 crore and till the end of the year in question, the outstanding guarantees stood at ₹89,768 crore.

The Commission did not include Tamil Nadu in the club of States with a high proportion of loss-making enterprises, a matter that provides solace to policymakers and people of the State.

Cases booked against Srirangam MLA, son, and journalists over incident at quarry

The Hindu Bureau
KARUR

The Kulithalai police have registered cases against Srirangam DMK MLA M. Palaniyandi, his son Vimalathithan, a television reporter, and a cameraman following an altercation at a stone quarry near Ayyamalai in Karur district.

The police said cases were registered based on complaints from both sides in connection with the incident on January 30. The quarry in Sivayam North village is leased in the name of Mr. Vimalathithan. According to the police, a confrontation broke out when quarry staff objected to journalists visiting the site to verify alleged

violations. Members of both sides sustained injuries and were admitted to the Kulithalai Government Hospital, with the journalists later referred to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital in Tiruchi.

The journalists denied the allegations against them and accused the MLA, his son, and quarry workers of assault and seizure of equipment, while the quarry lessee alleged trespass and physical assault.

Based on the complaints from both parties, the police on Thursday registered FIRs against them under sections relating to assault, criminal intimidation, and use of abusive language. Investigation is under way.

Jallikattu spectator dies of injuries in Pudukkottai

The Hindu Bureau
PUDUKKOTTAI

A 17-year-old youth, who was undergoing treatment after being gored by a bull during a jallikattu held at Kulamangalam village in Pudukkottai district on February 2, died in hospital on Friday.

According to police sources, the deceased, S. Chinmaya, was watching the jallikattu when a bull gored him, causing grievous injuries to his neck. He was administered first aid by the medical team stationed at the venue and was later referred to Thanjavur Government Medical College Hospital for treatment.

However, he succumbed to his injuries on Friday evening. The body was handed over to the victim's family after the post-mortem.

IN BRIEF



Pinarayi lays foundation stone for organ transplant institute

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has flagged the high cost of medical treatment in private hospitals in Kerala. He was laying the foundation stone for the Kerala Institute of Organ and Tissue Transplant on the campus of the Government Dermatology Hospital, Chevayur, on Saturday. Mr. Vijayan said the cost of treatment varied from one private hospital to another. This was revealed while examining applications for help under the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund.

Proposed Bill on menstrual leave deferred in Karnataka

The State government's plans on ushering in the Karnataka Women Well Being Leave Bill, 2025, seen as a pioneering legislation in the country, seems to have been put on the back burner amid opposition from several quarters. The Bill was proposed to be introduced during the last Winter Session, even as a Government Order on the one-day menstrual leave a month had been questioned in the Karnataka High Court. The Bill, however, did not make it to the legislature.

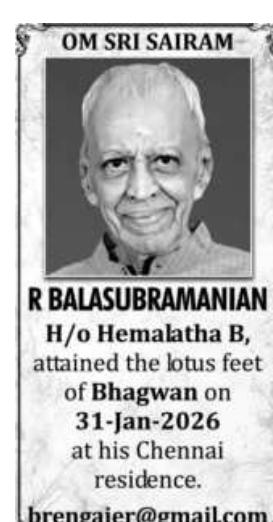
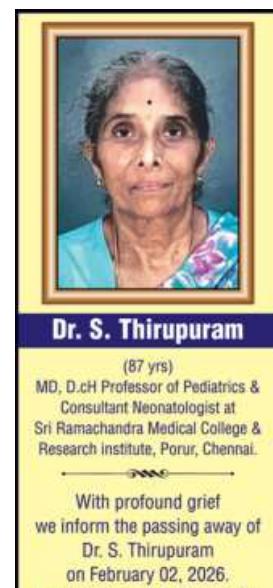
Fire at Telangana Forensic Lab damages case evidence

A fire broke out at the Telangana Forensic Science Laboratory in Nampally on Saturday. No casualties or injuries were reported in the incident. Preliminary findings suggest that the blaze may have been triggered by a short circuit. Another official said that enquiry with the staff revealed that the first floor housed physical evidence, including case-related samples and documents along with computer systems which were damaged in the fire.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SHRI. RAMASESHADRI (90), Rtd HGA Vellore LIC, attained Vaikunta Prapthi on 11 Jan 2026 at Chennai. Deeply mourned by wife, sons, daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchild. Contact: 9884666543



HC rejects plea on entry of Christian priests into temple

Kerala court says the priests were invitees to an event at Sree Parthasarathy Temple and that the *tantri* had permitted their entry as guests; Bench cautions against use of rules to foment discord

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court has dismissed a plea challenging the entry of two Christian priests into the Adoor Sree Parthasarathy Temple in Pathanamthitta district in 2023, alleging that it violated the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965.

Statutes, rules and regulations ought not to be permitted to become instruments for fomenting discord or disharmony between different religions, castes, sub-castes or communities



gal framework must function as a unifying force that fosters mutual respect and coexistence, it noted.

The court was considering a petition seeking to declare as illegal the entry of Zacharias Mar Aprem of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and another

Christian priest during a Sreekrishna Jayanthi function on September 7, 2023. The priests had been invited to the temple as guests to attend the event.

The plea, filed by Sanil Narayanan Nampoothiri, a teacher, also sought directions to the Travancore De-

vaswom Board and the temple authorities to prevent the entry of non-Hindus into the shrine.

A Bench of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V. and K.V. Jayakumar said the priests were permitted entry as guests by the *tantri* (temple priest), and it was fundamentally distinct from an entry claimed as a matter of right. The court noted that the aim of the 1965 Act was to permit the entry of all classes of Hindus into temples and to prevent discrimination. However, while framing the rules, Rule 3(a) introduced a prohibition on the entry of non-Hindus, though the parent Act contained no such restriction, it said.

SIT questions UDF convener Adoor Prakash in Sabarimala gold misappropriation case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



Adoor Prakash

The High Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Sabarimala Gold misappropriation case questioned United Democratic Front (UDF) convener, Adoor Prakash, MP, for nearly three hours at the Kerala Police Crime Branch Headquarters in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday.

Officials said Mr. Pra-

him with the prime accused in the case, Unnikrishnan Potti, surfaced in the public domain.

Officials said the SIT was also examining whether Mr. Prakash had facilitated Mr. Potti's entry into Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's heavily guarded Delhi residence. Investigators were also examining photographs showing Mr. Prakash accepting an envelope and a "goody bag" from Mr. Potti in a hotel

kash had emerged as a subject of interest to investigators after photographs of

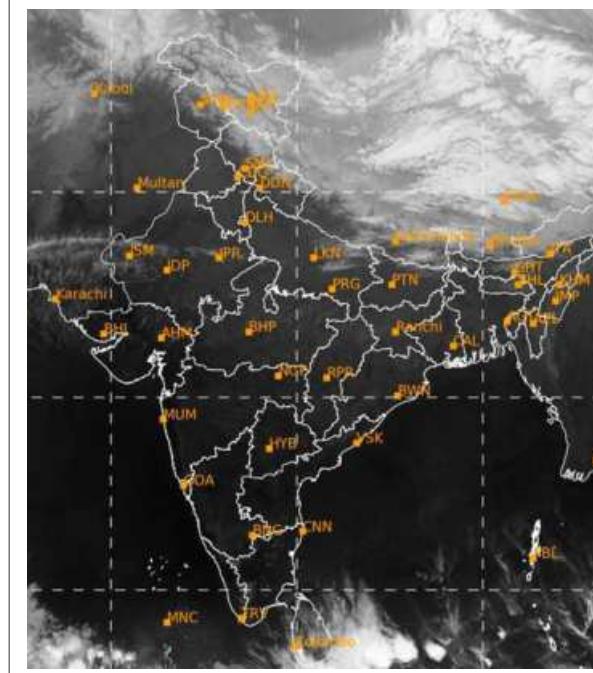
room in Bengaluru.

Mr. Prakash had clarified last week that the envelope was a wedding invitation and the carry bag contained sweets. He also stated that he knew Mr. Potti only as a constituent keen on Sabarimala affairs.

Mr. Prakash also stated that he did not perceive anything political or odd about the questioning. He said he had answered the SIT's questions with candour.

WEATHER WATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



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

Forecast for Sunday: No weather warning

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	26.6	11.2	Kozhikode	—	35.0	23.9
Ahmedabad	—	32.5	19.0	Kurnool	—	33.9	18.4
Aizawl	—	26.4	11.8	Lucknow	—	25.0	10.3
Allahabad	—	26.6	10.6	Madurai	—	33.4	20.6
Bengaluru	—	30.1	16.3	Mangaluru	—	35.1	21.4
Bhopal	—	27.4	11.0	Mumbai	—	34.6	19.7
Bhubaneswar	—	32.3	17.7	Mysuru	—	31.4	16.8
Chandigarh	—	24.0	9.4	New Delhi	—	25.1	11.8
Chennai	—	31.2	20.9	Patna	—	25.0	13.8
Coimbatore	—	32.0	19.0	Port Blair	—	30.3	22.0
Dehradun	—	29.5	19.0	Puducherry	—	30.0	20.3
Gangtok	—	13.6	8.6	Pune	—	32.7	17.1
Goa	—	35.3	19.0	Raipur	—	30.1	15.8
Guwahati	—	27.0	13.7	Ranchi	—	24.4	10.0
Hubballi	—	32.0	16.0	Shillong	—	18.0	6.4
Hyderabad	—	31.7	17.0	Shimla	—	18.2	6.8
Imphal	—	25.2	4.7	Srinagar	—	11.7	3.0
Jaipur	—	27.8	12.0	Tiruvananthapuram	—	34.7	23.7
Kochi	—	30.4	24.2	Tiruchi	—	30.7	20.6
Kohima	—	19.8	8.8	Vijayawada	—	33.2	18.0
Kolkata	—	26.2	14.2	Visakhapatnam	—	30.4	19.2

(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	.38	.55	.22	.182	.141	—
Bengaluru	.28	.116	.23	.53	.115	—
Chennai	.7	.14	.—	.93	.214	—
Delhi	.13	.219	.43	.261	.201	—
Hyderabad	.6	.9	.45	.118	.130	—
Kolkata	.8	.104	.34	.117	.135	—
Lucknow	.11	.41	.45	.142	.118	—
Mumbai	.27	.109	.43	.169	.137	—
Pune	.—	.73	.60	.247	.197	—
Visakhapatnam	.37	.93	.19	.119	.146	—

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Mandideep, Madhya Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 322 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 30

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

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.

NO_x: 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

DEATH



Dr Muthu Singaram

the Best Father in the world

Passed away peacefully on 7th Feb in Ipoh, Malaysia.

We love you and are forever grateful for the life you lived and the love you gave us.

Skanda and Sirish

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES

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From Page One

India, U.S. unveil framework for deal

In a post on X, Mr. Goyal said the framework "reflects India's commitment to safeguarding farmers' interests and sustaining rural livelihoods by completely protecting sensitive agricultural and dairy products, including maize, wheat, rice, soya, poultry, milk, cheese, ethanol (fuel), tobacco, certain vegetables, meat, etc".

The joint statement said that the U.S. would reduce its tariffs to 18% on several imports from India, including textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastic and rubber, organic chemicals, home décor, artisanal products, and certain machinery.

Notably, the joint statement includes a specific clause that says that each country can modify its own commitments if the other country changes the agreed tariffs.

After the interim agreement is officially signed, the U.S. will remove tariffs on a wider range of goods, including generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and aircraft and aircraft parts. In addition, the U.S. said it would remove tariffs on aluminium, steel, and copper.

Non-tariff barriers

The joint statement said that the two countries would also address non-tariff barriers that affect trade between them.

India has agreed to address non-tariff barriers on the import of U.S. medical devices and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) goods.

"Recognising the importance of working together to resolve long-standing concerns, India also agrees to address long-standing non-tariff barriers to the trade in U.S. food and agricultural products," the statement said.

The statement added that the two countries would work towards "further expanding market access opportunities" through negotiations on a more comprehensive Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

"The U.S. affirms that it intends to take into consideration, during the negotiations of the BTA, India's request that the U.S. continue to work to lower tariffs on Indian goods," the statement said.

The two countries also agreed to strengthen "economic security alignment" to enhance supply chain resilience and innovation through complementary actions "to address non-market policies of third parties", as well as cooperating on inbound and outbound investment reviews and export controls.

"India and the U.S. will significantly increase trade in technology products, including Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and other goods used in data centers, and expand joint technology cooperation."

Digital trade

The two countries also committed to addressing "discriminatory or burdensome" practices and other barriers to digital trade, and to set a "clear pathway" to achieve mutually beneficial digital trade rules as part of the BTA.

51 Maoists surrender in Sukma and Bijapur

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

Fifty-one Maoists, carrying a total reward of ₹1.61 crore, surrendered in Sukma and Bijapur districts of Chhattisgarh on Saturday, the police said.

Of them, 30 surrendered in Bijapur while 21 surrendered in Sukma.

Twenty-four of the surrendered Maoist cadres were women, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Bastar Range, P. Sundarraj said.

A total of 14 weapons, including AK-47 rifles, self-loading rifles, INSAS rifles, and barrel grenade launchers, were handed over to the government by the Maoists who surrendered.

In Sukma, where 21 cadres carrying a reward of ₹76 lakh had returned to the mainstream, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said, the Naxalite organisation had suffered a major setback. The surrendered cadres include active Maoists of the ranks of Divisional Committee Members and Area Committee Members, he added.

In Bijapur, Maoist cadres who returned to the mainstream, expressed their commitment to adopt the "path of peace, dialogue, and development", Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Yadav, said.

Decisive action against Maoism is putting an end to fear in Bastar: President

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday said that due to the government's action on Maoism, the decades-old atmosphere of fear was coming to an end in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region.

Inaugurating the Bastar Pandum in Jagdalpur, Ms Murmu said the tradition of Bastar has always attracted people, but unfortunately, this region was plagued by Maoism for four decades.

"As a result, people here suffered immensely. The youth, tribals, and Dalit brothers and sisters were the worst affected. But due to the decisive action taken by the Government of India against Maoist terror, the atmosphere of insecurity, fear, and mistrust that prevailed for years is now coming to an end," she said.

The Gondi word Pandum means festival and the State government now celebrates Bastar Pandum as an annual fest and holds divisional-level competitions showcasing tribal arts and culture.

Many surrendered
The President noted that a large number of people in Chhattisgarh, who were

Meghalaya coal mine blast toll rises to 27 as two more bodies recovered

Several workers are still missing at the February 5 blast site and search for them will continue, say officials; they are feared trapped inside labyrinthine tunnels branching out of 100-foot vertical pit at the illegal rat-hole coal mine in East Jaintia Hills

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Two more bodies were retrieved on Saturday from the illegal rat-hole coal mine in East Jaintia Hills district in Meghalaya, where a blast occurred on February 5. The death toll has now risen up to 27.

Officials said the bodies were retrieved during the rescue operations carried out by multiple agencies, including the National Disaster Response Force and the State Disaster Response Force.

While nine workers were undergoing treatment in Shillong, officials said several were still missing. They are feared trapped inside the labyrinthine tunnels branching out of the 100-foot vertical pit. Most of the victims have been identified. They were from Assam, Meghalaya, and Nepal.



Efforts continue: Operations under way at the illegal coal mine to rescue the trapped workers in East Jaintia Hills district in Meghalaya on Saturday. ANI

"We have arrested a few more people after a local court granted three days' police custody of two owners of the mine arrested on Friday. We have also closed down several mines that were in operation illegally

and confiscated machines and explosive materials, including fuse wires," East Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police Vikash Kumar told *The Hindu*.

The mine owners, accused in the dynamite

blast leading to the deaths, are 36-year-old Forme Chyrmang of Jalaphet Porlung village and 42-year-old Shamehi War of Sutnaga Pohwailong village.

Meanwhile, more organisations have slammed

the State government for failing to stop illegal coal mining despite an April 2014 ban on rat-hole mining, imposed by the National Green Tribunal. The Supreme Court upheld the ban.

The Hynniewtrep Integrated Territorial Organisation (HITO) submitted a memorandum to Governor C.H. Vijayashankar, demanding a probe by a Central agency and fixing of responsibility "at the political level". It said the incident was a clear case of systemic governance failure, as illegal coal mining continued to thrive in East Jaintia Hills despite the ban.

The State Congress also demanded accountability at the highest political and administrative levels. It demanded strict and time-bound enforcement of the ban on rat-hole mining and adequate compensation to victims' families.

Shah calls for campaign to boost tourism in Kashmir

Peerzada Ashiq
JAMMU

With Jammu and Kashmir still facing the aftershocks of the Pulwama terror attack, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday called for a country-wide promotional campaign to attract tourists to the region and pledged the Centre's support in developing new tourism destinations.

The enthusiasm of domestic tourists for J&K remains unwavering and must be capitalised on with a vigorous promotional strategy. The zeal of tourists from across the country to visit J&K has not diminished," Mr. Shah said. He was speaking at a high-level review meeting in Jammu, attended by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. Mr. Abdullah has been pitching for the reopening of several tourist destinations that were closed after the Pulwama attack.

The State Congress also demanded accountability at the highest political and administrative levels. It demanded strict and time-bound enforcement of the ban on rat-hole mining and adequate compensation to victims' families.

Pawar family raises doubts about Ajit Pawar's death

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

Days after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee raised questions about the death of Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar in an air crash, while his uncle Sharad Pawar called it an accident, the Pawar family has now voiced its own doubts about the manner of his death.

Ajit Pawar and his uncle headed rival factions of the Nationalist Congress Party. Legislators from both factions have expressed concerns about possible foul play behind the January 28 crash, which left five people dead.

Fears of foul play
"There are several doubts in people's minds about the accident. If we speak with any aviation experts or pilots, several people have doubts. Even we have doubts. We want answers to them. I will raise the doubts. I hope we will get answers for it," he told presspersons in Baramati on Saturday.

Asked about NCP(SP) MP Bajrang Sonawane's allegation that a bomb had



Ajit Pawar

been planted on the plane, Mr. Rohit Pawar said, "I don't think there was a bomb directly. But there are other elements which can act like a bomb. Whether a political leader fitted it or not, we cannot say anything about it. But there are several doubts we have," he said.

The Pawar family's statement comes against the backdrop of doubts raised by several Maharashtra leaders.

NCP legislator Amol Mitkari has raised questions about the blast, asking if there was any foul play involved.

Court-monitored probe
Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut sought a court-monitored probe in Ajit Pawar's death. "Was Ajit Pawar carrying any important files about the BJP? The probe into his death should be monitored by the court. Is there any foul play in the accident?" he asked.

He questioned Mr. Fadnavis over his statement

that the politicisation of Ajit Pawar's death should stop. "Fadnavis has been warning everyone that nobody should politicise Ajit Dada's death. Why is he threatening everyone? Why are you restless? Are you responsible for it? That is the question," he asked.

Mr. Sonawane has asked whether the engine exploded or whether a bomb was planted on the aircraft. Mr. Mitkari has raised doubts about the number of people in the plane, claiming that initial reports had said there were six people in the aircraft, but details were shared only about five people. He has also questioned why the pilot was changed

at the last minute, and the claims about fog during the crash.

Analysing black box

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murli Mohan said the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau and Directorate General of Civil Aviation were making rapid progress in the probe, including the analysis of the black box.

After Ajit Pawar's death in Baramati, Ms. Banerjee had sought a court-monitored probe in the matter.

However, on the night of January 28 itself, Mr. Sharad Pawar had issued a video statement calling it an accident, putting to rest the speculation around it.

Tawde to be Mumbai's first BJP Mayor in 4 decades; Sena (UBT) skips contest

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Madhya Pradesh Cabinet Minister Vijay Shah on Saturday once again apologised for his objectionable remarks against Indian Army officer Colonel Sofia Qureshi, saying the comments were made in the "excitement of patriotic fervour" following Operation Sindoor.

Mr. Shah's apology comes weeks after the Supreme Court, on January 19, directed the Madhya Pradesh government to decide within two weeks on a request to sanction to prosecute the Minister on the directions of the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

Mr. Shah, the Minister for Tribal Affairs, had on May 12 – days after India-Pakistan military clashes – made remarks at a public event in Mhow, in which he allegedly implied that Colonel Qureshi was a "sister" of the Pulwama attack terrorists.

Patriotic fervour
In his latest statement, he said, "I have said this many times before, and I repeat it today. I had no intention of insulting any woman officer, the Indian Army, or any section of society." "The words were spoken in a moment of patriotic fervor, excitement, and passion," he said.

UBT withdrawal

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) was expected to file a nomination against the BJP candidate, but decided against it after a meeting was convened at Mr. Thackeray's residence.



BJP leader Ritu Tawde, Mumbai mayoral candidate, and Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Shankar Ghadi, deputy mayoral candidate, file their nominations in Mumbai on Saturday. PTI

Former Mayor Kishori Pednekar, a Shiv Sena (UBT) leader in the BMC, described the development as a victory of Marathi *manoos*. "The BJP had to accept that Marathi *manoos* is a Hindu. If the Mayor of Mumbai is Marathi *manoos*, we won't do anything that amounts to a bad omen. Our victory in the elections was for Marathi *manoos*. We have accepted the arithmetic and will play the role of a strong Opposition and fight for Mumbai," she said.

Mumbai will work as per the vision of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji and as per the directions of our Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar to give a transparent administration to the Mumbai Municipal Corporation.

Ms. Tawde, who was earlier with the Congress, joined the BJP in 2012 and was elected as a corporator in the same year.

Reacting to Ms. Tawde's nomination, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar) spokesperson Clyde Crasto said the decision to nominate a turncoat was an "insult" to BJP workers who worked hard at the grassroots level.



President Droupadi Murmu being felicitated by Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai during Bastar Pandum 2026 on Saturday. PTI

previously involved in Maoist terror, had surrendered to the authorities.

She underlined that the government was ensuring that those who have laid down arms and returned to the mainstream lead normal lives.

Many development and welfare schemes were being implemented for them, she said.

Appreciating all those who had abandoned the path of violence and returned to the mainstream, Ms. Murmu urged them to have complete faith in the Constitution and democracy of the country. She said that they should have trust in the democratic system and move forward with hardwork and dedication.

The President emphasised that the welfare of the poor, deprived and back-

ward classes was a special priority for the government.

Benefits for needy
"Through programmes like the PM-JANMAN Yojana and the Dharti Aaba Janjati Gram Utikarsh Abhiyan, benefits of development are reaching the most deprived tribal villages," she said.

Apart from these Central schemes, Ms. Murmu also highlighted the State government's 'Nyay Nellaiyan Yojana' emphasising that it played a significant role in empowering the villagers. "Electricity, roads, and water facilities are becoming available in every village. Schools that had been closed for years are reopening, and children are attending classes," said the President.

'Patriotic fervour'

In his latest statement, he said, "I have said this many times before, and I repeat it today. I had no intention of insulting any woman officer, the Indian Army, or any section of society." "The words were spoken in a moment of patriotic fervor, excitement, and passion," he said.

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M CH-CHE

India-U.S. deal has no item that can hurt Indian farmers: Goyal

Commerce Minister says all sensitive agricultural items have been kept out of the deal, while India has opened up sectors that it needs imports for; several agricultural exports such as spices, tea, coffee, and coconut oil, will have zero duty, he adds

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Interim Agreement between India and the U.S. will not include any item that will hurt Indian farmers, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday, adding that there are several areas where Indian farmers and MSMEs have received duty-free entry into the U.S. market.

India and the U.S. issued a joint statement early on Saturday morning in which they announced that the two countries had reached a framework for an Interim Agreement, and would continue working together towards a more comprehensive Bilateral Trade Agreement.

While U.S. President Donald Trump has already signed an executive order removing the 25% tariffs the U.S. had imposed on imports from India for its trade in Russian oil, Mr. Goyal said that another executive order was expect-



Some items will see tariffs being removed immediately, while others will see tariffs removed in a phased manner, while some others will also see quota-based tariffs... It is a big win for India that the U.S. has agreed to provide us with various ICT products that we need

PIYUSH GOYAL
Commerce Minister

Centre says India has cut or removed tariffs on items it needed and did not produce, or those it produced but not in enough quantities

ed next week that would reduce the remaining 25% reciprocal tariff to 18%.

"We have not included any item where any Indian farmer will be hurt," Mr. Goyal said at a press conference later in the day.

"All sensitive items have been kept out of the deal.

No genetically modified items will enter India, and no tariff relief has been given [to the U.S.] on meat, poultry, dairy, soya bean, maize, rice, wheat, sugar, millets, fruits such as bananas, strawberries, cherries, and citrus fruit, green peas, kabuli chana, moong, oilseeds, ethanol, and tobacco."

How India will benefit

He further listed out a number of other sectors that would see duties on

exports to the U.S. being reduced from 50% to zero.

These include gems and

diamonds, pharmaceutical products, aircraft parts, machinery parts, generic drugs, pharma products, some auto parts, gems and diamonds, platinum, clocks and watches, essential oils, home decor items such as chandeliers and lamp parts, some inorganic chemicals, and some paper, plastic, and wood items.

"Several agricultural exports will see zero duty from 50%, such as spices, tea, coffee, copra, coconuts and coconut oil, vegetable oil, areca nut, Brazil nuts, cashew nuts, chestnuts, several fruits and vegetables, such as avocados, bananas, guavas, mangoes, kiwis, papaya, mushrooms, material for vegetable plating, vegetable sap, vegetable roots, cereals like barley, some processed foods," Mr. Goyal added.

Some tariffs reduced

The Commerce Minister acknowledged that India had reduced or removed

tariffs on items that it needed and did not produce, or those that it produced but not in enough quantities.

"Some items will see tariffs being removed immediately, while others will see tariffs removed in a phased manner, while some others will also see quota-based tariffs," Mr. Goyal said.

These items include apples, distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS), wines and spirits (with a minimum import price), pista, walnuts, almonds, some industrial production inputs, many medicines for cancer treatment, heart treatment, neurological treatment, some cosmetics, organic and inorganic chemicals, several products related to computers, and several pieces of medical equipment.

"It is big win for India that the U.S. has agreed to provide us with various ICT [information and communication technology] products that we need," the Union Minister added.

"If the U.S. decides India has imported Russian oil

Trade deal agreement is surrender to U.S. by Modi government: Congress

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI



One thing is clear: the framework deal is heavily tilted in favour of the U.S. and the asymmetry is obvious

P. CHIDAMBARAM
Former Finance Minister

and medium industries here. "This deal is a betrayal to all that India stands for and all that India stood for over the last 75 years. This is not a deal which is in our interest. This is a total surrender by none other than Narendra," Mr. Khera said.

"I do not want to call it a deal, as a deal is amongst equals and you sit across the table and negotiate. A deal cannot be with a gun held to your head... It is blackmail, it is a surrender," he said. "The lives and livelihoods of 72 crore of India's farmers and farm labourers have been put at stake by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP government," Congress member in the Rajya Sabha Randeep Singh Surjewala said.

"Now, America's corn (dried distiller's grains), soya bean, jowar (red sorghum), nuts (almonds, walnuts, pistachio, etc.), fresh and processed fruits shall all be imported into India, devastating India's farmers and farm produce," Mr. Surjewala said.

directly or indirectly the extra 25% tariff penalty is back. This is truly extraordinary. And the Modi govt has accepted it! Naam Naam Surrender, Kaam Surrender," Mr. Ramesh posted.

In another X post tagging U.S. President Donald Trump, Congress's Lok Sabha member Manish Tewari asked if India had specifically agreed to not buy Russian oil. "And this adds insult to injury," Mr. Tewari said.

Addressing a press conference on the same issue, Pawan Khera, who heads the Congress's publicity wing, said India would soon become a dumping ground for American products, hurting the interests of the farmers and small

Farmers' body seeks Goyal's resignation, asks Modi to desist from signing U.S. deal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

SKM urges farmers to join strike on Feb. 12 as a 'befitting reply to the anti-people Modi government'

ducts in the joint statement, leaders of the SKM said control of the animal feed market will be completely monopolised by U.S. companies.

The leaders urged farmers to join protest demonstrations on February 12 and support the general strike of workers as a "befitting reply to the anti-people Modi government".

They said the framework, and claim of Mr. Goyal that the agriculture and dairy sectors are out of the deal was wrong. "Dairy products are part of the FTAs signed with the U.K., New Zealand and European Union and the fresh revelations have undoubtedly proved the Commerce Minister is consciously propagating falsehood and be-

traying the farmers and the entire people. SKM considers the role of Commerce Minister as a traitor and demands his immediate resignation. Also, SKM demands the Prime Minister to desist from signing the India-U.S. Free Trade Agreement or face massive pan-India united mass struggles," they said.

They added that the U.S. tariff on Indian goods has actually risen from zero to 3% in 2023-24 to 18%, while Indian tariff rates on U.S. agriculture products that stood at 30% to 150% are now down to zero. "This will make Indian agriculture hang by the noose of U.S. MNCs," they said.

Leader of Apple Farmers Federation of India and J&K MLA M.Y. Tarigami said the deal will have a disastrous impact on the economy of Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. "...the Centre does not care about farmers here and is working for their masters in the United States," he said.

Trump cancels 25% tariffs, says India committed to buy oil from U.S. and stop supply from Russia

Suhasini Haider
NEW DELHI

India has "committed" to stopping buying Russian oil, and already taken "significant steps" towards it, U.S. President Donald Trump said while rescinding the 25% punitive tariffs imposed on India in August 2025.

The startling claim, which was not denied by the government on Saturday, was made in an executive order issued simultaneously with the India-U.S. joint statement on an interim trade agreement framework, and appeared to be a condition for removal of the punitive tariffs.

Mr. Trump said the tariffs would return if India "resumes" oil imports



Donald Trump

from Russia, and that India would buy U.S. energy, which former Indian diplomats criticised, calling it "plain bullying" by a "hegemonic America".

Iran link

In a separate order, Mr. Trump said that any country engaging in trade with Iran would draw penalty tariffs, formalising a threat he had made in January on social media.

"India has committed to stop directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil, has represented that it will purchase United States energy products from the United States, and has recently committed to a framework with the United States to expand [defence] cooperation over

from Russia, and that India have nothing to do with a bilateral trade deal with the U.S.," Mr. Sibal told *The Hindu*.

"The U.S. is a hegemonic power, and has the power to enforce such conditions," said former Ambassador to the EU and Nepal, Manjeet Puri.

At a press conference Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal refused to comment on the issue of oil imports, deferring to the MEA.

When asked, the MEA spokesperson referred to his statement earlier in the week, that "diversifying energy sourcing in keeping with objective market conditions and evolving international dynamics" is at the core of the government's strategy.

India is seen as a trusted partner for growth, says Modi in Malaysia

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India was seen as a "trusted partner for growth", and it was reflected in the recent trade deals it has agreed with various countries, including the U.K., U.S. and EU. Addressing a community programme in Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Modi said that the Indian diaspora continued to serve as a strong bridge between India and Malaysia," he said.

The Congress criticised the Prime Minister saying he had called off his last vi-

sit to Kuala Lumpur in October as he did not want to be face-to-face with U.S. President Donald Trump.

"In late October 2025, the Prime Minister was expected to visit Kuala Lumpur. It had been announced but at the last minute, Mr. Modi called off because he did not want to come face-to-face with President Trump who was also to be there at the same time. So Mr. Modi settled for a virtual summit meeting with ASEAN leaders," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

VISAKHAPATNAM METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
e-Procurement Tender Notice

VMRDA Visakhapatnam invites the following tender on "e" Procurement Platform "PREPARATION OF CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF KAILASAGIRI AND PERIPHERAL AREAS WITH AN INTEGRATED WILDLIFE, AQUATIC LIFE & ECO-RECREATIONAL DESTINATION AT VISAKHAPATNAM, ANDHRA PRADESH" with last date 21/02/2026 03:00 PM for further details is login www.apreprocurement.gov.in

Sd/-Metropolitan Commissioner, VMRDA

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED E - TENDER NOTICE
O/o the Executive Engineer, Transmission Division, Nedumkandam, Idukki.

E-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_826640 PAC: Rs.1,98,79,969.74/- Last Date: 11.02.2026 03.00 pm

O/o the Executive Engineer, Transmission Division, Kaniyambetta, Wayanad.

E-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_834207_1 PAC: Rs.1,49,67,807/- Last Date: 18.02.2026 03.00 pm

Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in

Ref : PR/MC1/E600 - E-tender/2026

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS - TIRUPATI MARKETING DEPARTMENT
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

e-Tenders are invited for supply of (1) 3,000 Tins (each 15kgs net) of Gingelly oil (2) 7,500 Kgs of Sealing wax (3) 1,00,000 nos of Laminated Die Leaf Buffet Plates (4) 2,50,000 Kgs of Sooji (Rava) through e-tenders to the Marketing Department, T.T.Devasthanams. For tender notice and tender details log on to the web site www.tirumala.org and <https://tender.apreprocurement.gov.in>. For further details contact phone numbers: 0877-2246079, 2264555, FAX No: 0877-2264554.

TTD-40021/10/2025/PRO SEC/Adm/No.389 Date: 07-02-2026 EXECUTIVE OFFICER

GREAT HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
O/o the Superintending Engineer (H-CITI&SNP), SRGKGS(HQ), GHMC, Hyderabad

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Tender Notice No.19(SE/H-CITI&SNP)/SRGKGS(HQ)/GHMC/2025-26-2nd call, Dt: 07.02.2026

Item No. Name of Work: Estimate Amount

1. "Construction of 6 lane bi-directional Grade Separator for through traffic covering three junctions namely, Mallardipet, Shamshabad Road & Katedhah junctions under Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) / Turnkey Basis" Rs. 345.00 Crores

Total Rs. 345.00 Crores

S.No Events: Date and Time

1. Start Date: 10-02-2026 from 03.00 PM

2. Pre-Bid Meeting: 20-02-2026 at 03.00 PM

Location: O/o Chief Engineer (H-CITI, Designs & Admin), GHMC 6th Flr, GHMC Head Office Tank Bund, Hyderabad.

3. Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids: 27-02-2026 upto 03.00 PM

4. Opening of Technical bid: 27-02-2026 after 3.30 PM

5. Opening of Price bid: 28-02-2026 after 04.00 PM

Note: The Bidders are advised to visit www.tender.telangana.gov.in to download Bid Document and EPC project Tender Drawings. Any Queries can be addressed to srgkgs1@gmail.com.

Address of the officer concerned: S.L.B. Srinivas Rao, SE(H-CITI&SNP), 9154768808, Superintending Engineer (H-CITI&SNP), SRGKGS (HQ), Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Tank Bund Road, Hyderabad. Further details can be seen at "e" Procurement (<https://tender.telangana.gov.in>)

Sd/-Superintending Engineer (H-CITI&SNP), SRGKGS(HQ), GHMC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Rahul Gandhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday described the arrest of Independent Bihar MP Rajesh Ranjan, popularly called Pappu Yadav, as "an act of political vendetta" aimed at silencing voices demanding accountability, and linked it to the controversy over the death of a NEET aspirant in Patna.

In a post on X, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha said Mr. Yadav had stood up as the voice seeking justice for the student, whose death has triggered allegations of sexual assault and a cover-up.

"This is not politics; it is a question of justice. It is a question of the honour

such incidents. "The most alarming fact is that this incident does not appear confined to a single case. It points towards a terrifying conspiracy and a dangerous pattern, where more daughters are falling victim, and those in power sit with eyes shut to this horrifying reality," he added.

The aspirant was found unconscious in a girls' hostel last month. She died at a hospital on January 11 after remaining in a coma for several days. Her family has alleged sexual assault and an attempt to cover up the case. The Bihar government has since recommended a CBI probe. The matter was earlier being investigated by a Special Investigation Team.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA.						
Letter No.:645 e-mail : servsbhd2003@yahoo.com Date:4/2/2026						
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH GePNIC e-Procurement Notice						

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IN BRIEF



Shia Muslims hold protests in J&K over blast in Islamabad

Street demonstrations, mainly by Shia Muslims, were held in parts of Jammu & Kashmir on Saturday to condemn the killing of 31 Shia worshippers inside a mosque in Pakistan's capital Islamabad on Friday. They raised anti-Pakistani slogans in Baramulla's Patti and Bandipora's Shadipora areas. "At a time when Muslims across the globe are under attack, Shia Muslims are targeted in Pakistan. What could be more shameful and condemnable?" a protester said. Aga Syed Hassan al-Mousavi al-Safvi, president of the Anjuman-e-Sharie Shian J&K, said "We demand immediate action from the Pakistani government to protect its Shia citizens".

Tax Dept. releases draft rules, forms for new Income Tax Act

The tax department on Saturday released draft rules and forms under the new Income Tax Act, 2025, which proposes to simplify the provisions and reduce compliance burden for ease of understanding and make it taxpayer-friendly. A new and simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, which will replace the over six-decade-old Income Tax Act of 1961, will come into effect from April 1. The department has sought comments from stakeholders on the draft Income-tax Rules, 2026, by February 22. Thereafter, the rules and forms under the new Act will be notified. The draft Income-tax Rules, 2026 contains 333 rules and 190 forms, the IT department said. PTI

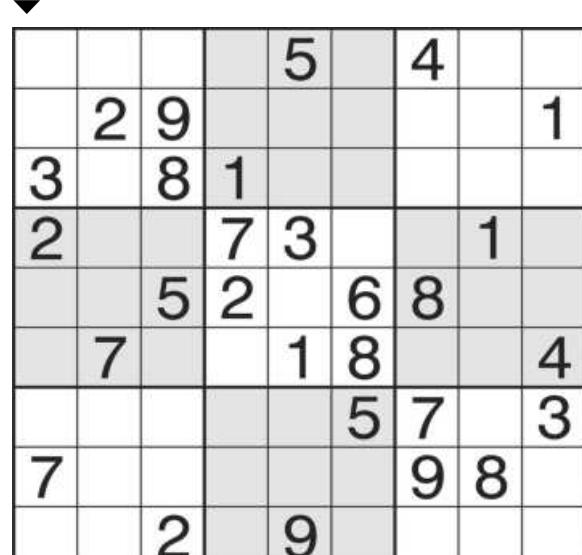
Building collapses in Kota; rescue operation under way

A three-storey building collapsed in Rajasthan's Kota on Saturday night, sparking fears that several people may be trapped under the debris, an official said. The building is located in the Talwandi area, and it had a restaurant. Police and rescue teams rushed to the spot and launched a rescue operation. So far, five people have been pulled out from the rubble and shifted to hospital, officials said. According to initial information, some customers and employees were present in the restaurant at the time of the collapse. Collector Piyush Samaria told reporters that teams were deployed immediately after the collapse. PTI

AAP leader murder case: one held after exchange of fire

A man was arrested from Amritsar on Saturday in connection with the killing of AAP leader Lucky Oberoi in Punjab's Jalandhar, the police said. The accused, identified as Shaminder Singh, a resident of Mithapur, was arrested following a brief exchange of fire in the Khasa area of Amritsar, they added. A .30-bore pistol was seized from his possession, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Border Range) Sandeep Goel said. The accused, who was driving a two-wheeler when he was intercepted by a police team, has a criminal history. Oberoi, 43, was shot by an unidentified assailant outside a gurdwara in Jalandhar's Model Town area on Friday. PTI

SUDOKU



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

The Hindu Bureau
BHOPLA

Five cheetah cubs have been born to a Namibian cheetah Aasha in Kuno National Park (KNP) of Madhya Pradesh, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav said on Saturday.

India's cheetah population is now 35, including 24 Indian born cubs and 11 translocated adults.

Five cubs born to Namibian cheetah at Kuno National Park

The Hindu Bureau
BHOPAL

"Kuno welcomes the birth of five cubs. Aasha's legacy leaps forward – India welcomes her five adorable cubs on February 7, 2026 at Kuno National Park," Mr. Bhupender Yadav announced on X.

Kuno Field Director and Project Cheetah Director Uttam Kumar Sharma told *The Hindu* that all five cubs are healthy and doing well, and that a team is keeping a watch on them from a distance.

India's cheetah population is now 35, including 24 Indian born cubs and 11 translocated adults.



Cheetah 'Aasha', left, has given birth to five cubs at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday. PTI

J&K govt. drops ₹416-crore Dal Lake resettlement project after 17 years

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir government has abandoned the ₹416.72-crore resettlement plan for Dal Lake dwellers. To a question from National Conference (NC) legislator Tanvir Sadiq, it told the J&K Assembly that the project achieved "only 27 per cent progress" in 17 years.

The plan was conceived by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi to preserve and restore the lake, which attracts tourists from across the globe. The Singh government approved the plan in 2009.

Incomplete project
The project sought to relocate and rehabilitate around 9,000 families from the Dal Lake ecosystem to tackle growing pollution, mitigate impact on aquatic life and preserve the shrinking lake.

However, in the face of



Redesigning development: The J&K government decides to make 58 existing hamlets within Dal Lake as eco hamlets. FILE PHOTO

poor implementation of the plan and inability to offer basic infrastructure at the location of resettlement, the J&K government has decided that 58 existing hamlets within the Dal Lake will be developed as 'eco-hamlets'.

"Work on six hamlets has already been taken up under the UT Capex budget, with one – Kachri Mohalla – already completed as a modern village," the J&K government told the

Assembly.

According to the new plan, an in-situ conservation model will replace the old scheme, and "residents will be allowed to stay in 'eco-hamlets' developed within the water body".

The shift in the policy has come in the wake of a report submitted by a high-level committee, headed by the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir, last year. It described the Dal Lake dwellers as an "inte-

gral part of the lake ecosystem".

The committee called for the continued stay of these dwellers on the lake, while also stating that it was "equally important to keep it [the lake] vibrant, dynamic and lively".

Awaiting approval
The government claimed that a sewerage network for six hamlets had been laid, and detailed project reports for modular sewage treatment plants were under preparation.

A ₹212.38-crore project, named 'Integrated Management Programme for conservation of Dal-Nigeen Lake ecosystem', had been accepted in principle by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, it said.

The five-year project aimed to address sewerage in 28 internal hamlets, treat inflow from catchment areas awaited the final approval from the Finance Department.

SIR rules on parent mapping leave those raised in orphanages, charity homes in a fix

Election Commission officials have said the care home's name should be entered in the column for parents, but the lack of specific guidelines has led to chaos on the ground; with no lineage proof, State must provide the required documentation, say those who fall in the 'unmapped' category

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Mohammad Palash Shekh is in a fix. Rescued from a railway station and brought up in the government-run Subhayani Home for Boys in Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal, he had to leave the shelter once he turned 18. He has a voter ID card and Aadhaar proving his own identity, but has no way to provide any evidence of his parents, as required for the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls currently under way in West Bengal and 11 other States and Union Territories.

Unable to "map" either of his parents to the voters' list of 2002, when the SIR was carried out previously, Mr. Shekh falls into the "unmapped" category, and has now got a hearing notice from poll officials.

With no lineage to claim

in the SIR, it is up to the State to provide him with the necessary documentation, he says, failing which he might be disenfranchised.

Under SIR rules, those born between 1987 and 2004 need to furnish their own documents and those of one of their parents, while those born after 2004 need to show their own documents and those of both their parents if they are unmapped.

Even if someone wants to register as a fresh voter by filling Form 6, a separate declaration has to be signed regarding the mapping of parents to the 2002 list.

Many people like Mr. Shekh who were brought up in State-run orphanages and charity homes are now facing the same conundrum, with no way to map their parents as required by the rules. Most wards of the State had to leave their



People wait during hearings under the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Kolkata on Saturday. PTI

shelter homes once they turned 18, and either have no parents or relatives or are not in touch with them.

A 2016 study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development says there are approximately 9,500 child care institutions (CCIs) in India (including government-run homes and NGO-supported homes), housing nearly 3.7 lakh children at any given

time. Every year, thousands of "care-leavers" turn 18 and transition out of these homes.

Election Commission officials have earlier said that in case of an orphan brought up in institutions, the orphanage's name will be entered in the column for parents.

However, there are no specific guidelines regarding this, so what is unfold-

ing on the ground is very different.

Under Section 53 of the Juvenile Justice Act, CCIs are required to assist children with regard to birth registration and to obtain a proof of their identity, where required. In many cases though, such children are left to fend for themselves when they turn 18.

Take the case of Bharat Jatiya, who was picked up by the police in Ajmer as a young child. Abandoned by his parents, he was brought up at various shelter homes and completed Class 12 from the Resource Institute for Human Rights (RIHR) in Jaipur.

Though Mr. Jatiya has Aadhaar and Class 10 and 12 certificates, he has not been able to submit Form 6 to register as a voter under the SIR as he has to fill in a separate form with a declaration about his parents' names in the 2002-03 list.

Under the SIR, however, even when fresh voters are being registered using Form 6, a separate declaration has to be signed regarding the mapping of parents to the 2002 list.

"There are many who find themselves in this 'unmapped trap' with these rules. These people are born in this country and the government needs to consider them as their citizens," says Vijay Goyal of the RIHR.

Assam orders 3 declared foreigners to leave India

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Three people declared non-citizens by a Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) have been ordered to leave Assam and India within 24 hours of receiving a notice from the government.

The orders, issued by the Karbi Anglong District Commissioner under Section 2 of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act of 1950, were issued on February 2, after the FT concerned adjudged them foreigners. The trio are Mohammad Faizul Haque of Manja Nadipar village, Mohammad Fakaruddin of Javad Rai Grant village, and Mohammad Rafiqul Ali of Hidim Teron Basti.

They have been asked to exit the country via Dhubri, Sribhumi, or South Salmara-Mankachar districts, bordering Bangladesh.

District authorities also ordered confiscation of documents and cancellation of their Aadhaar.

J&K govt. drops ₹416-crore Dal Lake resettlement project after 17 years

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir government has abandoned the ₹416.72-crore resettlement plan for Dal Lake dwellers. To a question from National Conference (NC) legislator Tanvir Sadiq, it told the J&K Assembly that the project achieved "only 27 per cent progress" in 17 years.

The plan was conceived by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi to preserve and restore the lake, which attracts tourists from across the globe. The Singh government approved the plan in 2009.

Incomplete project
The project sought to relocate and rehabilitate around 9,000 families from the Dal Lake ecosystem to tackle growing pollution, mitigate impact on aquatic life and preserve the shrinking lake.



However, in the face of

Assembly.

According to the new plan, an in-situ conservation model will replace the old scheme, and "residents will be allowed to stay in 'eco-hamlets' developed within the water body".

The shift in the policy has come in the wake of a report submitted by a high-level committee, headed by the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir, last year. It described the Dal Lake dwellers as an "inte-

gral part of the lake ecosystem".

The committee called for the continued stay of these dwellers on the lake, while also stating that it was "equally important to keep it [the lake] vibrant, dynamic and lively".

Awaiting approval
The government claimed that a sewerage network for six hamlets had been laid, and detailed project reports for modular sewage treatment plants were under preparation.

A ₹212.38-crore project, named 'Integrated Management Programme for conservation of Dal-Nigeen Lake ecosystem', had been accepted in principle by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, it said.

The five-year project aimed to address sewerage in 28 internal hamlets, treat inflow from catchment areas awaited the final approval from the Finance Department.

SBI Q3 net rises 24.5% to ₹21,028 cr. on interest income

Deposit growth remained healthy with current account growth in double digits despite competitive market environment, says C.S. Setty, Chairperson, State Bank of India

Ashokamithran T.

MUMBAI

State Bank of India's (SBI) reported standalone net profit rose 24.5% year-on-year (YoY) in the third quarter of FY26 to ₹21,028 crore on a rise in net interest income (NII).

NII increased by 9.04% while net interest margin dipped a tad to 3.12% from 3.15% a year earlier.

Gross advances climbed 15.17% to ₹46.8 lakh crore, while gross deposits rose 9.02% to ₹57 lakh crore. On asset quality, Gross Non Performing Assets (GNPA) slid 12.3% to ₹73,637 crore while Net NPAs dipped 15.74% to ₹18,012 crore.

"Deposit growth re-



Strong footing: SBI has enough headroom to address future credit growth needs in terms of capital and liquidity, says Setty.

mained healthy with current account growth in double digits despite competitive market environment," said C.S. Setty, Chairperson, SBI.

"Deposits at our foreign offices have grown well at 8.32% YoY basis. Credit

growth has remained strong and there has been a robust demand for credit across all the segments—retail, agriculture, MSMEs and corporate have crossed ₹26 trillion with YoY growth of 16.51%. All the components witnessed

double-digit growth. The domestic credit deposit ratio was at 72.98% at the end of Q3 of FY26, an improvement of 404 basis points year-on-year. We have enough headroom to address future credit growth requirements both in terms of capital and liquidity."

Delineating the downside risks to geopolitical tensions, global trade uncertainties, financial market volatility and commodity price volatility, Mr. Setty said the role of capital markets in the financial savings for households was increasing. Mr. Setty also informed SBI mutual fund would hit the public market for the initial public offer before September.

Trade deal opens up U.S. textile market'

The Hindu Bureau

COIMBATORE

The Union Ministry of Textiles said on Saturday that the agreement between India and the U.S. opens up a \$118 billion U.S. global imports market of textiles, apparels, and made-ups.

With the U.S. being India's largest export destination of around \$10.5 billion, the deal is expected to play a pivotal role in India achieving its intended target of \$100 billion exports in 2030.



U.S. imports of textiles and apparel from India dropped 31.4% YoY in Nov. 2025. AFP

The 18% reciprocal tariffs on all the textile products, including apparel

and made-ups, will remove the disadvantage that Indian exporters had and also place them in a better position than Bangladesh (20%), China (30%), Pakistan (19%) and Vietnam (20%), the Ministry said.

'Compete effectively' The Confederation of Indian Textile Industry chairman Ashwin Chandran said India's textile and apparel exports can once again compete effectively in the U.S. The U.S. imports of textiles and apparel

from India dropped 31.4% in November 2025 compared with November 2024. The industry is awaiting more clarity on cotton as India's exports of textiles and apparel are primarily driven by cotton.

A. Sakthivel, chairman of the AEPC, said the India-U.S. trade agreement will also address the issue of non-tariff barriers to trade and reduce the compliance burden and procedural delays leading to the faster movement of goods to the U.S. market.

BPCL in talks with Azerbaijan's SOCAR for LPG purchase

Saptaparno Ghosh

BETUL, GOA

Bharat Petroleum is in talks with State oil company of Azerbaijan for procurement of liquified petroleum gas (LPG), T.V. Pandiyar, head of LPG business with the State-owned refiner told The Hindu on the sidelines of the India Energy Week in Goa last week.

Further, whilst elaborating on the company's objective for diversification, Mr. Pandiyar informed BPCL had also floated a tender to import cooking gas from the U.S.

He said the firm's basket hinged on 90% of procurement being done via term-contracts and the rest from spot purchases. The tender for U.S. is premised on spot purchases.

'For diversification' Elaborating, Mr. Pandiyar, said, "There is a conflict in the Middle East. What if the [Strait of] Hormuz gets stuck up, what will we do?" adding, "This [the tender] forms part of objective for diversification of sources."

On the broader dynamics, Mr. Pandiyar explained China not taking U.S. LPG cargoes would also provide for India getting them cheaper. "U.S. ships that were taking LPG to China, they are being taxed because of the prevailing tariff war, so the landed cost of LPG on China's shores have become costlier. Therefore, China is not taking U.S. cargoes," he stated, adding, "They [the Chinese] are instead taking Middle East cargoes because of which U.S. cargoes are in surplus. We are sensing the landed cost of



China not taking U.S. LPG cargoes would also provide for India getting them cheaper.

U.S. cargoes on Indian shores would be cheaper and thus, we floated a tender to the extent of 10% of import needs on an all-oil-company basis to avail the advantage at present."

On under-recoveries According to Mr. Pandiyar, the under-recovery on LPG cylinder could rise to some extent should the international gas prices continue on an upward trajectory. "International prices cooled off in the last year, and suddenly, in the last 1-2 months picked up. Therefore, next month, as per the prices, our under-recoveries might go up to some extent," he stated.

He informed (January 28), the under-recoveries stood at ₹90/cylinder, and ₹30/cylinder in December.

In August last year, the Union Cabinet approved a ₹30,000 crore compensation scheme for oil firms for subsidising the sale of cooking gas during soaring global prices back then.

He said BPCL's share in the package was about ₹7,500 crore. Two instalments were paid in November and December and it would continue for the next 10 months.

TRANSMISSION CORPORATION OF TELANGANA LIMITED
E-Tender Notice
The TGTransco invites online Bids on e-procurement platform for supply of following Material. Specification No.: TGPM11-02/2026, Description of Equipment: 132kV Lightning Arrestors. Specification No.: TGPM21-05/2026, Supply of 220V, 200Ah & 100Ah Tubular Battery Sets against Tender. Bidders/Tenders can have further details and download the tender schedule from e-procurement market place i.e., www.tender.telangana.gov.in. (Telangana State). Contact Nos.: CHIEF ENGINEER/P&MM/TGTransco, Phone: 040-23396000 (Extn: 3670 / 3276 / 3487 / 3583 / 3460 / 3332), 040-23303736, www.tgtransco.com

Sd/-
Chief Engineer/P&MM
DIPR R.O.No.1144-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2025-26 Dt:07-02-2026

KITFRA™
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Kerala State IT Infrastructure Limited (KITFRA) invites e-Tenders under two cover bid system (Bid I: Prequalification & Techno Commercial bid and Bid II: Price Bid) from eligible contractors.
Name of Work: Construction of multi-storey IT building using precast RCC technology at Infopark Kochi Phase 1 campus, Kakkad, Kochi, Kerala
Estimate Amount : Rs. 107,70,81,970.64/- excluding GST.
Earnest Money Deposit : Rs.5,00,000/-
Period of Completion : 15 months
Due Date of Submission : 05-03-2026, 15:00 Hrs
Tender documents and tender schedule may be downloaded from the e-GP website www.etenders.kerala.gov.in
Date: 06-02-2026 Managing Director
Thiruvananthapuram D3/137/2026/I&PRD Kerala State IT Infrastructure Ltd

राजस्थान स्कूल शिक्षा परिषद्
मुख्य मंत्री, राजस्थान स्कूल शिक्षा परिषद्, अवधारणा विभाग, अवधारणा विभाग, राजस्थान, काशीपुर, काशीपुर,
फोन नं.: 0141-2700459, E-Mail: RAJ-SMSA.CIVIL@RAJASTHAN.GOV.IN
फ्रेमार्क :- F-51(194)RSCCE/CIV/SMSA/NIT 17/2025-26 /10/13/2025/D-7017 तिथि :- 04/02/2026
अत्यधिकारित ई-निविदा सूचना संख्या 17 (सिविट) /2025-26
(विविध विभाग स्कूल शिक्षा के निर्माण कार्यों के संबंध में निर्माण कार्यों हेतु पंजीकृत संसदों से MODIFIED BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT 2024-25 योजनागतर्वात रखीकृत 04 वारिका सैरिप स्कूल के निर्माण कार्यों हेतु राशि रु. 6579.19 लाख (प्रति कार्य की राशि लगभग 605.89 लाख से 1991.10 लाख के मध्य) बावजूद कार्यवार ई-टेलरिंग के माध्यम से अल्पकालिन ई-निविदा 06 / 02 / 2026 प्रातः 10:00 बजे से 20 / 02 / 2026 को साथ 6 बजे तक आमिरती की जाती है।

- निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्याएँ विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट <http://rajsmsa.nic.in>, <http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in> एवं <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।
- निविदा से सम्बन्धित प्रतिक्रिया जिला परिवेशना समन्वयक, समग्र शिक्षा कार्यालय सम्बन्धित जिला के तहसीलों की जाती है।

UBN No.: RSE2526WSBO6651
राज्य परियोजना निदेशक
राज्य संसद/वी/25/19343

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, H-CIT & SNDP/GHMC, HYDERABAD.
Tender Notice No.14/SE/H-CIT & SNDP/MUL Zone/GHMC/2025-2026, Dt:07.02.2026.
Item No.
Name of the Work
1. Project management Consultancy Services for Proof checking, construction supervision, Quality Assurance, Quality Control & Quality Audit for the work of 'Construction of 6 lane bi directional flyover crossing TKR College Junction, Gayathri Nagar Junction, and Mandamallam junction under Engineering procurement construction (EPC) / Turnkey' (Item-01)
2. Project management Consultancy Services for Proof checking, construction supervision, Quality Assurance, Quality Control & Quality Audit for the work of 'Construction of RK Puram ROB Deposit work' under Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC)/Turnkey Basis' (Item-02)
3. Project management Consultancy Services for Proof checking, construction supervision, Quality Assurance, Quality Control & Quality Audit for the work of 'Construction of Patigadda ROB-Deposit work' under Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC)/Turnkey Basis' (Item-03)

Events	Date & Timings
Start Date	10.02.2026 at 03:00 PM
Pre-Bid Meeting	18-02-2026 at 03:00 PM
Location:	O/o Chief Engineer (H-CIT), GHMC 6th Floor, GHMC Head Office Tank Bund, Hyderabad
Last Date & Time for receipt of Bids	26.02.2026 at 03:00 PM
Technical Bid Opening	26.02.2026 After 03:30 PM
Price Bid Opening	27.02.2026 at 04:00 PM

Address of the officer concerned Sri P. Mohan Reddy, SE (H-CIT & SNDP), Superintending Engineer (H-CIT & SNDP), Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Tank Bund Road, Hyderabad. Further details can be seen at 'e procure' at www.tender.eprocurement.gov.in.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, H-CIT & SNDP, Makaligiri, Uppal & LB Nagar, GHMC

DIPR R.O.No.15106-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26 Dt. 07.02.2026

Our focus is on raising throughput, utilisation : BPCL

Saptaparno Ghosh
BETUL, GOA

na, adding, "Within the safe operating region whatever maximisation can be done, we always try for it."

Mr. Khanna also pointed to BPCL having the highest capacity utilisation in the domestic industry - at 115% as on date.

Crude procurement

Asked about the rationale behind BPCL doubling the quantum of procurement

from Brazil's Petrobras, Mr. Khanna said the strategy for crude oil procurement from any geography hinged on assessing the "techno-commercial" feasibility of the deal.

"Our objective is very simple. When I am going to the market, we see which is the most techno-economical crude for me," he stated.

Refiner's GRM

Importantly, gross refining margin (GRM), the primary indicator of profitability for a refiner, stood at \$13.25/barrel in the December-end quarter

rose almost 10.2% on a year-over-year basis to 10.51 million metric tonne (MMT). Standalone net profit during the same period rose 62.3% year-on-year to ₹7,545.27 crore.

Processing ability

"Some crude [oil] may be very economical, but the refineries may not be able to process it."

"Therefore, depending

on the techno-economic evaluation, we pick up the crude," he added.

IN BRIEF



Pinwheel Therapeutics raises \$20 mn from 108 BioCapital

Pinwheel Therapeutics, a clinical stage biopharmaceutical firm, said it raised \$20 million from U.S.-based growth equity fund, 108 BioCapital. Having recently completed its first closure of over \$40 million, the fund initiated registration for a Gift City feeder vehicle with an application in due process. Dr. Sasha Bakhru, managing partner & CEO, 108 BioCapital said, "This represents a compelling next-generation, clinical-stage anticoagulant reversal opportunity."

RIL unit buys majority stake in Australia's Goodness Group

Reliance Consumer Products Ltd. (RCPL), the FMCG arm of Reliance Industries Ltd., said it has acquired majority stake in Australia's 'better-for-you' beverage business Goodness Group Global Pty. Ltd. (GGG) for an unspecified amount. The deal marks RCPL's entry into the consumer goods market in Australia. Under the agreement, RCPL will help promote Goodness Group's healthy beverages brands such as Nexas and PACE across newer markets including India.

Processing ability

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SCIENCE

'Over one-third of cancers worldwide may be preventable'

Athira Elisa Johnson

More than one in three cancer cases worldwide can potentially be prevented by reducing exposure to known and modifiable risk factors, according to a global analysis published in *Nature Medicine*.

Study findings

The study estimates that nearly 7.1 million among the 18.7 million cancer cases reported in 2022, or about 38%, of these were

linked to factors that could have been reduced through public health interventions and lifestyle changes.

Researchers analysed data from 185 countries, covering 36 cancer types, to examine the influence of 30 preventable risk factors. These included tobacco use, alcohol consumption, infections, obesity, physical inactivity, air pollution, and occupational hazards.

Because cancers often

develop years after exposure, the study mostly used risk-factor prevalence from around 2012, with a 10-year gap between exposure and diagnosis.

Smoking, identified as the single largest contributor, accounted for 15.1% of new cancer cases (around 33 lakh) worldwide. Infections were responsible for 10.2% of cases (around 23 lakh), while alcohol consumption contributed 3.2% (around 7 lakh).

The study also found

notable differences between men and women. Nearly 45.4% of cancers among men were linked to preventable risks, compared with 29.7% among women.

Tobacco use continues to be the main contributor among men across most regions, with alcohol use and infections also playing a major role. Among women, the pattern varied depending on geography. In many low- and middle-income countries, infec-

tions such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and *Helicobacter pylori* were key drivers. In higher-income regions, smoking and high body mass index (BMI) were more significant contributors.

Regional variations were also identified. In East Asia, almost six in 10 cancers among men were linked to modifiable risks, largely driven by tobacco use and infections. In sub-Saharan Africa, infections accounted for nearly one-

third of cancer cases among women, stressing gaps in vaccination coverage, sanitation and early screening.

The findings emphasise that cancer risk factors are already well recognised and can be tackled through proven public health strategies like better tobacco control measures, vaccination against HPV and hepatitis B, better air quality, safer working conditions, healthier diets, and more physical activity.

SNAPSHOTS



Heavier ions improve multi-ion cancer therapy

Multi-ion cancer therapy that uses beams of carbon, oxygen, and neon ions to treat radiation-resistant tumors is powerful but faces a trilemma: balancing high treatment intensity with hitting the target accurately. Researchers found that range uncertainty, the risk of the beam stopping slightly before or after the intended spot, is the biggest threat. To solve this, a Japanese team has found that using heavier ions like oxygen narrows the error margin by more than 7%.



Indians' education better predicts adult mortality

An international team, including from International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, has found that an Indian's education level predicts surviving middle age much better than their household wealth. Both higher income and better education reduced the risk of premature death but the protective benefit of schooling was stronger for both sexes. Education provides essential cognitive skills and social networks that help individuals recognise illness early and avoid risky behaviours like smoking.



Research tool scans papers without hallucinating

Researchers have developed a model called OpenScholar to help scientists synthesise the growing volume of scientific literature. OpenScholar identifies relevant passages from a data store of 45 million open-access papers to draft citable responses, using an inference loop to iteratively refine drafts to improve accuracy. In tests, OpenScholar exceeded GPT-4's correctness and experts preferred its responses to human ones more than half the time.

Loud music may damage your hearing before you realise it

Research has shown that prolonged exposure to loud noise can damage synapses without affecting the hearing threshold; since clinical assessments bank on this threshold, a normal audiogram need not mean no hearing damage

Shweta Yogi

The euphoric atmosphere of large music events may leave behind more than just memories. New research published in *Scientific Reports* suggests prolonged exposure to loud music can cause lasting hearing damage.

The study conducted by Nele De Poortere, a post-doctoral researcher, and her colleagues at Ghent University in Belgium focused on "hidden" hearing damage caused by subtle but irreversible changes in synapses. Because this damage doesn't immediately reduce hearing sensitivity, standard hearing tests often miss it, raising the possibility of an under-recognised public health concern.

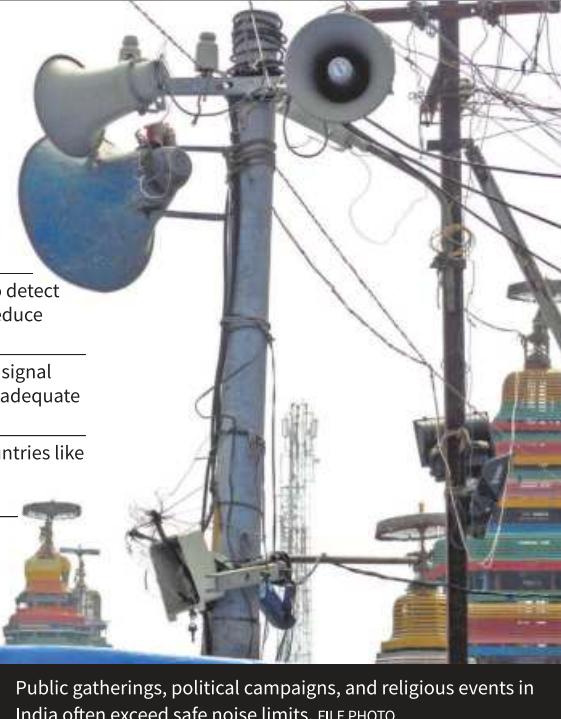
"Our study aimed to identify subtle, early-stage forms of noise-related hearing damage and objective markers that could reveal them, to improve early detection, prevention, and clinical care for people at risk who currently fall outside conventional diagnostic criteria," Dr. De Poortere said.

The cochlea converts sound vibrations into electrical signals that the brain can interpret. The synapses connect sensory hair cells in the cochlea to auditory nerve fibres, transforming sound pressure changes into electrical impulses that are relayed to the brain. Conventional noise-induced hearing loss results from damage to hair cells and appears as reduced hearing sensitivity

Quiet loss

Prolonged exposure to loud noise can damage synapses without affecting hearing thresholds

- Research from Ghent University indicates that loud music events cause irreversible damage to essential auditory synapses
- Standard hearing tests often fail to detect this condition because it does not reduce hearing sensitivity
- Hidden hearing loss functions like signal interference where volume remains adequate but sound clarity is significantly lost
- Poorly enforced noise limits in countries like India likely contribute to a higher prevalence of hidden damage
- Individuals who consistently use hearing protection maintain better auditory health than those who ignore preventive measures
- Clinicians require more sensitive diagnostic tools to identify early auditory damage before symptoms become very obvious



on audiograms.

However, research in animal models and human cadavers has shown that prolonged exposure to loud noise can also damage synapses without affecting hearing thresholds, a condition called cochlear synaptopathy (CS).

Dr. De Poortere described hearing loss as turning the volume knob down on a radio so the sound becomes faint. Hidden hearing damage, she said, is more like signal interference or a damaged cable where the volume may be adequate but clarity is lost, especially when there's background noise.

"Since we don't test for these kinds of difficulties in the clinic today, despite hearing in challenging and noisy environments being the primary complaint of

most patients, it has earned the moniker of 'hidden' hearing loss," Aravindakshan Parthasarathy, assistant professor of Communication Science and Disorders at the University of Pittsburgh, who wasn't involved in the study, said.

Sound levels are tightly controlled during clinical hearing tests, but at music festivals, peak levels often exceed recommended limits, making objective measurement difficult. By combining personal sound measurements with feedback from people who have attended concerts, the researchers were able to assess noise exposure in real-world settings.

They measured hearing-related parameters and physiological markers of CS before and after the participants attended the

events. The study found that a substantial proportion of attendees experienced symptoms such as muffled hearing, suggesting their auditory systems had been pushed beyond their capacity. People who consistently used hearing protection over the years had markedly better hearing.

Dr. Parthasarathy said the study's strength lies in its use of objective measures of CS and real-world noise exposure tracked with personal dosimeters, rather than relying on participants' recollections, which are often unreliable.

"This variability likely reflects a complex interaction between multiple factors, including cumulative noise exposure, timing and intensity of exposure, genetic predisposition, age,

biological sex, general health, and potentially lifestyle- or environment-related factors," Dr. De Poortere explained.

According to Prashasti P. Poovaiah, a professor at the Father Muller College of Speech and Hearing in Mangalore, continuous exposure to noise levels above 80 dB can damage hair cells, synapses or both.

Dr. Parthasarathy noted that despite the enforcement of strict noise limits in developed countries, hidden hearing loss still persists. "In India, these limits are often poorly enforced or absent, so the extent of damage is likely much greater," he said.

CS often precedes hair cell damage and may offer an early sign of hearing loss, but reliable diagnostic markers remain limited. Experts caution that gaps between animal and human data persist, underscoring the need for new experimental and clinical approaches.

"Key unanswered questions include how subclinical auditory damage progresses over time, who is most vulnerable, and whether these early changes can predict later, more obvious hearing loss," Dr. De Poortere said.

Clinically, she added, the findings reinforce the need for more sensitive diagnostic tools and stronger emphasis on early prevention and education, particularly for younger people who may accumulate damage long before symptoms appear.

Shweta Yogi is a freelance science writer

Rediscovering the virtues of bamboo, an ancient plant



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. Balasubramanian

Bamboo (called 'baans' in Hindi, and 'moongil' in Tamil) is an ancient plant that grows fast in wet soil in broad sunlight. It is well known to people in Asia and Latin America, where communities use bamboo plants for a variety of purposes. The food scientist and historian K.T. Achaya, in his book *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food*, notes that Jain monks and forest exiles used bamboo stems and leaves for food, since ancient times in India.

Bamboo trees across the country are best planted and grown in tropical and humid conditions, with good sunlight exposure

and soil rich in organic matter. The States where bamboo trees flourish are Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. A recent paper titled 'From Forest to Future: A sustainable perspective on bamboo's nexus with biodiversity, indigenous knowledge, ecological resilience, and current status in Northeast India', by Singh et al. in the journal *Trees, Forests and People*, reported that bamboo-based industries, using indigenous knowledge, can be strengthened scientifically and by policy interventions through setting up bamboo research centres to enhance local knowledge.

Bamboo finds new uses where sustainability is the goal, for example, in place of plastics for disposable cutlery. In Numaligarh in Assam, Prime Minister Na-



Bamboo finds new uses where sustainability is the goal, for example, in place of plastics for disposable cutlery. CHUTTERSNAP/UNSPLASH

rendra Modi inaugurated a bio-refinery slated to produce 50,000 MT of ethanol from bamboo last year. Its website mentions many products made in India from bamboo, including clothing, baskets, mats, chairs, tables, shelves, roofing and flooring, musical instruments (flutes and drums), and incense sticks. Some States have set up bamboo research institutes to develop bamboo-made products.

dy raw material supply for industries. In addition, there is export of bamboo and its materials such as full-length glass mirrors, cotton textiles and bamboo jewellery to the US, Denmark, and Nigeria. Globally, India ranks among the top three exporters of bamboo and its products (the others are China and Vietnam), with an income of several million dollars. Several states, including Maharashtra, Kerala, and Assam, have also set up bamboo research and technology institutes and sell bamboo products such as textiles, building materials, and food products.

Nutritional value
In a November 2025 paper in *Advances in Bamboo Science*, scientists indicated that they were rethinking bamboo as a powerful new superfood. The scientists were from Anglia Rus-

kin University in the UK, and in the study, they pointed out the nutritional benefits of including bamboo shoots, leaves, and seeds in diets. They reported that adding these bamboo materials could provide essential amino acids, vitamins A, B6, and E, and regulate blood sugar and lipid levels. These are good against diabetes and heart disease. The scientists also conducted a systematic multi-country analysis of the health outcomes of consuming bamboo, revealing that bamboo-based foods are also high in antioxidants and offer probiotic benefits.

While rural populations benefit by consuming bamboo foods, how can we urbanise do so? We can purchase by courier service and through online market vendors and distributors that sell bamboo-made foods and other products.



Question Corner

Hang on tight!

How is it that the elements and compounds of our atmosphere are not left behind in the great void of space even when the earth is moving at great speed through space along with the sun and its sister planets?
— Gayatri Chandrashekhar

The primary reason is gravity, which acts like an invisible tether. Every molecule of gas in our atmosphere, nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, etc., has mass. Earth's core exerts a gravitational pull that attracts these molecules towards the centre of the planet. Even though earth travels at 10,000 kmph around the

sun, the atmosphere is trapped inside earth's 'gravity well'. Also, the atmosphere possesses the same momentum as the solid earth. Since the gases formed alongside the planet or were released from it, they were already moving at that speed. In space, there's no friction to brush the atmosphere away. While gravity holds the air down, the magnetosphere protects it from being stripped away by the solar wind, a stream of charged particles from the sun that could otherwise blow the atmosphere away.

Readers may send their questions / answers to science@thehindu.co.in

How is India tackling mental health crisis?

What has the Budget allocated for mental health institutions? Will it be enough to tackle an emergency?

Bindu Shajan Perappadan

The story so far:

Last month, the Economic Survey flagged the alarming rise of digital addiction and screen-related mental health problems, particularly among children and adolescents. On February 1, the Budget announced measures to strengthen mental health infrastructure. Key highlights include the proposed establishment of a second National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in north India and the upgradation of premier institutions in Ranchi and Tezpur to improve regional access.

What is India's mental health burden?

According to experts, India is facing a mental health emergency. It accounts for nearly one-third of the world's suicides, depression and addiction cases. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among Indians aged 15-29, data from the National Crime Records Bureau and the Sample Registration System under the Ministry of Home Affairs show. According to the WHO, between 2012 and 2030, the economic loss due to mental health conditions in India is estimated to be \$1.03 trillion. Around 70% to 92% of people with mental disorders do not receive proper treatment due to lack of awareness, stigma, and shortage of professionals. According to the Indian Journal of Psychiatry, India has 0.75 psychiatrists per 1,00,000 people, whereas the

WHO recommends at least three per 1,00,000.

While health spends may have increased since FY2014-15, specific allocations for

mental health services have historically been small, around 1% of the total health budget.

Does India have enough hospitals?

To cater to the growing need for quality mental health services, the Central government has integrated mental health services in Ayushman Bharat calling them Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs). Under Ayushman Bharat, the government has upgraded more than 1.73 lakh sub-health centres and primary health centres to Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. Also, mental health services have been added in the package of services under comprehensive primary health care provided at these centres. Over the past two years, the government has also expanded its manpower base, sanctioning over 20 centres of excellence to train more postgraduate students in mental health and provide advanced treatment. In all, 47 PG departments on mental health have been established.

Moreover, Tele MANAS (Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States) is a 24x7, free initiative in India providing mental health support via toll-free helplines 14416 or 1-800-891-4416. Launched on October 10, 2022, it features 53 operational cells across 36 States/UTs, supported by 23 specialised mentoring institutes.

Where is the shortfall?

Over the past five years, India's mental health allocation has increased from ₹683 crore in 2020-21 to about ₹1,898 crore in 2024-25. While this rise is often cited as progress, it remains shockingly low in context, says Neha Kirpal, co-founder of Amaha and founding cohort member of the India Mental Health Alliance (IMHA), a network of stakeholders working on mental health issues. She adds that the budget allocation is less than 2% of the total health budget, which itself accounts for only around 2% of the national GDP. This underinvestment is stark when weighed against impact. Explaining why targeted allocation to grassroots mental health programmes is a must, she notes that even in this Budget a significant share of allocations continue to flow toward tertiary institutions such as NIMHANS and new centres of excellence. "This alone cannot mainstream mental healthcare in a country of India's scale," she explains. The other issue is about the utilisation of funds. Experts point out that funds allocated may be low, but even these are not completely utilised at the national level. Health experts argue that for funds to be better utilised, India's budgetary allocations for mental health must support community-based, early-intervention models.

What is the way ahead?

The need of the hour is affordable access, continuity of care, and timely treatment, which remain elusive, leading to preventable loss of life and years lived with disability. "Our focus remains on specialist-led, tertiary care, which takes a curative rather than preventive approach. Our response capacity is severely limited. There is a huge shortage of trained mental health professionals to deal with mental illness. This has led to a 95% gap in access to mental health care," says Ms. Kirpal.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry says it is laying emphasis on a "whole-of-community" approach, integrating mental well-being into school curricula, and strengthening workplace policies to address stress and burnout.

Why has AYUSH got a major push in Budget?

What are the proposals to make AYUSH more widely accessible? Which are some of the key institutes and autonomous bodies under the AYUSH sector? How has the free trade agreement with the European Union opened the door for AYUSH in European markets?

Vasudevan Mukunth

The story so far:

In February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed a slew of resources for AYUSH in the 2026-27 Union Budget. A week earlier, India's new Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union opened the door for Indian doctors and products to enter the European market more easily.

What has AYUSH received in the Budget?

In the 2026-27 Budget, its total allocation reached ₹4,408 crore, up from ₹3,992 crore in 2025-26 and ₹2,122 crore in 2020-21. Ms. Sitharaman also announced plans to set up three new All-India Institutes of Ayurveda intended to be the gold standard for traditional medicine, similar to how AIIMS works for allopathic medicine. These institutes will treat patients, conduct high-level research, and teach. The Budget also pitched for funds to upgrade the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jammagir, with the aim of India leading the way in setting standards for how traditional medicine should be practised and documented worldwide. The budget for the National AYUSH Mission has been hiked by 66% to ₹1,300 crore, to modernise local AYUSH hospitals and dispensaries, to place AYUSH clinics inside existing modern hospitals, and to upgrade existing centres to focus on preventive health. The Budget also provides funds to upgrade AYUSH pharmacies and drug-testing laboratories. The government is also introducing a multilingual AI assistant named Bharat-VISTAAR, designed to give farmers who grow medicinal plants real-time advice on

The presence of heavy metals such as lead and mercury in certain AYUSH products is a major worry

growing herbs of better quality, current market prices, and certifying crops for export.

What does the India-EU FTA do for AYUSH?

In the past, Indian Ayurvedic doctors have had a hard time working in Europe because their degrees weren't recognised. But under the FTA, in EU countries that don't specifically regulate traditional medicine, Indian AYUSH practitioners can provide their services using qualifications obtained in India. The deal also gives Indian companies a legal guarantee to open wellness centres, Ayurvedic clinics, etc. across the bloc's 27 countries without them having to worry that the laws will suddenly change and shut them down. Third, India and the EU will work together to recognise (some of) each other's lab results and safety certifications. As a result, a particular Ayurvedic supplement tested in an Indian lab will likely be accepted by European customs. Finally, the FTA recognises India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library, a database of formulations, thus preventing companies from wrongly claiming ownership of traditional Indian remedies.

What resources does AYUSH have?

India's AYUSH sector has a network of hospitals, research councils, and regulatory frameworks. In 2024-25, the government's support for the AYUSH Ministry was designed to integrate traditional medicine into the broader national healthcare landscape. The primary vehicle was the National AYUSH Mission and co-location of the primary policy (that is, placing AYUSH facilities within existing primary and community health centres and district hospitals).

The sector has several 'Institutes of National Importance' and autonomous bodies, including an All-India Institute of Ayurveda in New Delhi and the National Institute of Homoeopathy in Kolkata. Other specialised institutions provide training and care in Siddha, Unani, Yoga, and Naturopathy. The government also manages several research councils, such as the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences. The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine and the National Commission for Homoeopathy have to ensure medical education remains affordable and reliable. The Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy sets the official standards for all Indian AYUSH drugs. The National Medicinal Plants Board worked with 32 State boards to encourage the cultivation of high-quality herbs for both domestic use and export. The 'AYURGYAN' scheme promotes education while 'Ayurwasthaya Yojana' focuses on using traditional medicine to meet

community health goals.

Is AYUSH treatment scientific?

Critics led by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) have argued that traditional systems like Ayurveda often lack the rigorous, empirical evidence required to meet the thresholds of modern medicine. Allopathic drugs must clear randomised controlled trials that test their safety and efficacy. Many AYUSH treatments, however, are based on ancient texts and observational history, and either haven't been tested or their specifics remain unverifiable. The presence of heavy metals such as lead and mercury in certain AYUSH products has been a major concern. Health advisories from Australia, the U.S., and New Zealand have highlighted cases of lead poisoning linked to imported Ayurvedic products. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of AYUSH has been "mixopathy", the state-sanctioned blurring of lines between traditional and modern medical practice. In 2020, the Central Council of Indian Medicine authorised postgraduate Ayurveda students to be trained in 58 surgical procedures, including general surgery. The IMA called this "legalised quackery", arguing that surgery is a complex discipline requiring deep knowledge of anatomy, anaesthesia, and perioperative care that AYUSH curricula don't sufficiently cover. The controversy intensified in 2025 when the Andhra Pradesh government allowed Ayurveda exponents to perform these surgeries independently, leading to nationwide protests and legal challenges currently pending before the Supreme Court. Friction also persists over the practice of AYUSH doctors prescribing allopathic medicines like antibiotics or steroids. Some States have issued executive orders allowing this to plug the doctor shortage in rural areas but the medical community has warned that it could lead to irrational drug use and worsen antibiotic resistance.

What do the resources mean for AYUSH?

A smattering of independent estimates suggests that the AYUSH sector will be worth \$26.5 billion (₹2.3 lakh crore) in 2026, with startups and MSMEs accounting for 80%. The new plans are in line with the government's attempts to turn AYUSH from a domestic, welfare-adjacent public health programme to a regulated industry and source of economic growth. The proposed All-India Institutes are modelled on AIIMS and, together with plans to upgrade testing facilities and pharmacies, signal efforts to recast parts of traditional medicine as being scientific rather than based on lineage or experience.

That said, while global markets may reward standardisation, they will also raise expectations of evidence and accountability at home. In this sense the government's AYUSH push may also subject the sector to a level of scrutiny and institutional discipline that India itself has only partially enforced thus far.



Massive boost: Plants and pulses used in Ayurveda displayed during the AYUSH Habba in Mangaluru on January 31. H.S. MANJUNATH

Why is Dreamliner's fuel system under watch?

What happened on a recent Air India flight? Why are certain fuel control switches malfunctioning? Weren't precautionary checks undertaken after the Ahmedabad mishap in June last year? What is the risk it poses to the engine when switches are faulty?

Murali N. Krishnaswamy

The story so far:

In February 1, 2026, an Air India flight (AI 132) scheduled from London Heathrow to Bengaluru was preparing for departure when the crew reported that one of the two fuel control switches on the Boeing 787-8 had moved to 'Cutoff'. The incident came under intense scrutiny as the fuel switches and their functioning are a key part of the ongoing investigation into the June 12, 2025 crash of Air India flight 171 (Ahmedabad-London Gatwick), also a Boeing 787-8.

What happened next?

As the left fuel control switch "slipped from Run to Cutoff", the crew is said to have checked the switches by touching them. It was only in the third attempt that the switch remained in the 'Run' position. The crew decided to continue with the flight – a distance of about 8,000-plus kilometres – with no further incident.

How was the incident reported?

The Safety Matters Foundation, a non-profit and independent aviation safety think tank in India, put out a note that called for a "transparent

Boeing says it is in touch with Air India and supports their review of the incident

investigation after this new fuel system incident". It said that the incident was "alarming as it mirrors a known risk previously identified by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration". It highlighted how, "in 2018, the FAA had issued a Safety Alert For Operators SAIB NM-18-33, warning that certain fuel control switches, including those on Boeing 787s, could malfunction in this exact manner, increasing the risk of accidental engine shutdown." The Foundation said that "the incident was troubling as the airline had said that it had conducted precautionary checks across its 787 fleet and found no issues". India's regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), came into the picture after the incident was reported. In a note titled, "Rejoinder on News Item relating to purported malfunction of Fuel Cut Off Switch on M/s Air India Boeing B787-8 aircraft", the DGCA gave a detailed, technical account of the incident: "...the switch did not remain positively latched in the 'Run' position when light vertical pressure was applied but latched correctly in 'Run' and was stable during the third attempt." The note also said that the crew had "physically verified that the switch was fully and positively latched in the 'Run' position", adding that "no abnormal engine parameters, cautions, warnings, or related system messages were observed during engine start or at any time thereafter". The note went on to say that "the operating crew member was briefed on the observation, unnecessary contact with the switch was avoided, and engine indications and alerting systems were closely monitored during the full flight".

The crew reported the incident in the pilot defect report after which the airline reached out to the manufacturer, Boeing, for guidance. The DGCA note also said that Boeing had recommended checks on the switches. The airline's engineering department found both switches to be functioning satisfactorily. The DGCA said that the inspections were done in the presence of DGCA officers, and Air India was advised to "circulate the Boeing recommended procedure for the operation of Fuel Cut Off switch to its crew members". The aircraft was initially grounded in

Bengaluru but was cleared for operations later. It left for Delhi on February 5.

What have the other responses been?

In response to a query by *The Hindu*, a statement by an Air India spokesperson said, "Following the DGCA closure on the matter, Air India will be following its safety investigation protocol and take appropriate action. We will fully adhere to the regulator's guidance to circulate OEM [original equipment manufacturer]-recommended operating procedures for the operation of the FCS [fuel control switch] to all crew members." The airline is said to have inspected its Boeing 787 fleet once again. It operates 26 Boeing 787-8s and seven 787-9s (the newest jet was inducted in January 2026). IndiGo too has six leased Boeing 787-9s (from Norse Atlantic Airways). Boeing, in a statement to *The Hindu*, said, "We are in contact with Air India and are supporting their review of this matter." In response to an e-mail/telephonic call by *The Hindu*, a spokesperson for the Air Accidents Investigation Branch-U.K., said: "We are aware of reports in the media about an event on a flight between London Heathrow and Bangalore on 2 February. We are engaged with the UK Regulatory Authority who we understand is working to establish the facts."

In a comment to *The Hindu* on fuel switches, Professor David Cirulli, UAS Department of Flight, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Asia Academic Worldwide Campus, said that "aircraft flight decks have evolved over many years of operational experiences with a focus on safety. The industry thrives on creating the best and safest means of transportation". He pointed out that one item of focus is the human factor. "This study and area of expertise covers a broad range of items, but one in particular is the human-to-machine interface. Fuel flow to the engines is a safety critical issue. Inadvertent engagement or disengagement are both drastically important for numerous reasons. Overtime, the industry – both regulatory and operational safety – recognised the necessity to ensure that inadvertent operations do not occur. It is for this reason that these switches require multiple movements (pull/twist) with a locking mechanism to reach the engaged or disengaged states. The fundamental designs of these switches remain the same over most aircraft and fleets, with solid operational performance. The reliability of the system, for this reason, is very high," he said.



Safety concerns: The fuel control switches on a 787 commercial passenger aircraft. GETTY IMAGES

PROFILES

The diplomat on a tightrope

Abbas Araghchi

Iran's Foreign Minister faces the daunting task of finding a diplomatic way out of tensions with the U.S. without compromising key national security interests at a time when the economy struggles and internal tensions remain high after the January crackdown

Stanly Johny

Seyed Abbas Araghchi may have one of the most difficult diplomatic jobs in the world today. His country just experienced its worst internal crisis in over four decades. Massive protests and armed unrest erupted across different parts of Iran in the first week of January, which were violently put down by security forces. At least 3,000 people were killed, according to official figures. The U.S. has sent what President Donald Trump calls "a massive armada" towards Iran. Mr. Trump had earlier said the U.S. was "locked and loaded" to respond if Iran killed protesters. While the risk of military escalation remains high, the U.S. has also opened a direct diplomatic channel. "Time is running out for Iran" to make a nuclear deal, Mr. Trump said on January 28.

Mr. Araghchi responded in kind. Iran was "ready for a fair and equitable deal", he said the next day, "but not for coercion". He added that Iran's armed forces "are prepared – with their fingers on the trigger – to immediately and powerfully respond to any aggression".

Iran is internally tense. It faces the threat of external attack. It is under heavy Western sanctions, and its economy is in serious trouble. An all-out war could be catastrophic. But Iran also doesn't want to show signs of weakness. It doesn't want to be another Iraq, Libya, Syria or even Venezuela. So the job before Mr. Araghchi is to seek the path of diplomacy without compromising key security interests, with one finger on the trigger.

On February 6, he went to Muscat, the Omani capital, to hold indirect talks with Steve Witkoff, Mr. Trump's special envoy, and other officials. There was no breakthrough, but they agreed to meet again. The clouds of war have not lifted. But there seems to be a small window to continue the diplomatic engagement which has reduced the risk of an imminent military conflict.

Born in 1962 in the Shah's Tehran, Abbas Araghchi came of age during the tumultuous period of the Islamic

Revolution. He earned an undergraduate degree from the Foreign Ministry's School of International Relations and a master's in political science from the Islamic Azad University in Tehran. Mr. Araghchi, who is fluent in Persian, Arabic and English, did his PhD at the University of Kent under the supervision of Professor David McLellan, an English scholar of Marxism. Mr. Araghchi's thesis, titled 'The Evolution of the Concept of Political Participation in Twentieth-Century Islamic Political Thought', argues that modern Islamic political thought has sought to reconcile the absolute sovereignty of God with popular sovereignty, integrating elements of Western democracy with Islamic principles, according to a report by the Stimson Center.

Reformist promise

Mr. Araghchi rose quickly through the ranks of Iran's foreign policy establishment. He started as an international relations expert at the Foreign Ministry in 1988, the year the Iran-Iraq war came to a close. His first major posting came in 1992, when he was appointed as a deputy ambassador to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation by President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. In 1999, when reformist Mohammad Khatami was the President, Mr. Araghchi became Iran's ambassador to Finland. In 2007-2011, he also served as Iran's ambassador to Japan, before serving as a spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry. But the real turning point in his career came in 2013 when he was appointed by President Hassan Rouhani as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Legal and International Affairs.

Mr. Rouhani, a moderate cleric who assumed the presidency after the chaotic years of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, had promised to rewrite Iran's relations with the world and improve the country's economic situation. He found a willing partner in U.S. President Barack Obama. Both sides started direct negotiations which culminated in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

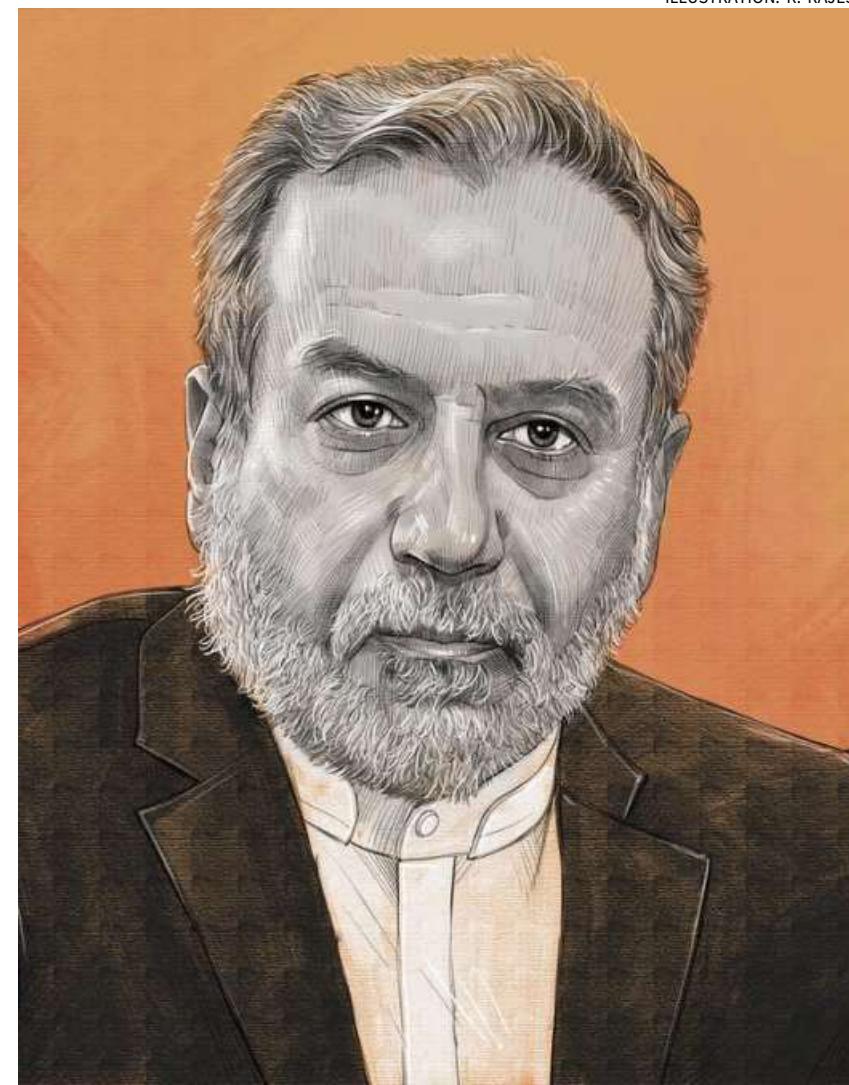


ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

(JCPOA). Under the agreement, Iran promised to curtail its nuclear programme, in return for the lifting of international sanctions. Mr. Araghchi, as a deputy of the then-Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, acted as the chief negotiator during the month-long discussions. The nuclear deal was seen as a major breakthrough for both the Obama administration as well as Iran's rulers. Sanctions were lifted and Iran was allowed to trade freely and invite investments. But in May 2018, President Donald Trump, who was in his first term, unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the agreement and reimposed sanctions on Iran.

Mr. Trump called the JCPOA "the worst deal" in America's history. He

adopted what he called a "maximum pressure" policy aimed for forcing Iran back to the table. Iran's moderates felt betrayed. When Mr. Trump tore apart the deal, Tehran was fully compliant with the terms of the agreement, as per the IAEA. "We proved that diplomacy can resolve the most complex disputes. We showed that mutual respect and adherence to international law can create breakthroughs," Mr. Araghchi once said about the nuclear deal. "We negotiated in good faith and we were met with bad faith," he added, referring to the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement.

When Ebrahim Raisi, a hardliner, succeeded Mr. Rouhani as Iran's

President, Mr. Araghchi was replaced by Ali Bagheri as the country's chief nuclear negotiator. The U.S., then led by Joe Biden, and Iran had held multiple rounds of indirect talks in Geneva aimed at reviving the nuclear deal, but failed to make any breakthrough. Mr. Raisi was killed in May 2024 in a helicopter crash.

12-day war

Masoud Pezeshkian, a doctor-turned-politician, won the election on a platform of reform. Mr. Pezeshkian picked Mr. Araghchi to head the Foreign Ministry. Soon after Mr. Trump began his second term in January 2025, Iran and the U.S. started negotiations over the country's nuclear programme. But those talks were undermined by Israel's June 13 bombing of Iran. The U.S. also joined the war, carrying out attacks at Iran's nuclear facilities, which Mr. Trump called a great success. Iran suspended the talks after the 12-day war, which ended in a ceasefire, and froze cooperation with the IAEA, effectively blocking any international monitoring of its nuclear programme. But within months, the Iran crisis would flare up again with street protests challenging Iran's clerical rule and U.S. and Israel openly supporting the protesters.

Before the Muscat talks began, it was clear that the U.S. and Iran remained far apart even on the format of the negotiations. Mr. Araghchi had repeatedly said the discussions would focus solely on Iran's nuclear programme. But the U.S. State Department stated that it wanted Iran's ballistic missile programme and its support for regional militia groups to be included on the agenda. While it remains unclear what exactly was discussed on February 6, the divergence itself underscores the scale of the challenge before Mr. Araghchi.

In his PhD thesis, he wrote about reconciling Western democracy with Islamic principles. Now, as Foreign Minister, at a time of acute crisis for his country, Mr. Araghchi has to balance a deeply hostile and militarised America's maximalist demands with his clerical government's security concerns and core national interests. A formidable task indeed.

THE GIST

Abbas Araghchi, as a Deputy Foreign Minister, acted as the chief negotiator during the month-long nuclear talks of 2013-15 which culminated in the JCPOA

When Ebrahim Raisi, a hardliner, became President, Araghchi was replaced by Ali Bagheri as the country's chief nuclear negotiator

Masoud Pezeshkian, a doctor-turned-politician who won the election on a reformist platform, appointed Araghchi as the Foreign Minister and gave him the mandate of talks

The anti-immigration czar

Stephen Miller

The U.S. Homeland Security Adviser has shaped President Donald Trump's most inflammatory immigration initiatives

Shruthi Darbhampuram

The Trump administration's hardline immigration stance has been acquiring vociferous detractors, even from Republicans, particularly after two U.S. citizens, Renée Good and Alex Pretti, were shot dead by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Minneapolis, Minnesota, enforcement operations earlier this year.

Soon after the shooting of Pretti, Stephen Miller, deputy chief of staff for policy and homeland security in the Trump administration, posted on X that the nurse was a "domestic terrorist" who had "tried to assassinate federal law enforcement" agents.

Mr. Miller's right-wing positions crystallised early on. Born in Santa Monica, California, in 1985 to Jewish liberal refugee parents, he attended a diverse high school that he came to view as too liberal. A report suggested that his transformation as a hardline conservative was influenced by the book *Guns, Crime, and Freedom* (1994), written by Wayne LaPierre, a gun rights lobbyist and former chief of the National Rifle Association (NRA).

As a political science student at Duke University, he continued his conserva-



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

tive advocacy through speeches and articles, writing a column titled 'Miller Time' for *The Chronicle*, the school's newspaper, and serving as the first national coordinator of the David Horowitz Freedom Centre's Terrorism Awareness Project.

After his graduation in 2007, Mr. Miller dove into Republican politics. He was tapped as press secretary for Rep. Michele Bachmann from Minnesota, and then as Communications director for Rep. John Shadegg of Arizona. He later started working for Senator Jeff Sessions from Alabama, a staunch anti-immigration advocate, later becoming his chief of communications.

Mr. Miller helped Mr. Sessions sharpen his immigration stance. In 2013, he helped craft an effort to prevent the passage of a 2013 Bill, mooted by a bipartisan group of Senators called 'Gang of 8', which was proposing a way for undocumented im-

grants to gain legal residency. Steve Bannon likened Mr. Miller's opposition to the Bill to "the civil-rights movement in the 1960s" and his efforts proved fruitful after the Bill, which passed in the Senate, was not brought to vote in the House.

Trump's adviser

As Donald Trump prepared to run for President in 2016, Mr. Miller joined his campaign as a policy adviser, later becoming his speechwriter. Post his victory, Mr. Miller joined the administration as a senior policy adviser, focusing on immigration.

He led advocacy for the zero-tolerance policy at the Southern Border, widely characterised by critics as a family separation policy where children were taken from parents who crossed illegally over the U.S.-Mexico border. Mr. Miller also supported the so-called Muslim ban, where entry from seven Muslim-majority countries

was banned. After Mr. Trump's failed re-election bid in 2020, Mr. Miller echoed claims that the election was stolen.

In Mr. Trump's second administration, Mr. Miller took up roles as deputy chief of staff for policy and as homeland security adviser, which didn't require Senate confirmation.

Since then, he has furthered Mr. Trump's campaign promise to carry out mass deportations of undocumented immigrants. He has frequently stressed the goal of one million deportations in the first year, telling ICE agents in May 2025 that he wanted 3,000 immigration arrests a day.

He has also been credited with increasing coordination with law enforcement and FBI for the anti-immigration effort. Further, Mr. Miller reportedly came up with the plan to deport migrants to an El Salvador prison using the wartime Alien Enemies Act.

Lately Mr. Miller has expanded his focus beyond immigration to foreign policy, spearheading the policy to strike Venezuelan drug boats in the Caribbean, and supporting the seizure of Greenland. As Mr. Trump seems determined to continue with his hardline anti-immigration agenda, Mr. Miller remains the main driving force of the policy.

Vijaita Singh

In February 4, Yumnam Khemchand Singh, 62, who studied up to Class X and is a martial arts expert, was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Manipur, a State reeling from an ethnic crisis between the majority Meitei and the tribal Kuki-Zo people since May 3, 2023.

Mr. Singh, a two-time MLA from the Singjamai constituency and a former Speaker of the Assembly, was chosen to lead the State by the central BJP leadership, days ahead of the one-year tenure of the President's Rule, which was to come to an end on February 13.

Any extension of the President's Rule beyond this would have required the Union government to move a constitutional amendment Bill in Parliament, not preferable to the central leadership as it would have left the floor open for the Opposition to criticise the government.

Said to have the backing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Mr. Singh's perceived inclination to be on the same page as the Centre helped his case. Though the Home Portfolio is with Cabinet Minister Govindas Konthoujam, by choosing Mr. Singh, the BJP also wants to ensure that the gains

made on the law and order front in the past one year – no major violent incidents, arrest of hundreds of extortions and underground cadres – are not reversed.

Before winning the Singjamai seat on a BJP ticket in 2017, Mr. Singh taught taekwondo, a Korean martial art, to children. But this was not his first attempt at electoral politics. In 2012, he contested the Assembly elections on a Trinamool Congress ticket and lost by a margin of 157 votes to the Congress candidate Hemachandra Singh.

Clean image

His clean image when it came to matters of law was also a factor. The affidavit that he filed during the 2022 Assembly elections from Singjamai shows that he has no past or pending criminal case against him.

That the Centre, through Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, will continue to keep an upper hand on critical governance and law and order issues is not

lost on all. It was reflected in the way Mr. Singh was selected. All the BJP legislators, including Mr. Singh, were called to Delhi, where the decision was sealed and announced to the waiting MLAs. Interestingly, former CM N. Biren Singh, whose resignation on February 9 triggered a political crisis in the State, leading to the imposition of President's Rule, was the one who proposed his name for the Chief Minister's post.

In fact, the new Chief Minister has been a vocal critic of Biren Singh and in one of the meetings at the latter's house in 2024, he had urged him to step down. On February 3, 2025, days before President's Rule was imposed, he came to Delhi and told the BJP leadership that the government would collapse if Biren Singh was not removed.

Popular in his constituency, Mr. Singh also became the first Meitei MLA to reach out to the Kuki-Zo

Crisis-time CM

Yumnam Khemchand Singh

The new BJP Chief Minister of Manipur has to take measures to heal the ethnic wounds while navigating administrative challenges



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

community, since violence erupted in the State in 2023. On December 8, in an unprecedented turn of events, Mr. Singh visited two Kuki-Zo villages and a relief camp to extend solidarity with the displaced people and those affected by violence. The choice of villages was also symbolic – both villages are located in Naga dominated districts of Kampong and Ukhru. Though his visit was criticised by the Kuki-Zo civil society groups, Mr. Singh said: "We, the elders, may have our differences, but we should not allow this conflict to affect the future of our children."

How Mr. Singh navigates governance issues with his two deputies – Nemcha Kipgen, a Kuki Zo and Losii Dikho from Naga People's Front (NPF), an alliance partner of the BJP – will be keenly watched in the days to come. Ms. Kipgen did not travel to Imphal to take the oath, instead she was sworn in virtually from Manipur Bhawan in Delhi and her appointment had led to widespread protests in Kuki-Zo areas with civil society groups demanding a resolution of their political demands before an MLA from the community provides legitimacy to the government.

With a year to go for the next elections, due in February 2027, Mr. Singh has his task cut out.

CAIRO

Drone attack by RSF in Sudan kills 24, including eight children



A drone attack by the Rapid Support Forces hit a vehicle carrying displaced families in central Sudan's North Kordofan province on Saturday, killing at least 24 people, including eight children, a doctors' group said, a day after a World Food Program aid convoy was targeted. Several others were wounded. AP

ABUJA

Two attacks in a few days leave 30 dead in Nigeria's Benue state



Two attacks in the space of a few days left 30 people dead in two neighbouring towns in Nigeria's central state of Benue, long prone to inter-communal clashes. The region has seen an upsurge of violence in recent months between Muslim ethnic Fulani herders and mainly Christian farmers over control of land and resources. AFP

CARACAS

Venezuela Parliament chief vows quick release of political prisoners



Venezuela's head of Parliament, Jorge Rodriguez, on Friday promised the speedy release of remaining political prisoners during a meeting with their relatives in which he promised to correct the government's "mistakes". The meeting came a day after National Assembly gave their initial backing to a draft amnesty Bill. AFP

WASHINGTON

Pentagon to cut academic ties with Harvard amid 'woke' ideology claims



The Pentagon is to cut all academic ties with Harvard University, ending military education, fellowships and certificate programs, it said in a statement on Friday. The move is the latest in the Trump administration's battle with Harvard over claims that the Ivy League institution promotes "woke" ideology. AFP

Iran, U.S. agree to hold next round of talks soon: Araghchi

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Iran's Foreign Minister said a fresh round of talks with Washington would take place "soon", while insisting that enrichment was Tehran's "inalienable right" and building trust would take time.

Abbas Araghchi said the first round of talks in Oman on Friday had been a "good start". "(Nuclear) Enrichment is our inalienable right and must continue. Even with bombing they could not destroy our capabilities," he said.

"The Iranian nuclear case will only be resolved through negotiations."

Mr. Araghchi's remarks came a day after renewed nuclear talks in Muscat with Washington.

Islamic State affiliate claims Pakistan suicide bombing

The group, Islamic State Pakistan, said the attacker opened fire on security guards who tried to stop him at the main gate and detonated his explosive vest after reaching the mosque's inner gate

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD

An affiliate of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility overnight for a deadly suicide bombing inside a Shia mosque on the outskirts of Pakistan's capital that killed 36 people and wounded 169 others. Initially, 31 worshippers were reported killed, but authorities said that the toll rose to 36 after some critically injured died in hospitals.

The police arrested four suspects, including three alleged facilitators and the mastermind of the attack. According to investigation



Deadly detonation: People attend a funeral for victims of the suicide blast at a Shia mosque in Islamabad, on Saturday. REUTERS

officials, an identity card recovered from them helped establish the attacker's identity as Yasir, a 32-year-old from Peshawar.

The regional Islamic

State affiliate, known as Islamic State in Pakistan, claimed responsibility in a statement posted on its Amaq News Agency. It said the attacker opened fire on

security guards who tried to stop him at the main gate and detonated his explosive vest after reaching the mosque's inner gate.

The Islamic State group suggested it viewed the Pakistani Shias as legitimate targets, calling them a "human reservoir" that provided recruits to Shia militias fighting the Islamic State in Syria.

Investigators have also revealed that prior to the bombing, the attacker had remained in Afghanistan for approximately five months where he allegedly received formal training in weapons handling and suicide attacks. (With PTI inputs)

'U.S. gave Ukraine, Russia a June deadline to reach deal'

Associated Press

KYIV

The U.S. has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a deal to end the nearly four year war, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told presspersons, as Russian strikes on energy infrastructure forced nuclear power plants to cut output on Saturday.

If the June deadline is not met, the Trump administration will likely put pressure on both sides to meet it, he added.

"The Americans are proposing the parties end the war by the beginning of this summer and will probably put pressure on the parties precisely according to this schedule," Mr. Zelenskyy said, speaking to presspersons on Friday.



Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Mr. Zelenskyy's comments were embargoed until Saturday morning.

"And they say that they want to do everything by June. And they will do everything to end the war. And they want a clear schedule of all events," he said.

He said the U.S. proposed holding the next round of trilateral talks next week in their country for the first time, likely in Miami, Mr. Zelenskyy said.

"We confirmed our participation," he added.

Mr. Zelenskyy said Russia presented the U.S. with a \$12 trillion economic proposal – which he dubbed the "Dmitriev package" after Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev. Bilateral economic deals with the U.S. form part of the broader negotiating process.

Russian strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure continued with over 400 drones and about 40 missiles launched overnight Saturday, Mr. Zelenskyy said in a post on X. Targets included the energy grid, generation facilities and distribution networks.

Ukrenergo, the state energy transmission operator, said the attack was the second mass strike on energy infrastructure since the start of the year.

As Bangladesh gears up for election, minority communities seek security

Rabiul Alam

DHAKA

Pranto Das Gupta, a 22-year-old from Bangladesh's minority Hindu community, is preparing to cast his first vote in the coming national elections. Living in Dhaka, around 300 km from his ancestral village in Saptakaria, Chattogram, Mr. Gupta plans to travel home to vote with his family on February 12.

For the first-time voter, the lofty promises in party manifestos from economic prosperity to constitutional reforms ring hollow against the lived reality of arson attacks, vandalism and intimidation. "We don't want clashes. We don't want promises. All we ask for is safety," Mr. Gupta said. "People in my village will go to the polling centres and vote for whoever they think can ensure their safety."

This plea for basic security has emerged as the overwhelming, non-partisan demand of religious minorities, who make up roughly 10% of the population.

According to a recent report by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), at least 56 targeted attacks on minority communities were recorded in the 17 months leading up to the election. These incidents included the desecration of temples, vandalism of homes, and physical assaults, leaving one person dead and 27 injured. Transparency International Bangladesh reported more than 50 such attacks in 2025, while Ain-e-Salish Kendra documented 42 incidents.

The Office of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, however, has offered a dif-



Campaign banners of candidates hang over the streets ahead of the national election in Dhaka on Saturday. REUTERS

A recent report by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBUC) said communal violence continues in the country. Based on data collected up to January 27, 2026, the council recorded 42 incidents, including murder, sexual violence and attacks on temples.

Monindra Kumar Nath, acting general secretary of the BHBUC, said fear continues to dominate minority communities' psyche as the 13th parliamentary election approaches. "Across the country, religious and ethnic minorities especially women and young people are living in constant anxiety," he said.

Following the August 2024 uprising that toppled the Sheikh Hasina government, organised mobs targeted Hindu neighbourhoods in several parts of the country. The community has long been perceived as supportive of the Awami League, Ms. Hasina's party.

The Awami League has been barred from contesting this election, yet minority voters say their participation remains important.

"Minorities have always been victims of violence in Bangladesh," said Abhi Chowdhury Partha, a college teacher in Dhaka. "Even during Sheikh Hasina's rule, we saw attacks during festivals. Fear did not disappear then, and it has not disappeared now."

He said this persistent insecurity is shaping voting behaviour. In many minority-dominated areas, there is a discussion of "strategic voting", choosing candidates perceived as less likely to provoke violence rather than those offering ambitious promises.

Persistent anxiety
This election cycle has been especially tense. While clashes between the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami dominate headlines, minorities describe a quieter but persistent anxiety. Major political blocs have made rhetorical overtures: the BNP's manifesto promises minority protection, while the Jamaat alliance speaks of building a "humane Bangladesh." Yet, critics said these parties,

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AGAMUDI MUDALIAR 34/165 Mirugasim Raju Lagnam, PG (HR, MNC, Hyderabad) Seeks MS, M.Tech Groom**WELL SETTLED** Doctor, 40 yrs, Divorcee without child, Hindu, BC seek compatible professional Groom. CNB. Contact: 8056868090**HINDU, 29, Pillai, ME, Private, 50 lakhs PH: 8138900557****HINDU, 31, Mudaliyar, MBA, royal family PH: 8138900402****HINDU, 30, UK, caste no bar, MSc, 50 crores. PH: 8137003550****SC AD Hindu Bride Age 26/163, BE, 163cm, M.S, Business, Well settled - Rich and Affluent, Wanted Christian Groom. CT: 9488184227****CHRISTIAN, 26, born-again, rich affluent, ACCA, NRI, 30 crores. PH: 8138900312****CHRISTIAN, Coimbatore - 30 Yrs/ 163cm, M.S, Business, Well settled - Rich and Affluent, Wanted Christian Groom. CT: 9488184227****CHRISTIAN CSI**, Very Fair, Beautiful MS Arch, 30 yrs, Alliance invited from Fair, Handsome, Height min 5ft and 9 Inches , Well settled Good Family Background. Ct: 9884013629**HINDU NADAR- Divorcee Unconsummated Marriage - 35 Bank/IT, Bangalore Sr.Associate 40LPA Own House. Seeks blw 38yr. Call / WA : 9442236736****HASTHAM 38 Fair MCA Chennai wanted Pillai/Mudaliar Groom. 820757159****VANIYAKULA KSHATRIYA 34yrs, Meenrasi, Revathi star, BE, LLB, Advocate. Seeks Groom with Good job, Good family. 9710028797****RC. CHRISTIAN, MBBS MD (Anesthesiology), Pursuing, College, 27 yrs, Fair, God Fearing, Educated Family in Chennai, Seeks Doctor. WhatsApp Profile 7550065082 Mail ID: mukdm14@gmail.com****ARCHITECT FAIR** Girl, 29 years, well settled and doing fine-lancing, Mudaliar, residing in White Town, Puducherry, seeks for a good looking bride groom from decent family, well settled background, age between 30 to 32 years, Salary 15 LPA & above, must be Roman Catholic in Mudaliar / any forward caste. Call: 9842230716**MUDALIAR, 29, yrs, BE, affluent family with moral values Bengaluru seek suitable groom. 7975421774****GROOM WANTED** Rich Mudaliyar 31yrs, B.Tech, Working in Bangalore, Elite business family Contact: 6385293227**MUDALIAR (CNB) 22/FAIR, Under Graduate, Father Jewellery Businessman, Elite Family, Seeks Groom. Business/ Industrialist-****MUDALIAR: 26/FAIR & Beautiful, 165cm, M.B.B.S, doing Final year, Chennai, Business Family, Only Daughter, Seeks Groom/ Doctor/ Business/Engg 8925019776****CHRISTIAN, 26, UK, Medical, 50 lakhs, VVIP, PH: 8137001255****MUSLIM, 28, PRIVATE, NRI, 35 lakhs. PH: 8138900312****TAMIL MUSLIM** Bride 31/165cm, Fair, Relatively well educated. Suitable Boy. Contact: 9404186227**HINDU SC/UNMARRIED** Canadian Citizen Bride 25/165cm looking for God fearing, Family Oriented, Canadian or American Citizen. Age 30-35, Professional, have Biblical values and Faith. Email Profile and Photo to: riyanpran@gmail.com Call: 9677181606**Muslim (kula) 31/163, PhD, NRI Abu Dhabi seeks groom Professional and religious (no shirk and bidah) 950146962/safat@gmail.com****CHRISTIAN/UNMARRIED/1991/ 160/ BDS-MPH** C:9042331000**Tamil Muslim, Dentist, 27 Years, 160 cm, affluent Family, seeks suitable Groom. Contact: 7867979904****ROMAN CATHOLIC** Nadar 23/167 B.Arch, working as Junior Modular Designer in Coimbatore. Salary Rs. 30000/- PA Seeks suitable Boy with Negative Blood Group. 9421621591**BORN AGAIN** Christian, 44yrs/152, MBBS, MD doctor, seeks Suitable Groom, Chennai CT: 9500188067**HINDU SC/AD** Age 38 BE Software Engg. in TCS, Chennai. Rs.140/Lakhs/ per annum seeks suitable Qualified Employee Groom. Ct: 9592167197 / 9962781009**Fair, Cultured, Good Looking, Slim, Doctor Girl 36/165 MD, Cardiac Anesthesiologist, Chennai based doctor family Father Keralee Nair Mother from Tamilnadu. Looking for Doctor groom or Engineer from respectable family.****98400 50381 / 98409 85383****Bride Groom PG MD or MS OR MCH. Contact: 9443331986.****HINDU NADAR** Girl 33ys, MBBS, M.S Ophthalmio Vitreo - Retina Surgeon Doctor only. 9840038499/ 9487928218**ENGINEER****CHRISTIAN NADAR** Girls BE, MS, Fair 27, Seeks Suitable Engineer/Wish to Go to Canada. Ct: 73586 38363

TAMIL

BRIDEGROOM WANTED
SEER KARUNEEGAR (Veg)**Age 28 years good looking bright Bride Unmarried MS (IT) Software Engineer & UI/UX Designer USA / New York City is looking for Suitable Unmarried Bride Groom (Veg) Doctor / Engineer Working in USA base from South India. Caste no bar.****Ct: 9486171087 / 9443161587 / 9500883162****9443469444****HINDU SC (AD)** 26 yrs, 154 cms, B.Com Hons., MBA, Into father's Business, Family is financially well off. Looking for affluent family match in Sengundhar/Agamudiyar/Vellalar in Pondicherry only.**9443469444****HINDU SC (AD)** 26 yrs, 154 cms, B.Com Hons., MBA, Into father's Business, Family is financially well off. Looking for affluent family match in Sengundhar/Agamudiyar/Vellalar in Pondicherry only.**9443469444****HINDU SC (AD)** 26 yrs, 154 cms, B.Com Hons., MBA, Into father's Business, Family is financially well off. Looking for affluent family match in Sengundhar/Agamudiyar/Vell

Classifieds

Matrimonial

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

BRIDES WANTED

TAMIL

MUDALIAR 30, BE, MS 178cm Smart Look 36Lacs PA Well Settled Family Seeks Bride CNB 8778514465/7200663432

TAMIL

BRIDE WANTED Rich Mudaliar, 29yrs, MBBS, MS, Elite Business Family in Chennai. Contact: 6385293227

SC AD 29/B.Tech., MBA, Techno Functional Consultant (WIPRO) 1,40,000p.m. Seeks Bride Ph : 7397674481

REDDY BOY, ME, 46/ Purattadi, religious, non smoker, non alcoholic divorcee, Manager in leading MNC, owning house & flat, 20 lacs p.a. seeks suitable Hindu bride Ct9985792975

GOLDSMITH 37/175 V.Fair Business 2LPM Wife Expired. Well Settled Seeks Middle Class Girl. CNB 730536086

TAMIL, PURE Vegetarian, 47 State Govt Officer -12L PA. First Marriage. Seeks Caste no bar only Vegetarian. Call/WA - 89037 47433

HINDU SENGUNTHAR, Age-31 officer KVB, Born in Moola Nakshatra 4th Padham. Seeks Employed /unemployed girl from decent educated family. Contact: 7598227564 / 9445250564

MUDHALIAR, Thiruvonam, Govt. Doctor - Asst. Professor - MS (Opt), Working at Tirupur Medical College, Tirupur, Age 38. Divorced, seeks bride Unmarried / Divorce (No child) Age below 33 (Doctor / Any Degree) from good family. CT: 9442523333, Tirupur

HINDU NADAR, 25yrs, MBBS, doing MS(Genetic Surgery), Doctor Parents seeks suitable MBBS studying MBBS Bride. Ct: 9443751221

LOOKING FOR a bride for my son who is 52 years old, Hindu, US Doctor. Never married, US Citizen. Please text me WhatsApp , No caste. Geetha 318-465-4292.

28M, B.TECH, MS (UK), MBA (Fin), hailing from a Hindu cultured, well-settled family, working at Big4 and shortly leaving for the Middle East invites suitable alliance. Father (SC) and mother (ly) working at senior level in the Gulf. Looking for a well-educated girl from cultured family. Caste no bar. Please callWhatsApp +917200484871

GOUNDER, 47yrs, B.Sc, Rohini Star Own Business, Income Rs.1 Lakh P.M, Property 2Cores, seeks Bride any OBC Community. CT: 9840878715.

MUDALIAR 30/180, FAIR, Handsome, MBBS MS, OWN SPECIALTY HOSPITAL, 800000 PA, CNB, 9043991629, 9043987029

TAMIL

BRIDE WANTED Rich Mudaliar, 29yrs, MBBS, MS, Elite Business Family in Chennai. Contact: 6385293227

HINDU, DIVORCED, 32, caste no bar, 30 crores, NRI, 9048 44858.

HINDU, 27, USA, caste no bar, 20 crores, MS, 9072 77781

REDDY BOY, ME, 46/ Purattadi, religious, non smoker, non alcoholic divorcee, Manager in leading MNC, owning house & flat, 20 lacs p.a. seeks suitable Hindu bride Ct9985792975

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MUDALIAR 30/180, FAIR, Handsome, MBBS MS, OWN SPECIALTY HOSPITAL, 800000 PA, CNB, 9043991629, 9043987029

TAMIL

Seeking Bride from affluent SOZIAH VELLALAR (PILLA) family for 27 yrs, 190 cm, handsome MBA Groom, settled in CANADA. Willing to relocate to India if required. Groom in India till Mar 2026. Email: s26091965@hotmail.com WhatsApp: +965 97121178

HINDU, SC (Adhi Dravidar) (Preferrable Kongu), 30, Punar Poosam, Mithunam (Gemini) Raagu Kedhu, 167cm Fair. B.E, M.Tech, 9L PA Bangalore. Seeks educated Bride working at USA. Contact: 98410 36017

TELUGU

HINDU REDDY 41 191 cms issueless divorce MDS dentist working in private in Chennai 1 lakh/mth seeks tall bride CNB ct 9384009329

BALJIA NAIDU, 1985/180cms, Krigai, Whitehs, MBA, IT Director in Dubai seeks suitable bride - decent family with BHP ct: 9840633177

REDDY, SWATHI, 29/183 BE, MS London, Business, divorced seek educated, good family background girl. Naidu's also welcome. Ct: 971093159

BALJIA NAIDU, Age-47 Unmarried MBA, Rohini / Rishabham MNC 19L PA, Chennai. Caste No Bar. Ct: 904035781

REDDIAR 39 B.E (Yarn Trading) Rs 1 Lakhs PM Casto no bar seeks good looking King Bride. 9443821427 / 9442721427.

TELOUGU VANNERI, 41, MBA, Kannai, Astham, AGM in MNC, 30 Lac.PA, Any Telugu Caste no Bar. Ct: 98947 77505.

NAIDI, 29/185, H-some MBBS,MBA, MEDICAL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING, 6000000PA, CNB, 9043991629, 9043987029

30 Years 178cm/ MS/ Hindu Telugu Speaking Groom /Seeks Bride, Contact: 9940383460.

BRIDE WANTED Rich Naidu 30yrs B.Tech MS Own school & complex Elite business family in Chennai 6385293227

HINDU Aryavasya Telugu-Vegetarian 37yrs/179cm, very good looking, working in a Bangalore based firm with WFH option, Monthly Income-2.5 Lacs, Divorcee, seeks suitable Bride in Tamilnadu. CT:9042593341.

URDU

DOCTOR PARENTS, Sunni Urdu, seek Medico Bride for their Doctor son pursuing MD Post Graduation, Fair 26/178cm. abash25@gmail.com

SYED OWNHOME 48/BBAs, seeks any marital status bride, WhatsApp 7871019173 Email:- rishtachennai3@gmail.com

WELL SETTLED

HINDU KONGU BOY

Seeking bride from similar background for educated handsome boy from affluent family 29/180cm/B.Tech, M.S/ Uthiram / Kannirasi / Working in Bangalore as PM

Contact : 93848-27999

WANTED BRIDE

God Fearing Rich Family, Vanniyar Padayatchi

Settled in Tiruchirappalli invites Proposal for their 3rd Son

Dr. ARUN PRASANNA

MBBS, MD

Rasi - Kanni Star - Uthram

Age 29, Fair, Owns a

Luxury 4 Star Hotel (Hotel Vijayarani)

Opp. Govt. Hospital, Trichy. Besides Many Assets.

NO BAD HABITS.

Seeks Equal Status Bride.

Caste No Bar

Parent Contact

94431 24712

ramalingaji@gmail.com

Seeking BRIDE for Bridegroom

Hindu, Kulalar/Udayaar,

44 yrs, 170 cms, M.Tech,

IT professional, Caste open for discussion.

Parent Contact

94431 24712

CT: 93842 76066

WANTED BRIDE

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ramalingaji@gmail.com

WANTED BRIDE

Hindu, Kulalar/Udayaar,

CLUTCH PLAY

Only I could tell how much pressure I was feeling: Suryakumar



EMMANUEL YOGINI

Only I could tell how much pressure I was feeling when we were 77 for six. But at the same time, I had that belief that I had batted in similar situations. And we learned that we could have batted a little better or maybe a little smarter... Washington Sundar is joining us in Delhi [ahead of Thursday's Namibia game] — Suryakumar Yadav.

SEEKING DIVINE HELP

Every part of my body prayed for the dropped catch: Faheem



AFP

Pakistan's Faheem Ashraf admitted that there was a prayer not just on his lips but every inch of his body before Netherlands' Max O'Dowd put down his catch. "The feeling at that time... it wasn't only my lips that were praying, every part of my body was praying for that catch to be dropped," Faheem said.

TRUE ALL-ROUNDER

Shepherd is always ready to put his hand up for the team: Hope



RITU RAJ KONWAR

West Indies skipper Shai Hope showered praise on Romario Shepherd. "He's one of those guys who's always willing to learn and improve. He's transformed his game with the bat and is one of the most dangerous finishers in world cricket today. He's always ready to put his hand up whenever the team needs it, with bat or ball."

THE DREAM

Getting to play in Kabul bigger than the World Cup: Rashid



R. RAGU

Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan dreams of playing an international match at home in Kabul. "Yes, that's bigger than the World Cup, to be honest. [If and when] we play an international game in Afghanistan, then everyone will see how welcoming people back home in Afghanistan are," Rashid said.

Skipper Suryakumar saves the day for Men in Blue

India, asked to bat first, slips to 77 for six in the 13th over before SKY's 49-ball unbeaten 84 pilots the side to 161 for nine; USA finds pacers Siraj and Arshdeep too hot to handle, loses by 29 runs

T20 WORLD CUP

K.C. Vijaya Kumar

MUMBAI

The captain rose to the fore and the host prospered at the Wankhede Stadium here on Saturday night. Suryakumar Yadav's masterly unbeaten 84 helped India post 161 for nine, a score that proved beyond the reach of the United States of America (USA) in the ICC Twenty20 World Cup Group A clash.

In the chase, USA struggled for a foothold and finished with 132 for eight, handing defending champion India a 29-run triumph. Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj scythed through the top-order.

Andries Gous, Saiteja Mukkamalla and Monank Patel were back in the hut as the visitor struggled at 13 for three.

DOWN FOR THE COUNT

Milind Kumar and Sanjay Krishnamurthi hung in together for a 58-run alliance but once the duo fell, the USA was down for the count.

Earlier as fans trooped in, a member of the Indian diaspora screamed "USA, USA," and in jest a local fan yelled: "Simon go back." Either it was just a throwaway line or perhaps a hat-tip to an iconic moment during India's freedom



Ebb and flow: Suryakumar came to India's rescue before Siraj struck two quick blows to derail USA's chase. Van Schalkwyk's four-for had earlier rattled the host. EMMANUEL YOGINI



struggle in the past.

And after a glitzy opening ceremony, USA skipper Monank won the toss,

elected to field and found the Indian openers slightly tentative.

Ishan Kishan bided his

time while Abhishek Sharma lofted the first ball he faced straight to the fielder in the deep as seamer Ali

Khan turned ecstatic. Tilak Varma then eased the pressure while tucking into Saurabh Netravalkar with a

six and a four.

Kishan too joined the act, whipping a maximum against Ali, and while the

SCOREBOARD**INDIA**

Ishan Kishan c Milind b van Schalkwyk 20 (16b, 1x4, 2x6), Abhishek Sharma c Krishnamurthi b Ali Khan 0 (1b), Tilak Varma c Monank b van Schalkwyk 25 (16b, 3x4, 1x6), Suryakumar Yadav (not out) 84 (49b, 10x4, 4x6), Shivam Dube c Netravalkar b van Schalkwyk 0 (1b), Rinku Singh c Milind b Mohsin 6 (14b), Hardik Pandya c Mohsin b Harmeet 5 (6b, 1x4), Axar Patel c Mohsin b Harmeet 4 (11b, 2x4), Arshdeep Singh c Milind b van Schalkwyk 4 (6b, 1x4), Varun Chakaravarthy run out 0 (0b); Extras (w-3): 3 Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 161.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Abhishek, 1.2 overs), 2-45 (Kishan, 5.2), 3-46 (Tilak, 5.5), 4-46 (Dube, 5.6), 5-72 (Rinku, 11.4), 6-77 (Hardik, 12.4), 7-118 (Axar, 16.4), 8-140 (Arshdeep, 18.6), 9-161 (Varun, 19.6).

USA BOWLING

Netravalkar 4-0-65-0, Ali Khan 2-0-13-1, van Schalkwyk 4-0-25-4, Mohsin 4-0-16-1, Ranjane 2-0-16-1, Harmeet 4-0-26-2.

two batters had their reprieves as two catches were dropped, they failed to capitalise.

Both succumbed to Shailesh van Schalkwyk, through soft dismissals triggered by ambitious shots finding eager fielders. It was a template that marred Shivam Dube too as India wobbled at 46 for four, and it got worse when a struggling Rinku Singh departed.

However, Suryakumar (84 n.o., 49b, 10x4, 4x6) hung in and relished a lucky break on 15 as a

USA

Andries Gous c Tilak b Siraj 6 (9b, 1x6), Saiteja Mukkamalla c Varun b Siraj 2 (7b), Monank Patel c Dube b Arshdeep 0 (2b), Milind Kumar st. Kishan b Varun 34 (34b, 3x4, 1x6), Sanjay Krishnamurthi c Rinku b Axar 37 (31b, 1x4, 2x6), Shubham Ranjane lbw b Siraj 37 (22b, 2x4, 3x6), Harmeet Singh c Siraj b Axar 0 (1b), Mohammad Mohsin c Tilak b Arshdeep 4 (9b, 1x4), Shadley van Schalkwyk (not out) 2 (5b); Extras (lb-3, w-3): 6; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 132.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Gous, 1.4), 2-11 (Monank, 2.1), 3-13 (Saiteja, 3.2), 4-71 (Milind, 11.6), 5-98 (Krishnamurthi, 15.2), 6-98 (Harmeet, 15.3), 7-110 (Mohsin, 17.4), 8-132 (Ranjane, 19.6).

INDIA BOWLING

Arshdeep 4-0-18-2, Siraj 4-0-29-3, Varun 4-0-24-1, Axar 4-0-24-2, Hardik 4-0-34-0.

Toss: USA; PoM: Suryakumar. India won by 29 runs.

India's next match: Feb. 12 vs. Namibia, Delhi, 7 p.m.

caught-and-bowled was dropped by Shubham Ranjane.

He picked his singles, watched Hardik Pandya's exit, and found an ally in Axar Patel. And when he toppled while scooping a four off Ranjane, it ushered in his half-century. He quickly rose to soak in the applause.

A stunning six off Schalkwyk and 21 runs off the last over from Netravalkar, revealed Suryakumar at his rousing best, and India had done enough to seize the night.

Faheem dazzles as Pakistan survives a Dutch scare

Agence France-Presse

COLOMBO

Faheem Ashraf smashed an unbeaten 29 off 11 balls as Pakistan scrambled past the Netherlands by three wickets to avoid a massive shock in the curtain-raiser of the T20 World Cup here on Saturday.

Pakistan was made to sweat as the Netherlands took a flurry of late wickets to leave it needing 29 off the last two overs with only three wickets in hand at the Sinhalese Sports Club ground.

Faheem then hit 24, including three sixes, off a 19th over that also saw him being dropped in the deep by Max O'Dowd and then completed the chase with three balls to spare.

Pakistan had begun well, racing to 61 for two after the six-over power play. Sahibzada Farhan looked in prime touch, cracking 47 off 31, but his exit swung the pendulum the Dutch way.

Right-arm quick Paul van Meekeren produced a double-wicket maiden to turn the screws. When the unconvincing Babar Azam perished in the next over



Great escape: Faheem came to Pakistan's rescue with a 11-ball unbeaten 29 to take the former champion over the line. AFP

for a scratchy 15, Pakistan was in trouble having lost three wickets for two runs in the space of 10 deliveries.

With the chase wobbling, Faheem stitched a priceless unbroken 34-run stand for the eighth wicket with Shaheen Afridi to see Pakistan home.

Earlier, the Netherlands showed plenty of flair after being put in. Roared on by

around 200 travelling fans, they were in a good position at 127 for four with four overs to go, but Pakistan applied the brakes with the slow bowlers sharing six wickets between them.

The scores: The Netherlands 147 in 19.5 overs (Bas de Leede 30, Scott Edwards 37, Salman Mirza 3/24) lost to Pakistan 148/7 in 19.3 overs (Sahibzada Farhan 47). **Toss:** Pakistan. **PoM:** Faheem.

PCB and ICC in formal dialogue

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

The Pakistan Cricket Board and the ICC have opened formal discussions over Pakistan's T20 World Cup clash against India. The fate of the match remains uncertain after the Government of Pakistan recently announced on social media that the men's team has been directed not to take the field against India in Colombo on February 15.

The Hindu understands that the PCB has conveyed its inability to play the fixture, invoking the force majeure clause of the Members Participation Agreement, which covers unforeseen circumstances, including government directives.

The onus is on the ICC to determine whether it can persuade the PCB that forfeiting a match would be in violation of the MPA, which mandates that every member must play all scheduled matches in an ICC tournament. The commencement of formal dialogue between the PCB and the ICC leaves a window open for the Pakistan authorities to reconsider their stance.

Hetmyer and Shepherd deliver for WI

Y.B. Sarangi

KOLKATA

Shimron Hetmyer smashed a blistering half-century to rewrite a Caribbean record and power two-time champion West Indies to a 35-run victory over late entrant Scotland in their opening T20 World Cup Group C match at the Eden Gardens here on Saturday.

Romario Shepherd's five-wicket haul, which included a hat-trick, was the icing on the cake.

Inserted to bat, the West Indies posted a formidable 182 for five before wrapping up the Scotland chase for 147.

The Caribbean team managed only 33 for no loss in the PowerPlay as openers Brandon King (35, 30b, 4x4, 1x6), who plundered 17 runs off Safyaan Sharif in the seventh over, and captain Shai Hope added 54 runs.

Hetmyer (64, 36b, 2x4, 6x6) replaced Hope in the ninth over and thoroughly entertained the 18,000-odd spectators with his blitzkrieg that was studded with breathtaking pulls to the stands.

The southpaw reached his milestone off 22 balls, breaking Chris Gayle's 17-

year-old record for the fastest half-century by a West Indian in the T20 World Cup.

Hetmyer's fire power overshadowed the efforts of Rovman Powell (24, 14b, 1x4, 2x6) and Sherfane Rutherford (26, 13b, 4x4, 1x6). A sensational catch by Brandon McMullen at deep midwicket off Sharif ended Hetmyer's stay in the penultimate over.

Scotland's reply was on expected lines. It lost three early wickets, with George Munsey falling to a stunning catch by Hetmyer off Shamar Joseph before captain Richie Berrington (42, 24b, 3x4, 2x6) and Tom Bruce (35, 28b, 1x4, 2x6) put up a fight by adding 78 runs.

Shepherd (5/20) removed four desperate Scottish batters, including a hat-trick (Matthew Cross, Michael Leask and Oliver Davidson), in his third over and the team's 17th to earn his maiden five-for in West Indies' comprehensive win.

The scores: West Indies 182/5 in 20 overs (Brandon King 35, Shimron Hetmyer 64, Brad Currie 2/23) bt Scotland 147 in 18.5 overs (Richie Berrington 42, Tom Bruce 35, Jason Holder 3/30, Romario Shepherd 5/20). **Toss:** Scotland. **PoM:** Hetmyer.



Heroes of the game: Shepherd celebrates his hat-trick with Hetmyer. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Spin-heavy Afghanistan looks to get the better of New Zealand in their opener

Rashid & Co. will aim to emulate their 2024 edition heroics; the batting unit, led by Zadran and Gurbaz, needs to pull its weight if the team has to go deep in the tournament; the Kiwis will be keen on bouncing back from the drubbing in the recent series against India



Huge responsibility: Rashid will be keen to use his experience and skills with both the ball and bat to inspire Afghanistan in the T20 showpiece. R. RAGU

T20 WORLD CUP

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

One of the highlights of the 2024 T20 World Cup was Afghanistan's sensational march to the semifinals. The foundation for the team's inspiring run - in which it also beat the mighty Australia - began with a crushing 84-run win over New Zealand.

The memories of that game in Providence should be fresh in the minds of both these outfits when they get ready to square off against each other to kick-start their 2026 campaign

(Group D) here at the MAC Stadium here on Sunday.

Afghanistan will bank on its formidable spin attack, led by skipper Rashid Khan, to stifle the Black Caps, especially if the Chepauk surface plays true to its reputation of being kind to tweakers.

Apart from Rashid, the experienced Mohammad Nabi and Noor Ahmad - the latter can expect good local support through his Chennai Super Kings association - form a potent combination. The batting unit, though, relies heavily on openers Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmullah Gurbaz, and the middle-order batters need to pull their weight if the squad

hopes to go deep in the tournament.

New Zealand, meanwhile, has to quickly learn lessons from the 1-4 drubbing at the hands of India recently, to avoid another first-round exit. The main issue in the bilateral series was its batting, which was over-reliant on Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips. However, the Kiwis have often shown the ability to raise their levels on the big stage.

This is one of the most competitive groups, with three of the five sides ranked in the top-10 (New Zealand, South Africa, and Afghanistan). Can Rashid's men spring another surprise?

Today's matches



Chennai, 11 a.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 2
New Zealand 1 | Afghanistan 1



Mumbai, 3 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
England | Nepal
First Meeting



Colombo (RPS), 7 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Sri Lanka 3 | Ireland 0

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR

The pressure of playing in big stadiums is new to many of our players: Madsen

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

Italy is a football country. So football that Milan Football and Cricket Club became A.C. Milan, and cricket was reduced to a trivia question for quizmasters.

Still, Italy is at a T20 World Cup. Not metaphorically. Not spiritually. Literally. Bags packed. Helmets on. National anthem queued. It is a squad built like assembled furniture. It arrives with part-timers, astroturf cricketers, Australian accents, Indian, South African, and Sri Lankan heritage, Italian passports, and a 42-year-old captain who has played a hockey World Cup for South Africa - Wayne Madsen.



Ready to roar: Madsen in action during the practice match against Canada. R. RAGU

Italy's World Cup build-up, Madsen insisted on Monday, "has been really good," with a two-week preparatory block in Dubai setting the tone. "We've had good wins against Ireland (T20I series) and Na-

mibia (practice match). We're starting to build confidence in the group, finding our methods to win games," he said after his team's 10-run win over Canada in the warm-up match here.

Role of a psychologist "The pressure of playing in big stadiums and in front of a lot of fans is going to be new to many of our players," Madsen said.

"As far as I'm aware, it (working with a psychologist) is something new for the team. Probably half of our squad, maybe even just over half, have jobs outside of cricket. We felt it was important, particularly for guys who are not in professional set-ups, to deal with pressure in big games. In the last month, we've had a lot of chats and

discussions around the mental side of this World Cup - what it's going to be for the individuals and the team," he added.

Back home, cricket is different. "There is club cricket in Italy, and none of it is on natural turf wickets. Everything's astroturf. It's a big adjustment when we go to tournaments. The ball's trajectory is different."

To prepare, the Italy-based players trained for six weeks in Sri Lanka. "We've got guys who are juggling jobs and have sacrificed so much to be here. Those journeys bring us together as a team. Our bond as Italians is special, and World Cup exposure will only help cricket grow (in Italy)," Madsen said.

Fighting spirit defined this Indian team: Deepesh on title triumph

U-19 WORLD CUP

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

Silence, emotion, and quiet pride marked India's u-19 World Cup triumph, according to D. Deepesh, who said the team struggled to find words immediately after the final moments. "No one knew what to say. We were all silent and emotional," he recalled over phone on Saturday. "We are winning after four years. I felt proud and emotional," the 18-year-old said, adding that his "parents and everyone back home" shared the joy. "This is the result of our hard work," he said.

Fighting spirit, Deepesh believes, defined this Indian side - a team that stayed united, resilient, and unyielding till the end. "We learned that we should all stay together as a team. No one gave up on each other," he said.

Fellow Tamil Nadu all-rounder Ambrish de-



On cloud nine: Indian players exult after going the distance in the u-19 World Cup. ICC

scribed the moments after the final as emotional and collective rather than personal. "We were all very happy. I didn't even expect that moment. Everyone was on their toes and running. We dedicated it for each other. We played as a team. So, it felt like a reward for everyone's hard work," he said over phone.

One of the defining off-field moments of the campaign came before the high-pressure clash against

Pakistan, when Sachin Tendulkar addressed the squad. "He gave many good examples," Ambrish said. "As players, we go through bad patches. He spoke about how to recover from it - that there will be bad phases in cricket, but we shouldn't let ourselves down, but come back up. He spoke about the mindset."

On the field, the World Cup marked a significant phase in the pacer's evolu-

Nagal to lead Indian charge at Chennai Open Challenger

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Sumit Nagal and the young Manas Dhamne will lead the Indian challenge at the Chennai Open Challenger (ATP 50 event) beginning at the SDAT Tennis Stadium here on Monday.

Briton Jay Clarke is the top seed in singles, which will see a handful of Indians including Sasikumar Mukund and Manish Sureshkumar in the main draw.

Among the direct entries for singles draw are Federico Agustin Gomez of Argentina (ranked 192), No. 204 Oliver Crawford of Great Britain, Rio Noguchi (Japan, 236), Frederico Ferreira Silva (Portugal, 265) and Ilia Simakin (275).

Nagal will open against Britain's Felix Gill while Dhamne will run into fourth seed Simakin.

Manish has been pitted against No.2 seed Gomez.

Elavenil clinches 10m air rifle gold

NEW DELHI: Elavenil Varilarvan held off the challenge from Japan's Misaki Nobata to clinch the women's 10m air rifle gold in the Asian rifle/pistol championships here on Saturday. Meghana Sajjanar joined Elavenil on the podium with a bronze. India racked up 10 gold medals on the fourth day.

India's overall tally grew to 43 medals, including 27 gold, 10 silver and eight bronze. Ojasvi Thakur secured gold in the women's youth category.

Lovlina and Sachin among 12 Indians to compete for gold

LA NUCIA (SPAIN): Lovlina Borgohain and Sachin Siwach notched up victories to storm into the finals, along with 10 other Indians, at the BOXAM Elite International boxing tournament. Twelve Indians, including eight women and four men, will compete for gold.

The results (involving

We have enough skills to beat any team now: Rashid

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI



I don't mind where we finish. The energy and effort should remain top priority

- RASHID



We've seen Afghanistan's recent success. So we know we've got to be 'on' to get past them

- SANTNER

Santner had a pragmatic outlook on the stiff competition in Group D, touted as the 'Group of Death' of the edition.

"That's how it goes in a World Cup. You don't get things easily; it's always very tough, and that's the beauty of T20 cricket," Rashid emphasised.

Santner added: "I guess we're used to it now, same as last time [2024 WC]. We've seen Afghanistan's recent success, not only against us but throughout the last World Cup and the bilaterals that followed. So we know we've got to be 'on' to get past them."

SNAPSHOTS

India wins SAFF U-19 women's title

POKHARA (NEPAL): The India U-17 women's team clinched the SAFF U-19 women's football championship, defeating Bangladesh U-19 4-0 on Saturday. Captain Julian Nongmaithem (42) opened the scoring before Elizabeth Lakra (63) penalty, Pearl Fernandes (68) and substitute Anwita Raghuraman (83) completed the triumph.

Tejaswin leads after day 1 of heptathlon

TIANJIN (CHINA): After four events on day one of heptathlon, Tejaswin Shankar leads the field with a total of 3513 points with China's Zihui Hua in second place with 3241 at the 12th Asian Indoor Athletics Championships on Saturday. He collected 844 points with a time of 7.11 seconds in the 60m dash. He recorded 7.53m in the long jump to add 942 to his tally. In shot put, his best performance was 13.63m which earned him 706. In high jump he recorded 2.23m to collect 1021 to move to the top.

Sathvik leads after day 1 of heptathlon

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Yohitha stars as Sudha Shah XI triumphs

CHENNAI: K. Yohitha's unbeaten 109 (90b, 14x4) helped Sudha Shah XI beat Niranjan XI by 107 runs in the last round and emerge the Ffrey-Thiruvallur DCA women's league champion. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Champion: Sudha Shah XI that won the Freyer-Thiruvallur DCA women's league title. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Sathvik (TN, 183); Yohitha (Sudha Shah XI, 109 n.o.).

Nadu declare at 428 for nine and secure a 260-run first-innings lead over Tripura on day two of the Elite-C sixth-round match in the Col. C.K. Nayudu Trophy on Saturday.

The scores: Tripura 168 & 23/1 in 10 overs vs Tamil Nadu 428/9 decl. in 104.3 overs (V.P. Amith Sathvik 183, M. Boopathi Vaishna Kumar 55, Manav Parakh 90, Parvez Sultan 3/75).

Yohitha stars as Sudha Shah XI triumphs CHENNAI: K. Yohitha's unbeaten 109 (90b, 14x4) helped Sudha Shah XI beat Niranjan XI by 107 runs in the last round and emerge the Freyer-Thiruvallur DCA women's league champion, with 16 points with four wins from five matches. Fowzie Khalili XI finished runner-up.

The scores: Fowzie Khalili XI 166/8 in 40 overs (N. Nitaysree 38, C. Yaazhini Evangelin 53, B. Tejaswi 27/2) lost to Lissy XI 167/3 in 30.4 overs (D. Swagata 74 n.o., B. Tejaswi 38 n.o.).

Sudha Shah XI 229/5 decl. in 35 overs (K. Yohitha 109 n.o., M. Keerthika 55) bt Niranjan XI 122 in 36.2 overs (M. Keerthika 3/6). Susan Pallikal XI 147/9 in 40 overs (P.K. Jaipa 40) lost to Thirushkamini XI 151/2 in 20 overs (W. Reena Santro 64, Shivani Sujith Nair 52).

Special awards: Highest run-getter: D. Swagata (Lissy XI, 268); Highest wicket-taker: S.K. Anirutha (Susan Pallikal XI, 11).

Suleymanov maintains lead

GM Alisher Suleymanov (Kazakhstan) maintained his half-point lead after the fifth round of the 1st Chola Chess International GMs round-robin tournament, moving to 3.5 points.

The results (fifth round): GM Alisher Suleymanov (Kaz, 3.5) drew with IM Harsh Suresh (2); GM Mahel Boyer (Fra, 1) lost to GM Neuris Delgado Ramire (Par, 3); IM Ethan Vaz (3) drew with GM Joseph Girel (Fra, 2); IM Akshay Borgiaonkar (2) drew with IM Mayank Chakraborty (2.5); IM Audi Ameya (3) drew with Aronyak Ghosh (3).



On target: Gyokeres slides in Arsenal's third. AFP

Arsenal rolls over Sunderland

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies LONDON

Arsenal sealed a comfortable 3-0 win over Sunderland on the back of a Viktor Gyokeres double to extend its advantage at the top of the Premier League table to nine points on Saturday, turning up the pressure on Manchester City ahead of its trip to Liverpool.

A first-half hat-trick from Cole Palmer eased Chelsea past bottom-dweller Wolves 3-1 while Aston Villa was left looking over its shoulders as it dropped points in a one-all draw at Bournemouth.

United wins again
Earlier, Manchester United profited from Tottenham captain Cristian Romero's red card to stretch its perfect start under Michael Carrick to four games with a 2-0 win at Old Trafford.

Robert Lewandowski and Lamine Yamal scored as Barcelona eased to a comfortable 3-0 win over Mallorca on Saturday to move four points clear at the top of LaLiga.

In the Bundesliga, Ser-

hou Guirassy scored late for Borussia Dortmund to cut Bayern Munich's lead to three points on Saturday with a 2-1 win at Wolfsburg.

The results: Premier League: Manchester United 2 (Mbeumo 38, Fernandes 81) bt Tottenham 0; Bournemouth 1 (Ryan 55) drew with Aston Villa 1 (Rogers 22); Arsenal 3 (Zubimendi 42, Gyokeres 66, 90+3); Burnley 0 lost to West Ham 2 (Summerville 13, Castellanos 26); Fulham 1 (Mykolenko 18-0g) lost to Everton 2 (Dewsbury-Hall 75, Leno 83-0g); Wolves 1 (Arokodare 54) lost to Chelsea 3 (Palmer 13-pen, 35-pen, 38).

LaLiga: Barcelona 3 (Lewandowski 29, Yamal 61, Bernat 83) bt Mallorca 0.

Bundesliga: Freiburg 1 (Beste 13) bt Werder Bremen 0; Mainz 2 (Amiri 8-pen, 80-pen) bt Augsburg 0; Wolfsburg 1 (Koulibakis 52) lost to Borussia Dortmund 2 (Brandt 38, Guirassy 87); St. Pauli 2 (Salikas 35, Sinani 55-pen) bt Stuttgart 1 (Leweling 90); Heidenheim 0 lost to Hamburg 2 (Konigsdorffer 45+3, Philippe 78).

On Friday: Premier League: Leeds 3 (Bogle 26, Okafor 30, Calvert-Lewin 49) bt Nottingham Forest 1 (Lucca 86).
LaLiga: Celta Vigo 1 (Iglesias 53-pen) lost to Osasuna 2 (Budimir 35, Garcia 79).
Serie A: Verona 0 drew with Pisa 0.

Bundesliga: Union Berlin 1 (Querfeld 87-pen) drew with Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Brown 84).
In the Bundesliga, Ser-

Big-serving Dhakshineswar pulls India level on day one

His victory over top-100 player de Jong restores parity after Nagal comes a cropper against Dutchman Den Ouden in a three-set encounter; the doubles tie on Sunday holds the key

DAVIS CUP

N. Sudarshan BENGALURU

Dhakshineswar Suresh added another high-impact bullet point to his fast-growing tennis resume as he beat Jesper de Jong 6-4, 7-5 on day one of the Davis Cup Qualifiers first round fixture against the Netherlands at the S.M. Krishna Tennis Stadium here on Saturday.

Dhakshineswar's maiden win over a top-100 player came after India No. 1 Sumit Nagal lost a tough three-setter to Guy Den Ouden 0-6, 6-4, 3-6. The levelling act now shifts focus to Sunday afternoon's doubles between Yuki Bhambhani-Sriram Balaji and Sander Arends-David Pel, a rubber that will break open the tie.

"It's an unreal feeling... making it level," Dhakshineswar said. "The whole team was behind me and I played the way I wanted to."

In the media briefing, captain Rohit Rajpal called him his "trump card", and it is easy to see why. In his Cup debut last September against Switzerland in World Group I, the 25-year-old had beaten Jerome Kym, a player then ranked more than 280 places above. The latest victory gap was a whopping 377.

Prima facie, de Jong appeared the better-rounded player, but Dhakshineswar



Going for it: Dhakshineswar was all aggression in the win over de Jong. K. MURALI KUMAR

had the bigger weapon - a booming serve that clicked like a dream. He allowed de Jong a solitary break-point all evening, and he was especially impressive on his second serves, of which he won 18 of 25 points.

Dhakshineswar needed only two breaks of serve - in the tenth game of the first set and the 12th of the second, and on both occasions, de Jong crumbled while serving to stay alive.

The lanky Indian took the opening stanza on his fourth set-point when his opponent sent a forehand long.

In the second set, with

gal looked every bit the man who was playing his first match in over three weeks as he routinely missed first-serves and overcooked his ground-strokes.

In the second, he found the tennis to match Den Ouden, breaking in the seventh game and following it up with two excellent holds to restore parity. But midway through the decider, he lost direction again.

However, the two-hour, 30-minute workout should hold him in good stead for the reverse singles which, after Dhakshineswar's splendid win, will be all important.

greater bite on both serve and return. She began to turn defence into offence, using depth and timing to disrupt Sawangkaew's rhythm. With Sawangkaew faltering on the return and Tararudee lifting her first-serve percentage - highlighted by a couple of well-placed aces - the momentum swung in her favour as she claimed the set 6-3.

The momentum shift was short-lived, however, as Tararudee seemed visibly rattled in the decider, distracted and thrown off by the thunderous beat of drums and dhols just outside the venue.

Sawangkaew pounced on the opportunity, breaking early and stepping inside the baseline to dictate the rallies. With heavier groundstrokes, sharp angles, and court coverage, she kept Tararudee chasing shadows, racing through the final set 6-1 to book her place in the championship match. She will take on Austria's Lilli Tagger in the summit clash.

Other results: Singles (semifinal): Lilli Tagger (Aut) bt Fangran Tian (Chn) 6-2, 7-6(3).
Doubles (semifinal): Polina Iatcenko & Elina Pridankina bt Naima Karamoko (Sui)/Leolia Jeanjean (Fra) 2-6, 6-4, [10-2].

Tararudee mounted a strong response in the second set, tightening her service games and finding



Fighting fit: Sawangkaew outlasted Tararudee in a three-set match to reach the final. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sawangkaew sets up title clash with Tagger

MUMBAI OPEN

Tarun Shastry MUMBAI

The Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association's (MSLTA) centre court took on a distinctly Thai flavour on Saturday as Mananchaya Sawangkaew battled past compatriot Lanlana Tararudee in a gripping three-set semifinal, 6-2, 3-6, 6-1, to reach the final for the second straight year at the L&T Mumbai Open 125K Series here on Saturday.

The 23-year-old Sawang-

kaew set the tone early, asserting herself from the baseline with sharp footwork and measured aggression. She placed the ball intelligently across the court, opened up angles with clean down-the-line strokes, and closed out points with assured finishing at the net.

Tararudee struggled to withstand the sustained pressure, committing a string of unforced errors as Sawangkaew wrapped up the opening set 6-2.

Tararudee mounted a strong response in the second set, tightening her service games and finding

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP

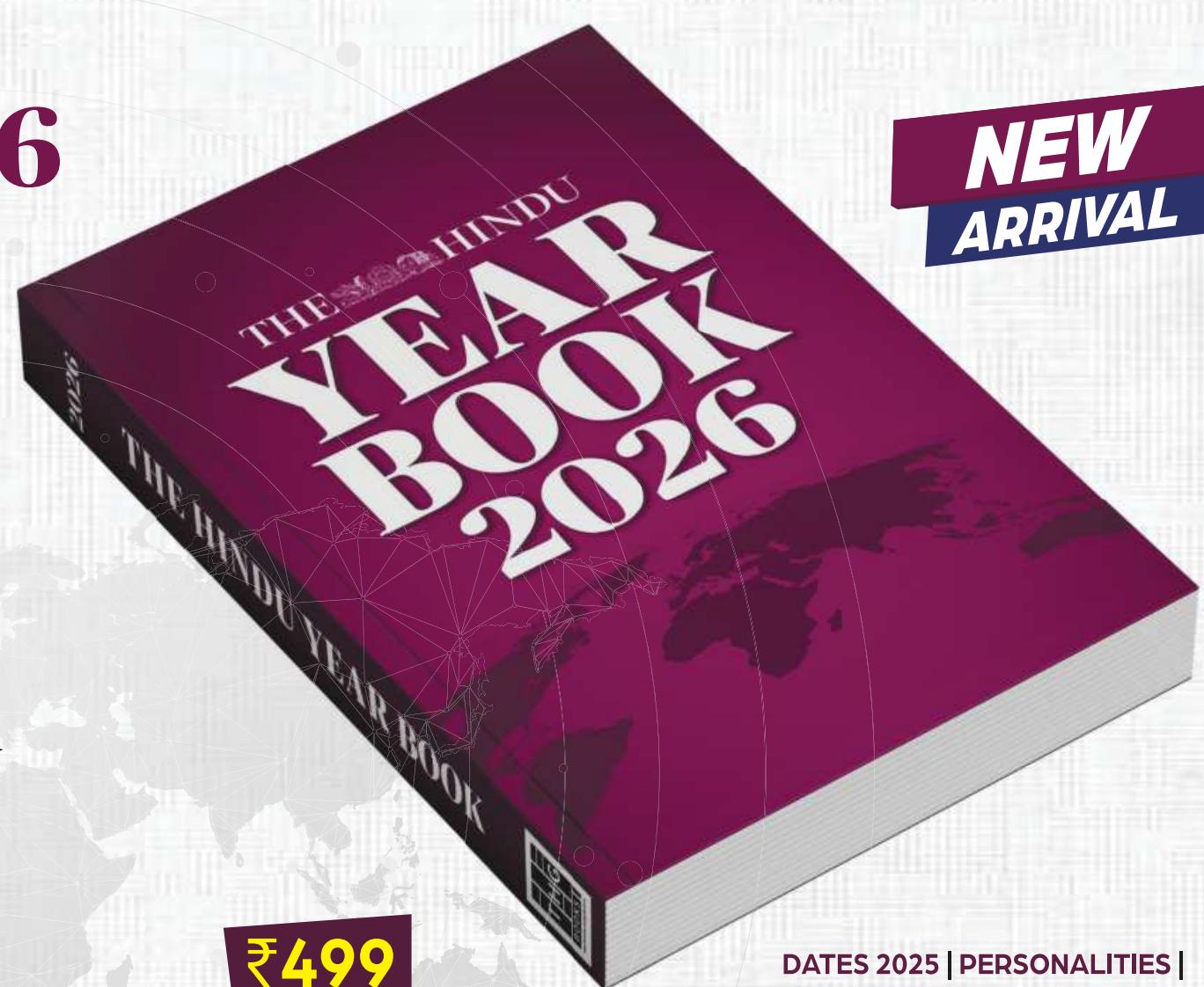


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Amul

Avasthi and Deshpande help Mumbai stage a fightback

The two fast bowlers take four wickets apiece as the host restricts Karnataka to 173; Agarwal (92) wages a lone battle; Akash and Musheer lead the home team's charge in the second essay

RANJI TROPHY

Shayan Acharya
MUMBAI

After a dismal batting show let Mumbai down in the first innings of the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal against Karnataka, not many would've imagined that the 42-time champion would eventually stage a comeback.

But Mohit Avasthi (four for 27) and Tushar Deshpande (four for 33) once again proved why the Mumbai cricketers are called 'khadoos'. True to their reputation, the Mumbai fast bowlers refused to give up and bundled out Karnataka for just 173, limiting the deficit to 53 runs.

Karnataka, cruising at 110 for two at one point, looked set for a big total before Deshpande and Avasthi made the most of the conditions on Saturday to trigger a collapse. Karnataka lost eight wickets for just 63 runs, and was folded up in just 127 minutes to allow Mumbai bounce back in the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal. Avasthi maintained good line and length and unsettled the Karnataka middle-order before Deshpande tightened the noose.

Mayank Agarwal (92, 134b, 14x4, 1x6) did put up a fight and challenged the Mumbai bowlers before he was caught at second slip by Siddhesh Lad off a nippy Deshpande delivery.



Crucial wicket: Agarwal's gritty knock ended when Deshpande had him caught at second slip.

EMMANUEL YOGINI

RANJI QUARTERFINAL SCORES - DAY 2

At Mumbai: Mumbai 120 & 189/2 in 52 overs (Akash Anand 53 batting, Musheer Khan 49 batting) vs. Karnataka 173 in 47.1 overs (Mayank Agarwal 92, Mohit Avasthi 4/27, Tushar Deshpande 4/33).

At Kalyani: Andhra 295 in 88.4

overs (K.S. Bharat 47, Shaik Rasheed 46, Ricky Bhui 83, Mukesh Kumar 5/66, Akashdeep 4/79) vs. Bengal 199/5 in 63 overs (Sudip Kumar Gharami 112 batting).

At Indore: J & K 194 & 84/5 in 26 overs vs. Madhya Pradesh 152 in

53.4 overs (Yash Dubey 58, Aujib Nabi 7/40, Sunil Kumar 3/47).

At Jamshedpur: Jharkhand 235 vs. Uttarakhand 282/5 in 87 overs (Avneesh Sudha 64, Kunal Chandela 68, J. Suchith 60 batting).

Akash adding 112 for the third wicket, there were no further slip-ups. Akash seemed to be in no hurry, en route to his third fifty-plus score, while Musheer was one run away from his fifty at stumps.

The scores: Mumbai — 1st innings: 120.

Karnataka — 1st innings: K.L. Rahul c Kotian b Avasthi 28, Mayank Agarwal c Lad b Deshpande 92, Devdutt Padikkal c Akash b Shedge 17, Karun Nair c Jaiswal b Shardul 4, R. Smaran c Akash b Avasthi 0, Shreyas Gopal c Akash b Deshpande 9, Vidyadhar Patil c Musheer b Deshpande 4, Shikhar Shetty b Avasthi 4,

Prasidh Krishna b Deshpande 0, Vidwath Kaverappa (not out) 4; Extras: (lb-9, nb-1, w-1) 11; Total: (in 47.1 overs) 173.

Fall of wickets: 1-50, 2-88, 3-119, 4-120, 5-120, 6-156, 7-164, 8-169, 9-169.

Mumbai bowling: Shardul 9-2-52-1, Avasthi 15.1-4-27-4, Deshpande 11.3-3-34, Shedge 8-0-37-1, Mulani 4-0-15-0.

Mumbai — 2nd innings: Yashavali Jaiswal st. Kruthik b Shreyas 36, Akhil Herwadkar (run out) 33, Akash Anand (batting) 53, Musheer Khan (batting) 49; Extras: (lb-10, b-1, nb-1, w-6) 18; Total: (for two wkts. in 52 overs) 189.

Fall of wickets: 1-77, 2-77.

Karnataka bowling: Vidyadhar 12-2-52-0, Prasidh 11-1-37-0, Kaverappa 7-0-36-0, Shreyas 13-2-35-1, Shikhar 9-2-18-0.

Tough to catch up with teams that have a head start, says Miranda

ISL

S. Shrivathsan
CHENNAI

In normal circumstances, Chennaiyin FC, during this time of the year, would be chalking out plans to be best-placed for the Indian Super League playoff qualification.

However, these are unprecedented times. It is February, usually the month when the league season's climax begins, but the Indian football fraternity still awaits ISL's kick-off. The uncertainty meant that the Chennaiyin players, like their rivals from other clubs, were waiting in hope at a time when they must have been battling for the ball on the field.

So, after that one notification which they longed for appeared on their mobiles, they finally breathed again. CFC head coach Clifford Miranda expressed "relief" looking at the immediate future of the ISL, scheduled to begin on February 14. "We would rather have a delayed start to the league than have no league at all. All of us have to adapt," Miranda, Chennaiyin's first permanent Indian chief coach, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.



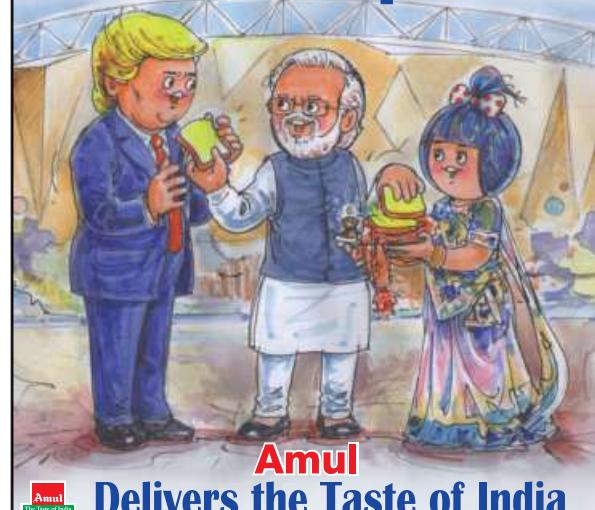
Miranda. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

But Miranda admitted that it would be an onerous task to catch up with clubs which enjoy a head start. "Primarily, our objectives will depend on the preparation we have for the season. Four-five clubs have been training year-round, so it is not a level-playing field," said Miranda, whose team re-started practice only two weeks ago.

"But we cannot term ourselves as victims. While we cannot make up for four-five months of non-football, we will try to play football the way I want the team to play. In the end, football is result-oriented; we would love to win and we want to win."

For now, Miranda and the wider football community want the national federation to give life to the ISL tagline of 'Let's football'.

Pact with a punch!



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ENGAGEMENTS

Cricket: TNCA league, II div., Cromhest RC vs Bunts (A.M. Jain); Pristine vs Komaleeswaran (Vivekananda); UFCC (T. Nagar) vs India Pistons (Guru Nanak); S. Rly. vs MCC (S. Rly.); Swaraj vs Coromandel (Murugappa); Indian Bank vs Egmore RC (Tagore); IV-C, Unicorn vs KMC (Gandhi Nagar); Vigneswara vs Triplicane CC (Engg.); Chatnath vs Book Sellers XI (Venkateswara); Chennai Port vs Bharat Petroleum (Wah! Guru-B); State Bank of India vs Kumbhat (Union); PUC vs BRC (PBEL City); V-A, Varsity Occasionals vs Globe (Gojan); Sir Ashley Biggs Inst. vs Lusuraj (St. Bede's-A); Vepery vs Harnath (Gojan-B); V-C, Triplicane RC vs NUC (SMK Fomra-B); MRC-B vs Saidapet Gymkhana (St. Bede's-B), 9.30 a.m.

Tennis: Coromandel Chennai Open ATP Challenger, SDAT Nungambakkam Tennis Stadium, 10 a.m.

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LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: JioHotstar, 9.30 a.m.

Men's T20 World Cup: Star Sports 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 11 a.m. 3 & 7 p.m.

Serie A: DAZN, 5.70, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)

LaLiga: FanCode, 6.30, 8.45, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Monday)

Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 7.30 & 10 p.m.

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 8 & 10 p.m.

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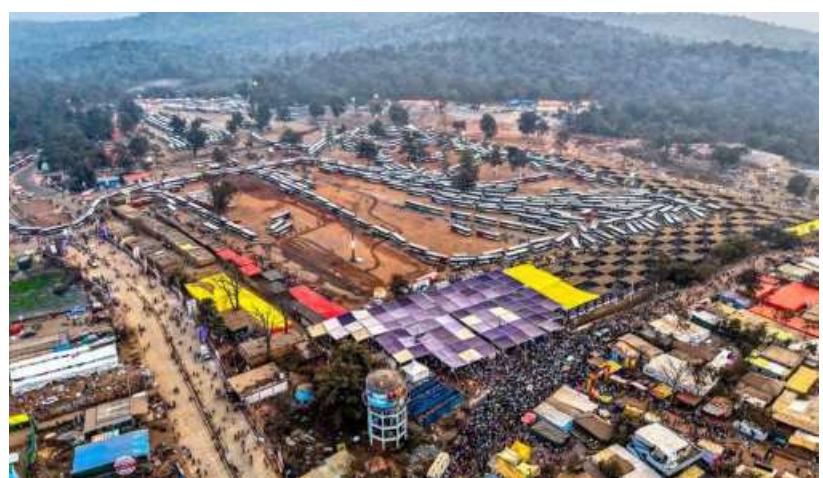


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Journeys begin: A temporary TSRTC bus stand set up at Medaram village to manage the steady influx of devotees arriving for darshan during Sammakka-Saralamma Maha Jatara.



Gathering of faith: Devotees from different parts of the country gather at Medaram village as the festival draws lakhs to the forest shrine.



State salute: Mulugu Superintendent of Police Sudhir R. Kekan, along with other officials, fires a ceremonial round into the air at Chilakalagutta ahead of the arrival of Sammakka.



Sacred waters: Pilgrims take a holy bath in the Jampanna Vagu as temporary tents line the riverbanks, accommodating devotees who stay through the days of the Sammakka-Saralamma Maha Jatara.

Medaram and the rhythms of devotion

The Sammakka-Saralamma Maha Jatara held in Medaram, a small forest village in Telangana, draws crores of devotees who seek to honour the forest goddesses



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The Sammakka-Saralamma Maha Jatara, popularly known as Medaram Jatara, is regarded as Asia's largest tribal congregation. This extraordinary biennial festival takes place in Medaram, a small forest village nestled deep within the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary in the Mulugu district of Telangana. Rooted in ancient Koya tribal traditions, the Jatara honours the forest goddesses Sammakka and Saralamma, commemorating their valour and sacrifice.

Recognised as a State festival in 1998, the Medaram Jatara has grown from a modest tribal observance into one of the world's most remarkable spiritual gatherings. During the festival, the otherwise quiet village transforms into a vast spiritual arena, drawing crores of devotees, tribal and non-tribal alike, from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and neighbouring regions. Pilgrims gather to seek the blessings of Sammakka and Saralamma.

The festivities begin with the arrival of Saralamma, who is ceremoniously brought from Kannepally village, about 6 km from the Medaram shrine, by Koya tribal priests. Her procession crosses the sacred Jampannavagu rivulet before reaching her "gadde" (holy platform) on the first day of the four-day Maha Jatara. The rituals commence on Magha Sudha Pournami, a full-moon day that is considered auspicious.

Ahead of Saralamma's arrival, the deities Pagididdaraju and Govindaraju are installed on their respective platforms. Govindaraju arrives

from Kondai, while Pagididdaraju is brought from Ponugonda, located about 80 km from Medaram in Mahabubabad district.

The Jatara reaches its spiritual peak with the arrival of Sammakka from Chilakalagutta, symbolically represented in a revered vermilion casket. Her arrival marks the most sacred phase of the celebrations.

Traditionally, the District Superintendent of Police conducts a ceremonial welcome in the presence of officials and public representatives by firing rounds into the air using an AK-47 rifle, an age-old gesture signifying the State's formal welcome to the tribal goddess.

A multi-layered security arrangement ensures the smooth movement of the processions. Thousands of tribal devotees follow in deep reverence, some dancing, others in a trance, moving to the rhythmic beats of traditional drums.

According to local legend, Meda Raju, the erstwhile ruler of the region, once discovered an infant girl in the forest, guarded by wild animals. Enchanted by the sight, he adopted the child, named her Sammakka, and raised her alongside his daughter Nagulamma. In time, both were married to Pagididdaraju.

Sammakka, her consort Pagididdaraju, their son Jampanna, and daughter Saralamma are believed to have been martyred in a fierce battle against the Kakatiya rulers.

Ritual order: The four-day festival takes shape with the arrival of Saralamma, Govindaraju and Pagididdaraju at the Medaram tribal shrine, ahead of the arrival of Sammakka.





Living tradition: Koya tribal priests, led by Kokkera Krishnaiah, carry the presiding deity Sammakka in the form of a vermilion casket from a secluded spot at Chilakalagutta to the Medaram shrine.



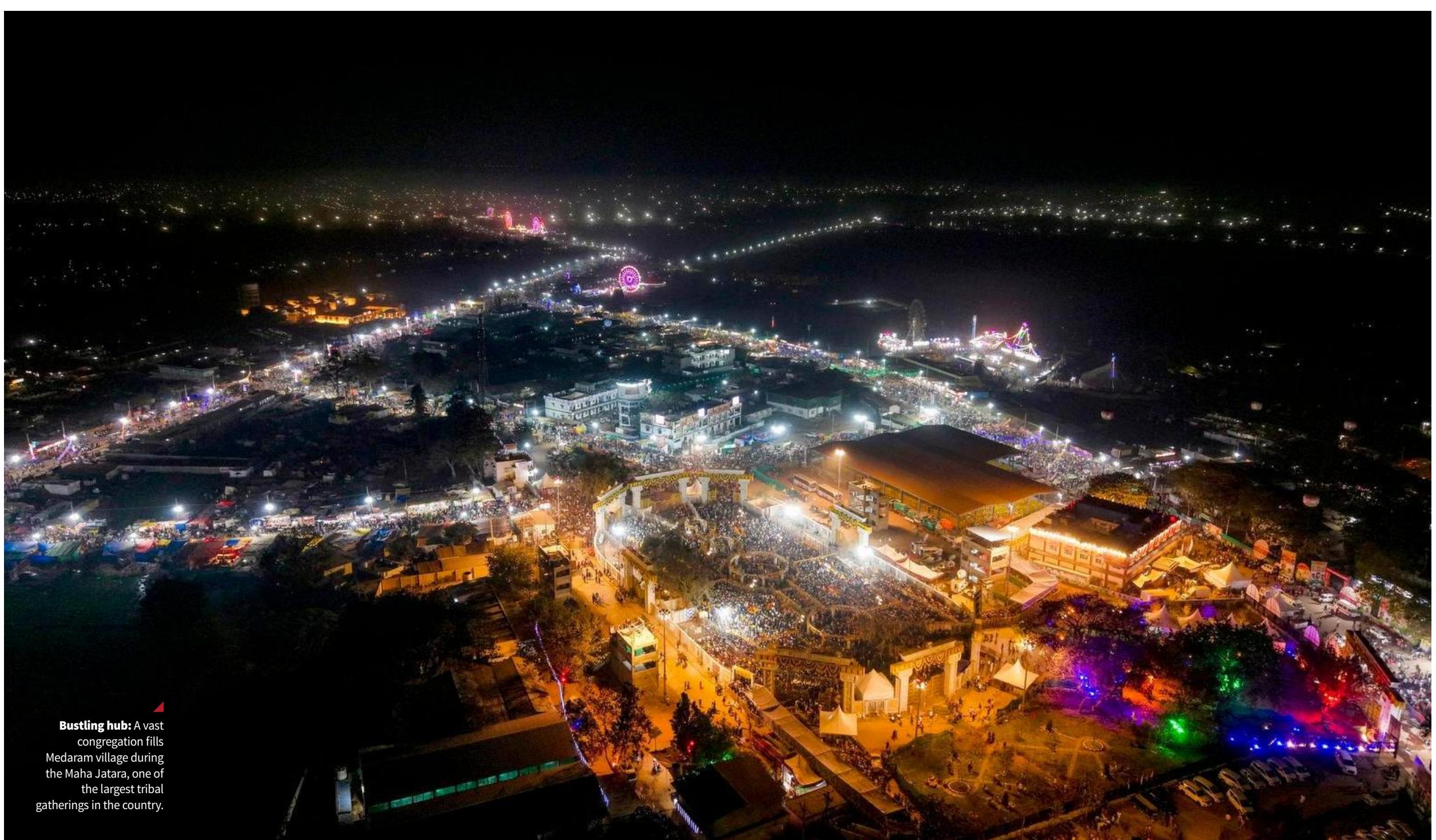
Symbol in sandal: A girl has a sacred mark drawn on her forehead during darshan at the Sammakka-Saralamma shrine.



Holy immersion: A view from the Jampanna Vagu as devotees perform ritual bathing, an integral part of the historic festival.



Homeward bound: Devotees begin their return journey after darshan of Sammakka and Saralamma, as the festival draws to a close at Medaram.



Bustling hub: A vast congregation fills Medaram village during the Maha Jatara, one of the largest tribal gatherings in the country.