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Sri Siddaramaiah  
Hon'ble Chief Minister  
Government of Karnataka



Sri D.K. Shivakumar  
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister  
Government of Karnataka



Sri M.B. Patil  
Hon'ble Minister for Large &  
Medium Industries and  
Infrastructure Development  
Government of Karnataka



Sri Appaji C.S. Nadagouda  
Hon'ble MLA, Muddebihal Constituency  
& Chairman, K.S.D.L.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Tamannaah Bhatia, who has graciously accepted to be the face of the brand, as it enters its next glorious chapter.

Here's to ushering in of a new era, one where the new generation will embrace the tradition of a glorious past.



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பெற்றிட உதவும் நான் முதல்வன் திட்டம்  
48.65 இலட்சம் மாணவர்களுக்குத் திறன் மேம்பாட்டுப் பயிற்சி  
1.17 இலட்சம் கல்லூரிப் பேராசிரியர்களுக்குத் திறன் மேம்பாட்டுப் பயிற்சி

தமிழ்நாட்டின் வளர்ச்சிப் பயணத்தில் ஒருவரையும் விதமாட்டோம்!



UKHRUL VIOLENCE  
Arson cases escalate tension in Manipur

NEWS » PAGE 8



DIABETES DIAGNOSIS  
'Anaemia may skew HbA1c results'

NEWS » PAGE 10



REVERSING DECISION  
Pakistan to play India in WC, says PM Sharif

SPORT » PAGE 13

Opposition mulls motion to remove LS Speaker Birla

Sandeep Phukan  
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties belonging to the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance are considering moving a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, accusing him of acting in a partisan manner and denying Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi the opportunity to speak during the debate on the Motions of Thanks to the President's Address.

The move is also based on the suspension of eight Opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha, the alleged failure to initiate action against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for objectionable remarks against former Prime Ministers, and the "unsubstantiated" charges against women MPs.

FULL REPORT ON  
» PAGE 9

## 'Restrictive' software tools being used for SIR, says SC

Court extends deadline for SIR process in Bengal, seeks clarification on allegations of violence; counsel for the State says 70 lakh people were called for hearing over minor disparities in names

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said the Election Commission (EC) was using "very restrictive" software tools, at least in the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in West Bengal, with scant tolerance for "natural" differences and inconsistencies commonly found in India, including Bengali households.

Tools applied by you in your software appear to be very restrictive tools. They are eliminating natural differences. Surnames are of various forms - 'Roy', 'Ray'... There is a common practice of 'Kumar' being a middle name in Bengali households. Now, if there is an omission of 'Kumar', notice is given?" Justice

### Clearing the air

Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Monday extended the claims-and-objections phase of the West Bengal SIR for a week beyond the current deadline of February 14.

#### Directions from the Supreme Court:

- West Bengal DGP should file an affidavit responding to allegations of orchestrated violence at verification centres
- EC can temporarily deploy a fresh batch of personnel provided by the State government for the revision exercise

Top court clarifies that micro-observers would only assist the EROs, and will not take calls on inclusion or exclusion of voters in the final electoral roll of the State



Joymalya Bagchi asked the EC's counsel, senior lawyer Dama Seshadri Naidu.

Senior lawyer Shyam Divan, for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, submitted that of the nearly 1.4 crore people who came under the 'logical discrepancies' category, 70 lakh were called to explain minor dis-

parities in their names or even surnames.

The Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant asked the poll body to extend the deadline for the claims-and-objections phase of the West Bengal SIR for a week beyond the current deadline of February 14. The

Bench further directed the State's Director-General of Police (DGP) to file a personal affidavit, responding to allegations of orchestrated violence and burning of documents at SIR verification centres.

The court asked the EC to temporarily deploy a fresh batch of 8,505 personnel provided by the State government for SIR work. The court also clarified that micro-observers, whose appointment had drawn objection from the State, would only assist the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs). It would be solely up to the EROs to take a final decision on inclusion or exclusion of voters from the final electoral roll of the State.

CONTINUED ON  
» PAGE 8

Stalin opens Jaguar Land Rover plant in Ranipet

The Hindu Bureau  
RANIPET

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday inaugurated the ₹9,000-crore Tata Motors Jaguar Land Rover car manufacturing plant and rolled out the first Range Rover Evoque at Panapakkam village in Ranipet district.

Speaking at the event, he said Tamil Nadu had grown to compete with nations in attracting investment. Global investors knew that the Tamil Nadu government would deliver on its guarantees, he added.

The plant would manufacture 2.5 lakh vehicles a year over the next 5-7 years for domestic and international consumers, and is expected to create over 5,000 direct and indirect jobs.

FULL REPORT ON  
» PAGE 4



इण्डियन ऑवरसीज़ बैंक  
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### A Journey of Progress



#### India's Firsts in Banking

- Any Branch Banking and ATM
- Consumer Credit Personal Loan Scheme
- Drive-in banking at Cathedral Branch, Chennai in 1960s
- Computerisation in 1964
- ISO 9001 Certified IT Operations
- WAP-based Mobile Banking Services
- Anywhere Banking... and more

#### Innovations for a Digital India

- My Account My Name facility
- Online Application & Allotment of Safe Deposit Locker
- IOB Mobile Banking App
- Internet Banking
- Digital Savings Account
- e-Bank Guarantee
- Instant Digital Retail Loan
- API Banking... and more



#### IOB Products & Services:

IOB Savings & Current Account | IOB Home Loans | IOB Vehicle Loans | IOB Easy Plot | IOB Nest App (Society Management App)  
IOB Connect Mobile Banking App | IOB Digital Hub | IOB MSME Loans | IOB Education Loans | My Account My Name Facility | IOB Online Locker



# 'Centre has released ₹10,354.15 crore for CMRL's phase II work'

Nearly 49% of construction work for phase II project has been completed, and there is no pending demand for release of funds, says Union Minister

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

Nearly 49% of Chennai Metro Rail Limited's (CMRL) phase II project's construction work has been completed and ₹10,354.15 crore has been released so far by the Centre for this project, Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu said.

In the Rajya Sabha, DMK MP Rajathi alias Salma raised queries on the release of ₹9,500 crore, advanced by the Tamil Nadu government towards the Centre's share for the project. CMRL's 118.9-km phase II project was initially taken up and approved by the State government as a State-sector project. Following this, they requested Centre to give their approval which came in October 2024.

"Consequent upon the sanction of CMRL's Phase II project by the Central government, Government of Tamil Nadu has made a



The Centre releases funds based on the requirement presented by CMRL, says the Union Minister. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

book adjustment request to the Central government for already availed loan of ₹9,500 crore, taken for Chennai Metro Rail phase II from State government to CMRL, which is 50:50 Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of the Government of India and the Tamil Nadu government for implementing CMRL phase II project," the Minister said.

At the pre-Union Budget consultation meeting held in New Delhi last month, Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu said the advance payment of ₹9,500

crore that the State government made towards this project impacted the State's debt-GSDP ratio and the permissible borrowing limit.

Mr. Sahu, also stated: "Central government releases funds for the project based on the requirement posed by CMRL. The Central government as per request of CMRL has already released funds to the tune of ₹10,354.15 crore since its sanction in October 2024. As on date, there is no pending demand for release of funds to CMRL."

"People are advised not to panic and not to touch the bird's carcasses with

## Chief Secretary holds meeting to monitor avian influenza in city

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has started conducting medical camps for screening residents for respiratory infection in areas where crows have died in the city.

At a meeting conducted on avian influenza by Chief Secretary N. Muruganandam on Monday, civic officials were advised to sensitise residents to it.

Corporation Commissioner J. Kumaragurubaran has directed GCC employees to prevent residents from touching infected birds with bare hands.

Anna Nagar councillor T.V. Shemmozhi said residents reported about the death of a crow in Anna Nagar on Friday. "We have taken precautionary measures," he said.

"It is to be noted that only crows are affected and other birds are not affected in Chennai. No rise in ILI (influenza-like illness) symptoms is noted among the public," said an official.

"People are advised not to panic and not to touch the bird's carcasses with

bare hands. Any symptoms of influenza-like illness need to be informed to the nearest GCC officers or Urban Primary Health Centres," said the official.

Following the reports of avian influenza, GCC has examined the caretakers and people working in a park for respiratory infection.

"They are on follow-up.

Medical camps have been

conducted in the vicinity

of the park to identify ILI

cases. House-to-house sur-

vey is being carried out in

the neighbourhood for ILI

and SARI (severe acute respi-

ratory infection) cases.

Details of such cases are

collected from private and

government hospitals, and

no unusual human cases are

being reported," said an

official.

After a crow fall was re-

ported in Adyar Park on Ja-

nuary 7, the GCC has

launched various activi-

ties. "The carcasses of the

crows have been disposed

of through deep burial un-

der strict preventive bar-

riers such as masks and

gloves by the workers. The

site of the crow fall and dis-

posed areas were disinfect-

ed with bleaching powder,"

said an official.

The production house

reportedly told the finan-

cial director him to pay a

compensation of ₹7.70

crore to the ad agency or

## Pay dues or serve jail term, HC tells Kochadaiiyaan producer

**Mohamed Imranullah S.**  
CHENNAI



A poster of Kochadaiiyaan.

The Madras High Court has directed the producer of Rajinikanth-starrer *Kochadaiiyaan* to pay ₹2.52 crore, within four weeks, as compensation to an advertising agency that had financed the photorealistic motion capture movie in 2014, or serve a six-month simple imprisonment in a cheque bounce case.

Justice Sunder Mohan passed the orders while partly allowing a criminal revision case filed by J. Murali Manohar and his production house, MediaOne Global Entertainment Limited, against the conviction and sentence imposed on them by a metropolitan magistrate in 2021 and confirmed by a city civil court in 2023.

According to the complainant, Abirchand Nahar, of AdBureau Advertising Private Limited, his firm had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MediaOne Global Entertainment on April 28, 2014. However, in December 2014, a cheque issued by the production house got returned with the endorsement, 'stop payment by the drawer', and hence the complaint was filed under Section 138 of the Negotiable Instruments Act of 1881.

On December 4, 2021, a metropolitan magistrate in Egmore convicted the producer and sentenced him to six months of imprisonment.

Further, the magistrate directed him to pay a compensation of ₹7.70 crore to the ad agency or

undergo six more months of imprisonment.

The conviction and the sentence was confirmed by an Additional City Civil Court on August 4, 2023, and therefore, the producer had approached the High Court, claiming to have repaid ₹12.75 crore. He also accused the ad agency of having used a cheque given as guarantee at a much later date.

However, after finding several inconsistencies in the version of the complainant and that of the producer, the judge came to the conclusion that there were enough material to rule that the ad agency had lent only ₹10 crore, and that it had been repaid ₹8.74 crore, leaving a balance of ₹1.26 crore.

Observing that the object of Section 138 of the NI Act was essentially to recover the money covered under a cheque, the judge confirmed the conviction, but modified the sentence to a fine of ₹2.52 crore (twice the existing liability), which the producer was ordered to pay the ad agency as compensation. "In default, the second petitioner/second accused (Mr. Manohar) shall undergo simple imprisonment for six months," he said.

**BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, Zone-2,  
Dasarahalli Division, MEI Layout, Hesarahatta Main Road,  
Bagalagunte, T. Dasarahalli, Bengaluru - 560073.

No: BNCC/EE/DD/TEND/05/2025-26 Date: 07-02-2026

### INVITATION FOR TENDERS (IFT) - (SHORT TERM)

(Two Tender Document System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC, Bengaluru invites Tenders from eligible Tenderers for the Construction of Works detailed below.

(Standard Tender Document - KW-1, 2, 3 & 4)

**Sl. No.** **Name of the Work / Category**

1 Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 15, Kammagondanahalli. (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 28,410/-

2 Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 16, Mallasandra. (ST) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 28,410/-

3 Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 17, Chikkasandra. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 56,820/-

4 Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 18, Bagalagunte. (CAT-1) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 28,410/-

5 Desilting and Maintenance of Drains by Silt and Tractor for the year 2025-26 in Ward No. 19, T. Dasarahalli. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 28.41, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 56,820/-

6 Improvements of Roads & Drains in Medarahalli Colony in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (CAT-II(A)) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 73.72, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 73,720/-

7 Construction of Samudaya Bhavan in Medarahalli Colony in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 125.00, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,87,500/-

8 Improvements of Roads & Drains in Kammagondanahalli, K.G. Halli, A.K. Colony in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 80.69, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,61,380/-

9 Development of Park in Medarahalli Colony in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 21.18, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 42,360/-

10 Improvements of Roads & Drains in Lakshmi pura in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 72.01, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,44,020/-

11 Improvements of Roads & Drains in Kanshiram Nagar in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 69.61, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,39,220/-

12 Construction of Drains in Cross Roads in Lakshmi pura Govt. School Surrounding Area in Ward No. 15, Shettihalli Sub Division. (CAT-II(A)) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 40.23, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 40,230/-

13 Construction of Roads & Drains in Shettihalli Colony in Ward No. 16, Shettihalli Sub Division. (SC) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 29.11, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 29,110/-

14 Construction of E Library Building and Toilet in Shettihalli Colony in Ward No. 16, Shettihalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 52.54, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 1,05,080/-

15 Improvements to Roads and Drains at Kalasthi Nagar in Ward No. 19, T. Dasarahalli Sub Division. (Others) - Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 16.14, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 32,280/-

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender Documents may be Downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from 12-02-2026.

2) Tenders must be Submitted online through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal on or before 16.00 Hours. on 23-02-2026. 3) Technical Bids will be Opened on the Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> at the Office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC on 24-02-2026 at 16.30 Hours. 4) Financial Bids will be Opened on the Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> at the Office of the Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC on 25-02-2026 at 16.30 Hours (if Possible). Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, BNCC.

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### NOTICE INVITING ELECTRONIC TENDERS

On behalf of President of India Principal Chief Materials Manager/PLW/Patiala invites tenders in electronic form for following items:

e-Tender Notice No. 43 ET/2025-26

S. Tender N. No.	Description	Qty.	Tender Closing date
1 21250007	Semi Assembled Bogie Frame	72 Nos.	01.04.2026*
2 11265036	Electric Overhead Travelling Crane, capacity:30/5 Ton	01 Nos.	24.02.2026
3 11255597	Rotor Bar Swaging Machine	01 Nos.	06.03.2026

Tender closing Time 15:00 Hrs  
Item marked with \* is reserved for procurement from CLW approved sources.  
The prospective Tenderers are advised to visit the website <http://www.irrep.gov.in> or <http://www.plw.indianrailways.gov.in> for detailed description of items & other terms and conditions of tender document. Please note that Tenderers can submit their quotations only through <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice No. 36 ET/2025-26

Closing date of Tender No. 02251369 may be read as 16.02.2026.

Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice No. 25 ET/2025-26

Closing date of Tender No. 02251169 may be read as 19.02.2026.

Corrigendum to e-Tender Notice No. 40 ET/2025-26

Closing date of Tender No. 02261001 may be read as 16.0

# Fisherfolk oppose proposed Mamallan reservoir project

According to a community leader, the fisherfolk were not given any opportunity to raise their objections to the project that could lead to thousands of families losing their livelihoods

**Deepa H. Ramakrishnan**  
CHENNAI

Residents of 16 fishing hamlets from Kanathur to Kokkiliemedu along the East Coast Road gathered on Monday at the backwaters of Vada Nemeli to protest against the Mamallan reservoir project.

Getting into the slushy brackish waters, they raised slogans urging the State government to give up the project.

Community leader R. Narayanan of Kovalam said that the fishing community, that includes inland fishers and Irulas who fish during the daytime, was not given any opportunity to raise objections to the project that will lead to thousands of families losing their livelihoods. A day after a peace meeting was held, the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the project.

K. Saravanan of Urur



**Voicing dissent:** Residents of fishing hamlets staging a protest on Monday to urge the State government to give up the Mamallan reservoir project. DEEPA H. RAMAKRISHNAN

Kuppam, said that no public hearing was held as all these areas have been classified as CRZ 1B. A section of the Buckingham Canal runs through the backwaters. During the monsoon, one cannot differentiate between the canal and the backwaters as everything including the adjacent buffer zone would be submerged in water, he said.

K. Bharathi, another

Shankar, a fisherman from Padur, said that since several projects came to their area like the Muttukadu Boat House in 1983, the CMFRI field station, and the desalination plants, fishermen lost fishing grounds.

"If this one too is completed, we would lose everything and would be forced to go in search of work in other industries," he said.

Marine biologist T.D. Babu said that the backwater was a lagoon similar to that of Pulicat, with high productivity and biodiversity.

The Buckingham canal, which cuts across, is a boon as it prevents inundation in the city with excess rainwater being discharged through the canal at different points of the coast before the final discharge into the Bay of Bengal at Marakkannam. If the reservoir comes up, this lagoon will be destroyed, he said.

As part of the campaign, the centres hosted an expert-led interaction focusing on the benefits of early detection across cancer types. Moderated by Ayappan, senior consultant, surgical oncology, the panel included R. Srivathsan, consultant - Uro-oncology & Robotic Surgery; P. Venkat, senior consultant - Surgical Oncology; Asha Reddy, consultant - Breast Surgery; Ajit Pai, senior consultant - Surgical Oncology; Senthil Kumar A. C., senior consultant - Surgical Oncology and Senthil Kumar Ganapathi, senior consultant - Surgical Gastroenterology. The doctors highlighted that cancers identified at Stage Zero or early stages often required less aggressive treatment. The campaign also features survivor narratives.

Marking World Cancer Day, senior oncologists from Apollo Proton Cancer Centre and Apollo Cancer Centre launched the 'Zero to Hero' campaign in Chennai. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Cancer awareness campaign launched

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Apollo Cancer Centre, Chennai, and Apollo Proton Cancer Centre have launched the 'Zero to Hero' campaign to promote awareness on Stage Zero cancer detection and the importance of early diagnosis, marking World Cancer Day.

The initiative comes at a time when cancer incidence in India continues to rise. Nearly one in nine Indians faces a lifetime risk of cancer, with experts noting that more than 70% of cases are diagnosed at advanced stages.

As part of the campaign, the centres hosted an expert-led interaction focusing

## Metro Rail completes tunnel from Light House to Thirumayilai

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

rumayilai is a small part of corridor 4 (Poonamallee to Light House) of the phase II project.

**Tough conditions**  
The TBM encountered difficult geological conditions and passed below 151 buildings including Light House, All India Radio, Russian Embassy, Dominic Savio School, Rosary Church, and St. Raphael's School.

<b>Timings</b>	
<b>CHENNAI</b>	
TUDESDAY, FEB. 10	
RISE 06:33	SET 18:13
RISE 00:34	SET 12:07
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11	
RISE 06:33	SET 18:14
RISE 01:26	SET 12:54
THURSDAY, FEB. 12	
RISE 06:33	SET 18:14
RISE 02:19	SET 13:45

<b>CHENNAI</b>	
Chennai Weather	max min
Tiruvallur	31 18
Chennai Airport	31 20
Chennai City	31 21
Chennai Airport Today	
33°C	The morning will be pleasant. The day will be warm. The night will also be pleasant. Dry weather to prevail.
Chennai Airport Tomorrow	
32°C	The weather will be dry. The day will be a little warm. The night will be pleasant.

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<b>THE HINDU</b>	
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Chennai Weather	max min
Tiruvallur	31 18
Chennai Airport	31 20
Chennai City	31 21
Chennai Airport Today	33°C The morning will be pleasant. The day will be warm. The night will also be pleasant. Dry weather to prevail.
Chennai Airport Tomorrow	32°C The weather will be dry. The day will be a little warm. The night will be pleasant.

## Man with disabilities murdered, body dumped in septic tank

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

A man with disabilities was murdered near Puttur in Tiruvallur district in December 2025 and his body was dumped in a septic tank. The police have arrested two persons in connection with the murder of Mahendran, 26, who was a native of Tenkasi district and had a speech and hearing impairment.

Mahendran worked at the godown of a textile firm at Madhavaram in Chennai. Lawrence, 43, one of the accused persons, worked at the godown. He is also a person with disabilities. Mahendran

frequently visited Lawrence's house at Puttur and stayed there. Wary of his interactions with his wife, who is also a person with disabilities, Lawrence warned Mahendran not to visit him any more.

However, Lawrence spotted him in the area once, and Mahendran reportedly continued his relationship with his wife, the police said. In the first week of December, Lawrence and Vaidyanathan strangled him with a belt and smothered him to death.

Mahendran's family in Tirunelveli grew suspicious as he did not make any call for long. Hence, Santhoshkumar, one of his relatives, lodged a man-missing complaint with the Puzhal police on December 26. The Puzhal police re-

gistered a case and conducted an investigation for over a month. A *habeas corpus* petition was filed in the Madras High Court for a direction to trace Mahendran.

A police team, led by Assistant Commissioner of Police Shibu Kumar, scanned Mahendran's call record details and questioned those who were in contact with him. They also discovered his interaction with Lawrence. The police initially questioned Lawrence and let him go. However, a detailed analysis of the call records showed that calls had been made to Mahendran's number from Lawrence's phone. The police al-

so found out that Vaidyanathan too had used Lawrence's phone. Hence, they interrogated them with the help of a sign language interpreter.

The two gave a handwritten confession that they had murdered Mahendran on December 6 because of his "illicit relationship" with Lawrence's wife, tied the body with a rope, and dumped it in a septic tank near Lawrence's house.

The police recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem examination. The police arrested Lawrence and Vaidyanathan. They were remanded in judicial custody.

### A *habeas corpus* petition had been filed in the Madras High Court for a direction to trace Mahendran

Hendran was intoxicated, Lawrence and Vaidyanathan strangled him with a belt and smothered him to death.

Mahendran's family in Tirunelveli grew suspicious as he did not make any call for long. Hence, Santhoshkumar, one of his relatives, lodged a man-missing complaint with the Puzhal police on December 26. The Puzhal police re-

Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Ltd. Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)		
Specification No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Name of the Work
M.229	CE / MM	Hiring of 12 Nos diesel or petrol driven sedan model cars
24	SE / C / Distribution	SITC of centralized AC system by VRF AC with Fire fighting in 2nd floor of NPKR Maalai

For details of works / Procurement / Due date of submission / Opening, viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit the website [www.tnpsc.gov.in](http://www.tnpsc.gov.in), [www.tntenders.gov.in](http://www.tntenders.gov.in) DIPR/833/Tender/2026

### THE HINDU

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

### WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Open E-Tender Notice

Date: 06.02.2026

Chief Project Manager/GS/ WCR, Bhopal acting for and on behalf of the President of India against Tender No. mentioned below due to open on 02.03.2026 at 15.00 hrs. for the following works. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Sl. No. & Tender Notice No.: Name of Work; Tender Value; Earnest Money:

(1) ST-CKP-OT-25-26-116, dated 06.02.

2026; Provision of Block Panel and Block

Proving by Axle Counter in place of Single

Line Block instruments; ₹ 3,03,58,569.92;

₹ 3,10,800/- (2) ST-CKP-OT-25-26-117,

dated 06.02.2026; Provision of Dual

MSDC in Auto Section of Sini-Chandil

and Adityapur-Rajkharawalan;

₹ 12,77,59,260.10; ₹ 7,88,800/- (3) ST-CKP-OT-25-26-119, dated 06.02.2026;

Provision of Dual Detection by Commissioning of Track circuit in Joint Line between

Rajkharawalan-Rajkharawalan West/Outer;

₹ 17,61,209.50; ₹ 35,200/- Completion Period : 12 (Twelve) Months for sl. no. 1 & 3 and 18 (Eighteen) Months for sl. no. 2, The Tender at Tender No.-117 will be on "Two Packet System" and Tender No. 116 & 119 will be on "Single Packet System". The tender details can be viewed at website <http://www.reps.gov.in>. NIT can also be seen on the notice board of Dy CE/GS/ Bhopal office. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. For any correction, in these tenders, if necessary, corrigendum will be uploaded on website and copy of corrigendum will be placed on Notice Board of this office, which may be seen upto the date of tender opening. NIT No. : CPM-GSU-BPL-T-01-2026, Date : 06/02/2026, Name of including Location : Preparation of DPR / Technical feasibility, including Site Survey, Geotechnical investigations, development and approval of General Arrangement Drawings (GADs) and Land Plans etc in connection with ROBs works in the jurisdiction of Bhopal Division of west Central Railway, Estimated cost of tender Rs. : Rs. 4,00,74,525.83, Earnest Money for tender Rs. : Rs. 3,50,400.00, Cost of tender form Rs. : 0.00, Last date for submitting tender : 03/03/2026 (Sd.) Dy. Chief Engineer/GS West Central Railway, Bhopal

Corrigendum/Addendum/Cancellation to this advertisement, if any, shall be published on NHAI website only.

**BUILDING A NATION, NOT JUST ROADS**

Online RFP in two bid system - Technical Bid & Financial Bid

are invited from reputed and prestigious coaching institutes in India

for Providing Coaching for the UPSC Civil Services Preliminary, Main examination and Interview to the Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribes candidates of the UT of Puducherry, for the UPSC Civil service Exams of 2027.

RFP Document containing details regarding Bidding Data Sheet, General Terms & Conditions, Selection Process etc., is available in the website <https://puductenders.gov.in/>.

Last date for bid submission is 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026, 17.00 Hrs.

No.799/DPADCO/P5/2024-25 Date: 09.02.2026

PUDUCHERRY ADIDRAVIDAR AND SCHEDULED TRIBES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED (PADSTDC)

3rd Floor, ADW & STW Building,

Thattanchavady, Puducherry - 605009,

Contact No: 043-2277318 E-mail id: padco@py.gov.in

E-TENDER NOTIFICATION / RFP

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## IN BRIEF



## TNPSC reschedules cancelled main examinations to Mar. 15

A day after cancelling the main examination of the Combined Civil Services Examination-II (Group II and IIA Services) midway, the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPSC) has announced that the cancelled examinations will be conducted on March 15. According to a press release, the TNPSC will conduct the tests for General Studies and General Intelligence and Reasoning in the forenoon session, while Tamil Eligibility Test will be held in the afternoon. The hall tickets of all candidates will be uploaded online by February 28. Candidates have been requested to download the hall tickets using the one-time registration (OTR) details. The details will be shared with all candidates by email and SMS. The main examination for Combined Civil Services Examination-II scheduled on February 22 will be held on the same date. The hall tickets will be uploaded on February 11. Candidates will receive the SMS and email, the release said.

# Tamil Nadu competes with nations, not States, in attracting investment: Stalin

Global investors know well that the Tamil Nadu government will deliver on its guarantees, the Chief Minister says after inaugurating Tata Motors Jaguar Land Rover passenger car manufacturing plant and rolling out the first Range Rover Evoque at Panapakkam village in Ranipet district

**The Hindu Bureau**  
RANIPET

**R**eaffirming confidence in the 'Dravidian model' of governance, Chief Minister M. K. Stalin said on Monday that Tamil Nadu had grown to compete with nations in attracting investment.

He was speaking after inaugurating the ₹9,000-crore Tata Motors Jaguar Land Rover passenger car manufacturing plant and rolling out the first Range Rover Evoque at Panapakkam village in Ranipet district. He said global investors knew well that the Tamil Nadu government would deliver on its guarantees. Tamil Nadu had long ago stopped compet-



**Top of the line:** Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran at the Tata Motors Jaguar Land Rover plant at Panapakkam village in Ranipet district. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

ing with other (Indian) States and had grown to compete with other nations, he said.

Mr. Stalin said the Tata Group has deep roots in the State, especially in the

industrial sector, through its chain of companies such as TCS, Taj Hotels, Titan, Tata Power, and Tata Electronics. "The presence of the Tata Group in the State has only reaffirmed

the belief that Tamil Nadu has the capability to have such world-class facilities that can make globally competitive products," he said.

Establishing such a

modern car manufacturing plant on a huge budget would usually take at least three to four years. However, the Jaguar Land Rover plant in Ranipet had been established in just 16 months after the foundation was laid for the 470-acre facility in September 2024, he pointed out.

Vietnamese electric vehicle (EV) maker VinFast's first manufacturing plant in India was opened at Thoothukudi in August 2025 after the entire work was completed in a similar time period, he recalled. "It only shows that doing business in Tamil Nadu is much simpler and easier with easy clearance and approval. Tamil Nadu also has better infrastructure, human resources, peaceful

environment, and transparency," he said.

The Chief Minister said the government would organise a conclave to showcase around 100 schemes in doing business in an easier and simpler way in the State.

In his special address, N. Chandrasekaran, chairman, Tata Sons and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd., said the inauguration of the facility marked a milestone in the company's journey towards accelerating India's leadership in sustainable and future-ready manufacturing. "We deepen our long-standing partnership with Tamil Nadu, a State that continues to drive industrial excellence, innovation, and inclusive growth," he said.

## Stalin extends free meal scheme to one lakh more conservancy workers

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday extended the free meal programme for sanitation workers in urban local bodies to one lakh more workers. He launched the programme last year for 29,455 workers of the Greater Chennai Corporation.

The extension, launched by the Chief Minister at an event held at Polivakkam in Tiruvallur district, would benefit 48,768 workers in 24 Corporations, 29,556 workers in 145 Municipalities, and 21,910 workers in 479 town panchayats.

Mr. Stalin said his government was providing sanitation workers with housing, entrepreneurship loans, life insurance, and assistance for the education of their children. "We would launch more wel-



**Expanding coverage:** Conservancy workers eating breakfast as part of the free meal scheme in Coimbatore on Monday. M. PERIASAMY

fare initiatives for them and stand by them," he said in a social media post.

Ministers K.N. Nehru, S.M. Nasar, and M. Mathiventhan; MP S. Jagathrakshan; legislators S. Chandran, V.G. Raajendran, T.J. Govindarajan, S. Sudharsanam, A. Krishnaswamy, K. Ganapathy, and Durai Chandrasekar; Chief Secretary N. Muruganan-

dam; and senior officials were present on the occasion.

Following the dramatic eviction of conservancy workers staging a protest at the Ripon Building in Chennai last year, the State Cabinet met on August 14 and approved six schemes, including free breakfast, for the welfare of these workers.

## 'Lack of co-ordination, old practices posing challenges to DMK alliance'

**Udhav Naig  
B. Kolappan**  
CHENNAI

With the DMK yet to constitute a committee to discuss and finalise seat sharing with its allies for the upcoming Assembly election, members of the Congress' negotiation committee for Tamil Nadu will meet party senior leader Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi on Tuesday to appraise him of the latest developments.

When DMK Parliamentary party leader Kanimozihi Karunandhi, recently met Mr. Gandhi in New Delhi to iron out differences, he had reportedly asked why the DMK had not yet constituted a committee despite the Congress' delegation meeting DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on December 3, 2025. Highly placed Congress sources in New Delhi and Tamil Nadu said the leadership was miffed with the DMK's dithering attitude.

"They are still stuck in the old ways of doing politics. They want to start the negotiations only after the notification of the election. In fact, I have been telling the DMK leadership to start meeting alliance partners, even if they don't want to start negotiating immediately," said the leader involved in the seat sharing exercise. "They want to delay it and push allies into making a decision at the last minute," he added.

### DMK's stance

However, DMK sources citing the "cordial meeting" between Mr. Gandhi and Ms. Kanimozihi, said the Congress would continue to remain in the alliance. Mr. Stalin had recently informed the Left party leaders that he hoped the Congress would remain in the alliance.

On the Congress' demand for the formation of a seat-sharing committee,

a source close to the DMK's

first family insisted that traditionally these panels had been constituted after the Model Code of Conduct took effect. A DMK leader contended that the Congress formed its committee early primarily to dispel rumours that it might align with actor Vijay's Tamilagam Vettai Kazhagam (TVK).

Meanwhile, the DMK and the State government remain engaged in organising conferences and inaugurating government projects across Tamil Nadu, with the Chief Minister currently on an extensive tour of the State. The government is also gearing up for the presentation of the Interim Budget this month.

In a related development, a senior Congress leader alleged there is "severe lack of co-ordination" among the DMK-led alliance, which only compounded issues.

He was referring to the joint announcement by the Left parties, comprising CPI, CPI(M), CPI(L), and

the VCK, that they would fully support the nationwide strike called on by Central trade unions, workers federations, and farmers union on February 12. He said such a decision to support the protest sans the DMK and the Congress was a huge embarrassment to the alliance.

"On the one hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Edappadi K. Palaniswami (AIADMK leader), Anbumani (PMK), G.K. Vasan (TMC), and others are united on the same stage, presenting a united opposition to INDIA bloc, while we are yet to get all leaders on the same stage. It doesn't augur well for the alliance," he said.

When contacted about this, D. Ravikumar, VCK general secretary, said: "The VCK has been a part of such a call for action by Left parties nationally. This is one such instance. Left parties have made such calls without other allies of the INDIA bloc."

**Priority given to defence projects over Hosur airport proposal'**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Kinjarpal Rammohan Naidu said on Monday that the Hosur airport project proposal mooted by Tamil Nadu has not been recommended "in order to prioritise defence projects of national importance" executed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Airport.

He was responding to a question raised by DMK MP S. Kalyanasundaram in the Rajya Sabha on whether the Centre has examined the Hosur airport proposal sent by the State government and the reasons for the delay in granting in-principle approval, airspace clearance and other such permissions. His party colleague Kanimozhi N.V.N. Somu too posed a similar query.

Mr. Naidu said: "In order to prioritise defence projects of national importance, being carried out by HAL Airport and to enable operational preparedness of defence forces, the proposal has not been recommended."

In November last year, the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) sent the site-clearance for the Hosur airport. "The proposal was circulated to the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for comments/observations," Mr. Naidu added.

Before that, in June, TIDCO had requested the MoD for airspace relaxation to construct the Hosur airport. When it was rejected, the Tamil Nadu government yet again wrote to the Centre, but it was turned down again in January. Sources said the State government had been drafting a justification for this project and will resubmit the request soon.

## Jana Nayagan producer to withdraw writ petition against CBFC from HC

**Mohamed Imranullah S.**  
CHENNAI

The producer of actor Vijay-starrer *Jana Nayagan* has given a letter to the Madras High Court Registry for withdrawing a writ petition filed against the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) since the production house had now agreed for a reference to the revising committee.

According to sources, the writ petition would be listed under the caption 'For Withdrawal' before Justice P.T. Asha on Tuesday since Vijayan Subramanian, the counsel-on-record for KVN Productions LLP, has expressed his client's disinterest in pursuing the litigation.

Originally slated to be released on January 9, 2026, *Jana Nayagan* was watched by the CBFC's five-member examination committee on December 19, 2025, and the production house claimed to have received a communication on December 22, 2025, stating that the board had come to the conclusion that the film was suitable for U/A 16+ certificate if certain excisions were carried



A scene from *Jana Nayagan*.

out. KVN had accepted the recommendation instead of appealing to the nine-member revising committee for a 'U' certificate and carried out all the suggested excisions. The edited movie was resubmitted to the board on December 24, 2025. However, in the meantime, one of the members of the monitoring committee sent a complaint to the CBFC Chairman Prasoon Joshi in Mumbai stating that his "objections were not considered during the examination of the film" and requested a direction to the competent authority to re-examine it.

After the receipt of this complaint, the CBFC on December 29, 2025, instructed its Regional Office

in Chennai to put the certification process of *Jana Nayagan* on hold and on January 5, 2026, the production house was informed that the Chairman had decided to refer the movie to the revising committee. Hours before the decision was uploaded on the e-cinepramaana portal on January 6, KVN Productions rushed to the Madras High Court with a writ petition seeking a direction to CBFC to issue U/A 16+ certificate. Justice P.T. Asha heard the matter and directed the CBFC to produce all relevant records related to the certification of the film on January 7.

She allowed the writ petition on January 9 and directed the CBFC to issue the U/A 16+ certificate. Justice G. Arul Murugan of the Madras High Court, and obtained an interim stay of the single judge's order. Though the production house went on appeal, the first Division Bench

## Fog, mist to persist across T.N. as winter conditions extend into mid-February

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Various districts of the State may continue to witness moderate fog and mist throughout the week, with dry winter conditions extending till mid-February.

On Monday, foggy conditions were observed in interior and northern parts of the State, including Chennai and its outskirts, leading to reduced visibility in some pockets during the early morning hours. Officials of the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) said winter conditions had extended into late February in recent years, owing to the spillover of the Northeast monsoon into January.

It has forecast shallow to moderate fog over pockets of districts including Ranipet, Vellore, Theni, Tirupattur, Dharmapuri, and the Nilgiris till February 13.

Many other districts, including Salem, Erode, Dindigul, Chennai, and its surrounding districts, are likely to witness mist



**Low visibility:** Fog enveloping Chennai-Bengaluru National Highway in Ranipet on Monday. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

throughout the week.

V.R. Durai, Director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, RMC, said dense fog was observed in some places such as Chennai's outskirts, where the visibility dropped to 300 metres on Monday.

A visibility of 1,000 metres was reported in the vicinity of the Chennai Airport between 6.30 a.m. and 7.30 a.m. The prevailing dry weather and clear skies in most parts of the State this February are expected to enhance night-time radiational cooling,

leading to a drop in the minimum temperature by 1-2 degrees Celsius below av-

erage in some places till February 13.

In coastal areas, easterly winds from the Bay of Bengal are bringing in moisture, and the combination of high moisture content and temperature inversion – where a layer of warm air traps cooler air near the surface – was creating ideal conditions for fog formation. Light and calm winds are further aiding fog development, Mr. Durai said.

The RMC has forecast that dry weather could cause a gradual rise in the maximum temperature in parts of the State till the weekend.

## IN BRIEF



## BJP leaders quiet on Centre's discrimination, says Revanth

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy charged the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with insulting Telangana's self-respect and keeping quiet on Centre's financial discrimination. He said the Centre returns only 42 paise for every rupee collected from Telangana, while Karnataka gets just 16 paise and Tamil Nadu 26 paise. On the other hand, Bihar gets ₹6.06, Madhya Pradesh ₹2.09 and Uttar Pradesh ₹2.90 for every rupee contributed.

## 37-year-old Karnataka-origin man shot dead in Canada

A 37-year-old Indian-Canadian died after being shot by unidentified men in the parking lot of a shopping centre in Toronto, Canada on Saturday. In a statement on February 8, the Toronto Police Service identified the victim as Chandan Kumar Raja Nandakumar. Mr. Chandan Kumar, originally from Karnataka, was an Information Technology professional. The circumstances surrounding the shooting are not known, but officers believe it was a "targeted" incident.

## Containment operations for bird flu under way in A.P.

The official machinery on Monday intensified the containment operations, which continued for the second consecutive day in Sodum mandal of Annamayya district of Andhra Pradesh, after the confirmation of avian influenza. The district authorities said culling of birds in the infected and surveillance zones was in progress, led by animal husbandry and veterinary officials.

## Kerala govt. issues order to raise DA, DR for employees

The Kerala government has issued orders hiking the Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) from the existing rate of 22% to 25%. The DA at the enhanced rate will be disbursed with the salary for February 2026. The DR at the enhanced rate shall be disbursed with the pension for March, according to an order issued by the finance department.

## SC rejects plea against curbs on prayer at Madurai dargah

Petition challenges Madras HC order restricting namaz at Thirupparankundram hill dargah in Madurai district to Ramzan and Bakrid days; top court says it won't interfere with the HC order

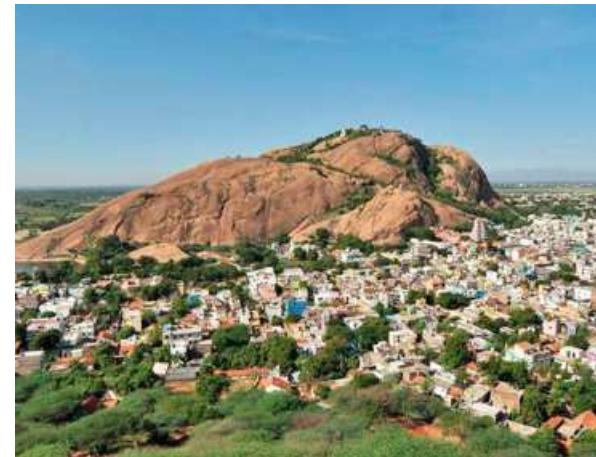
**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, on Monday, refused to entertain a challenge to Madras High Court orders restricting the conduct of prayer, including namaz, at Nelliappu area of the Sikkandar Badusha Avulya Dargah, located atop the Thirupparankundram hill in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, to Ramzan and Bakrid festival days alone.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Justice Aravind Kumar, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner Imam Hussain, said the High Court's finding that "Mohammedans could be permitted to offer their prayers in Nelliappu area during Ramzan and Bakrid festival days alone... without disturbing the traditional footsteps which lead to Kasi Vishwanathar Temple" had crossed the "constitutional boundary".

The petition said the High Court had merely endorsed a peace committee understanding with regard to performance of namaz at Nelliappu during Ramzan and Bakrid.

"Neither Article 25 (freedom of religion) nor settled Constitutional compromise meant to avert law and order issues and elevated it into a permanent judicial rule that prayer should be confined to Ramzan and Bakrid alone. It is submitted that a tem-



The petition challenged the High Court's finding that the practice of offering namaz was only of a 'recent origin'. FILE PHOTO

porary understanding reached in an administrative meeting cannot crystallise into a Constitutional ceiling on religious practice," Mr. Bhushan argued.

He submitted from the petition that the High Court, without pointing to any specific statutory authority, dictated the occasions on which namaz, an "essential religious practice", could be observed.

The petition challenged the High Court's finding that the practice of offering namaz was only of a "recent origin".

"Neither Article 25 (freedom of religion) nor settled Constitutional compromise meant to avert law and order issues and elevated it into a permanent judicial rule that prayer should be confined to Ramzan and Bakrid alone. It is submitted that a tem-

porary understanding reached in an administrative meeting cannot crystallise into a Constitutional ceiling on religious practice," Mr. Bhushan argued.

The High Court, the plea challenged, had concluded that a large number of persons offering namaz and prayers would obstruct the pathway leading to the Kasi Viswanathar Temple and encroach upon other portions of the temple premises, thereby resulting in a violation of a civil court decree passed over a century ago on August 25, 1923.

The October 10, 2025 order was passed by a third judge after a Division of the High Court gave a split view on June 24, 2025 regarding the restrictions on the offering of namaz.

The petition, which was dismissed after a short hearing, submitted in the apex court that the limitation placed by the High

ritual is bona fide, religious in character, and not prohibited by law," the petition countered.

The High Court, the plea challenged, had concluded that a large number of persons offering namaz and prayers would obstruct the pathway leading to the Kasi Viswanathar Temple and encroach upon other portions of the temple premises, thereby resulting in a violation of a civil court decree passed over a century ago on August 25, 1923.

The October 10, 2025 order was passed by a third judge after a Division of the High Court gave a split view on June 24, 2025 regarding the restrictions on the offering of namaz.

The petition, which was dismissed after a short hearing, submitted in the apex court that the limitation placed by the High

Court through its October 10 decision on the offering of the "well-recognised essential religious practice of Islam, namely namaz, to only two occasions in a year at the Nelliappu area owned by the Dargah/Mosque Committee, even though believers offer namaz every day" was arbitrary and contrary to the breadth of Article 25, which protects the continuous practice and manifestation of faith".

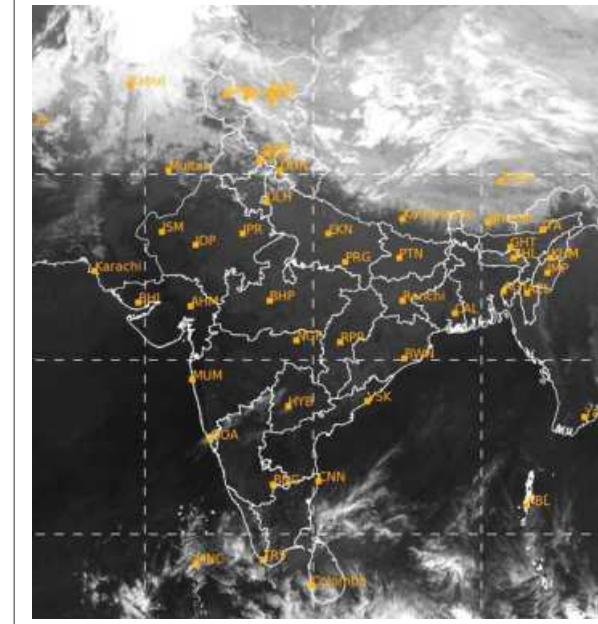
"We do not propose to interfere with the impugned order without expressing any opinion with regard to the rights of the parties, the Special Leave Petition stands dismissed," the Supreme Court order said.

The petitioner said that he was a regular worshipper at the Hazarath Sultan Sikkandar Badusha Avulya Dargah and the adjoining prayer space at Nelliappu. The High Court orders, he alleged, had effectively barred him from offering namaz at the Nelliappu area.

"By confining prayer at Nelliappu area to two festival days, the High Court order of October 10 impermissibly abridges equality before law by disproportionately burdening one community. It violates dignity and personal liberty by compelling adherents to suppress their religious identity except on designated days..." the petition said.

## WEATHER WATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



**Forecast for Tuesday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning & gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad and Himachal Pradesh

**CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN**

Agartala	—	33.1	16.2	Kozhikode	—	34.1	18.6
Ahmedabad	—	27.9	12.2	Lucknow	—	26.4	10.0
Aizawl	—	28.9	10.2	Madurai	—	33.2	19.1
Allahabad	—	29.8	16.8	Mangalore	—	31.9	22.5
Bengaluru	—	29.4	14.2	Mumbai	—	32.7	19.0
Bhopal	—	31.2	14.1	Mysuru	—	31.8	14.0
Chandigarh	—	22.1	9.1	New Delhi	—	24.4	9.4
Chennai	—	30.5	21.2	Patha	—	25.8	14.0
Gangtok	—	32.2	20.2	Port Blair	—	29.5	21.6
Goa	—	16.5	7.6	Puducherry	—	30.2	20.3
Guwahati	—	28.1	14.2	Pune	—	34.5	17.6
Hubballi	—	33.0	14.0	Raipur	—	30.7	15.2
Hyderabad	—	30.7	15.4	Ranchi	—	25.4	10.0
Imphal	—	27.1	5.3	Shillong	—	20.2	6.5
Jaipur	—	27.0	13.7	Shimla	—	16.6	8.2
Kochi	—	30.8	24.4	Srinagar	—	10.6	1.1
Kohima	—	19.8	8.0	Tiruvananthapuram	—	34.1	22.5
Kolkatta	—	27.0	14.0	Vijayawada	—	30.8	20.0
Visakhapatnam	—	30.9	14	Visakhapatnam	—	29.9	20.3

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Rainfalls in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>2</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	....	112	33	206	—	—
Bengaluru	6	31	29	215	130	—
Chennai	15	10	28	186	102	—
Delhi	9	10	28	13.7	298	—
Hyderabad	6	11	44	98	119	—
Kolkata	8	.98	36	149	140	—
Lucknow	11	.51	58	105	221	—
Mumbai	33	.71	29	91	143	—
Pune	....	.89	41	181	.217	—
Visakhapatnam	14	.59	14	143	150	—

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

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

**NO<sub>2</sub>:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

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

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4:00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 289 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Shillong, Meghalaya recorded a healthy AQI score of 27

**The Hindu Bureau**  
KOCHI

Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA) general secretary B. Unnikrishnan

nan on Monday suggested including actors drawing a remuneration of ₹1 lakh and above in an agreement involving producers, production controllers, and

directors to check budget overruns and extended shooting schedule of movies.

He said FEFKA was ready to accept such an agree-

ment if such actors were made part of it. He alleged that actors had "a major role" in stretching budgets and extension of production timelines.

Meanwhile, FEFKA and the Kerala Film Producers' Association signed an agreement revising the service conditions of film workers, replacing the 16-

hour daily shift with a 12-hour schedule. The hours were revised citing stretched schedules that were taking a toll on the workers' health.

## FEFKA seeks agreement to curb budget overruns, production delays

## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

## DEATH

T.RADHAKRISHNAN, IPS (RTD)

APRIL 21, 1953 - FEB 9, 2026



TIGER TIGER, BURNING BRIGHT,  
IN THE FORESTS OF THE NIGHT.

YOUR COURAGE, LOVE, AND FEARLESS FIGHT,  
WILL BE OUR ETERNAL GUIDING LIGHT.



FUNERAL TUES FEB 10  
3 PM PROCESSION BEGINS AT 71 2<sup>nd</sup> AVENUE PANAIYUR & CONCLUDES

5 PM AT BESANT NACAR CREMATORIUM

+91 94443 88855

## BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE



M. SUBHASHINI

DOB: 10-02-1980 DOD: 08-03-2018

Dear Darling,

You are living forever with us

Father: RKPM Michael (Meeranji)

Mother: Nagalakshmi (Geetha)

Brother: Dr. Rajan Babu

Sister-in-Law: Dr. Niranjana

Niece: Rishita Rajan & Family Members

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES

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## Back on track

India and Malaysia have set about repairing ties during the Modi visit

Making amends was at the top of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 24-hour visit to Kuala Lumpur over the weekend after he had cancelled a planned trip to Malaysia last year, at short notice, to attend the ASEAN summit in October 2025. As a result, Mr. Modi said that he made Malaysia his first destination abroad in the new year. His talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who had visited India in 2024, resulted in MoUs, with plans to strengthen ties. There was some strain in India-Malaysia ties in 2025 too – although Malaysia condemned the Pahalgam terror attacks, Mr. Ibrahim had called for a “full and thorough enquiry” into the perpetrators and also for “de-escalation and meaningful dialogue between India and Pakistan”, which ruffled feathers in New Delhi. He had even offered his services to mediate if required, and in October 2025, had hosted Pakistan Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif for an official visit. It is, therefore, significant that Mr. Modi set aside these concerns, and that the joint statement said India and Malaysia condemned terrorism unequivocally “... including cross-border terrorism”. India and Malaysia also discussed counter-terrorism cooperation, intelligence and information sharing and coordinating positions at the United Nations and the Financial Action Task Force on the issue. Other important decisions were an MoU on semiconductors, building on cooperation between IIT Madras Global and the Advanced Semiconductor Academy of Malaysia. Building ties in trade, defence, energy and digital technologies were highlighted by the two sides, that took care not to discuss contentious issues publicly, such as the continued stay of preacher Zakir Naik, wanted in India on UAPA charges.

The two sides also side-stepped their differences over multilateral issues. Mr. Modi's decision to skip the ASEAN summit despite accepting the invitation had also dealt a blow to negotiations on reviewing the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA). Critical comments by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal about the FTA, as “badly negotiated” and “silly”, and his reference to ASEAN countries as “B-teams” to China still rankled. Mr. Modi's visit was an important reminder of India's commitment even as New Delhi moves ahead with FTAs with Europe and the U.S. India will chair the BRICS Summit later this year – in the joint statement, India merely “noted” Malaysia's aspirations to become a member. Mr. Ibrahim will be invited as Malaysia is a BRICS partner country, while Indonesia has become a member. Mr. Modi's visit, which was welcomed warmly by Mr. Ibrahim, may thus lead to closer coordination but also lay the ground for closer ties between India and the ASEAN region, in terms of their shared geographies, and in dealing with the larger changes in the world.

## Stifling ideas

Sentiments cannot be allowed to trigger a criminal process against art

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's direction to file a first information report (FIR) against the makers of a film over its title, *Ghooskhor Pandat*, is a sign of how sections of the ruling establishment have come to treat speech that they dislike. Mr. Adityanath alleged that the title attempts to disrupt social harmony and hurts religious or caste sentiments. The producer agreed to remove promotional materials for the film. A dispute over expression quickly became a policing matter and the threat of criminal process swiftly compelled capitulation, even before any court had examined the facts. Article 19(1)(a) protects speech precisely because it can sometimes be unwelcome to powerful groups. The restrictions that the state can impose are enumerated in Article 19(2), and have to be proportionate. Courts have also separated speech that offends from speech related to violence or disorder. In the present case, the FIR is a threat, issued by a Chief Minister no less, to mobilise the coercive machinery of criminal law, a sign that the state fears public debate and wants to flatten the issue to a matter of discipline. Of late, the visual arts have often been met with restrictions. In 2023, West Bengal ordered that *The Kerala Story* not be screened in the State to maintain “law and order”; a few months earlier, the Centre had directed platforms to remove links to the BBC documentary, *India: The Modi Question*, sans a judicial finding on illegality. Other examples include *Kaum De Heere* (2014), *India's Daughter* (2015), *Padmaavat* (2018), and the documentaries, *Infiltrating Australia - India's Secret War* and *Contract to Kill* (both 2024).

In a diverse society, people can plausibly say they are hurt by many things, which is why sentiments are not useful thresholds to trigger a criminal process. Equally, when film-makers and distributors believe that the safest way out is to erase contested material rather than defend it in law, the public loses access to the work, courts lose the chance to clarify legal standards, society loses a chance to exercise the democratic response to controversial art – e.g., boycott or satire in return – and, over time, the marketplace of ideas wilts. Speech is not always free of consequences but the state bears the burden to examine it with specificity. A more sensible response, when there is a credible claim of unlawfulness, is for the aggrieved party to seek judicial relief, record the reasons, and adopt the least restrictive measure. Taking executive action flies in the face of this constitutional process. It is Mr. Adityanath's responsibility to ensure public order while allowing people to express themselves, not to maintain it by curtailing expression altogether.

**A** global market in a new commodity is growing exponentially in front of our eyes. It is not artificial intelligence (AI). It is not rare earths. It is not some new source of energy. It is not even in pharmaceuticals, media, or finance. It is integral to each of them and might determine the future of all of them. It is an infinitely renewable resource, which will last at least for as long as human beings and our planet continue to exist.

This commodity is the self, in which a global market has gradually emerged. It cuts across all domains of human life, from entertainment to journalism, from streaming to gender transitions, from banking to branding, from identity politics to soft power, and from crowdfunding to the tariff wars.

### Mining the self

Industrial capitalism has a marked predilection for the creation and exploitation of what Marx called surplus value, value beyond the value of the labour required to produce commodities, and floats into the mysterious form of profit for the owners and managers of capital.

Today, human beings are the new object and horizon of capitalist extraction. The new object is sociality itself. It is our friendships, our love lives, our family connections, our classmates, our children, our fellow workers, our neighbours, as well as our digital lives, our political allies, our food and drug suppliers, and more. This is profiling on steroids. It mines our deepest affinities and our most ephemeral social ties. It is a new feat of creative destruction, which renders ideas such as privacy, intimacy and trust obsolete. It makes all our sociality a resource that can be mined without permission or limit. And in this unbounded mining of sociality, our stories are the access code. There are three recent changes in the market for selves, which together drive the mineable self.

This first change is that the seduction of the global has captured the market in characters. This is evident in the global hunt for stories from Mexico to Nepal and Spain to Indonesia. Every form of local mythology, folklore and backwater is trotted by publishers, film festivals, art biennales, and literary prize committees in the ceaseless hunt for portability, local flavour, vaguely universal themes and new character types (aliens, cyber-monsters, souped up heroes, zombies, post-blobs).

The most sought-after stories of our times are about obviously mobile phenomena such as drugs, migrants or mercenaries. More precisely, they are about the local addresses of transborder volatility. And this is as true of the stories that



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make up the news, as it is of more obviously literary fiction. It has been a few decades since any person with a camera or a video-recorder who happens to be in a scheme of war, crime or terror becomes a photojournalist, a kind of narrative First Responder, who puts the global narrative system on alert. Syndicated news services, stringers, overseas correspondents and their metropolitan handlers become parts of a vast system of triage for these “local” incidents and images, stoking the furnace of global media. Of course, there is a vast pyramid of news organisations, media, audiences and platforms, which form an uneven hierarchy of priorities and tastes. These include media that are resolutely local in their reach. But even they imagine the larger world through their own lenses.

So, “local” news is often a prismatic refraction of global issues, in a manner that changes the texture of locality, which is no longer bound by the parochial, the proximate and the familiar. Thus, locality regarding the news is no longer what it used to be. Nor is the global its simple antonym. The market for stories, whether of the real or of the less real, occupies a new geography which cannot be captured by opposing the global and the local. This development drives the transformation of the self into the newest form of raw material, a new horizon for extraction, exploitation and commodification.

In this new market, everyone has a story, including ordinary humans (who still are the reference point of what used to be called human interest), but also banks, nations, sports teams, genders (old and new), corporations, and franchises and cities among other social forms. This multiplication of the “I” and the “Me” is discernible even in the twilight zone of AI, where Siri, ChatGPT and numerous bots are in the race to display the same emotions, intuitions and vulnerabilities as any garden variety human can do. The strange symbiosis between the mineable self, the rebooted idea of locality and the story market can be better understood by looking at the single biggest force in the story market today, which is OTT (Over the Top) streaming, the entertainment technology of choice for such giants as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney and other companies in this market.

### The character of streaming

It is widely known that streaming, driven by OTT technologies, which rely only on the Internet, and not on prior media infrastructures, is colonising much of the market previously dominated by big studios, their business models, their modes of distribution and their approaches to branding, promotion and audience-building.

Stories, technology platforms and digital markets are transforming humans into commodities

Perhaps the biggest element of this booming story economy is the rise of “unknowns”, mid-market actors and characters who appear to be woven into modest parts of professional life and seem extraordinarily ordinary. In India, a streaming market that Netflix CEO Reed Hastings claimed in 2018 would bring his company a 100 million subscribers. This trend highlights a more general global trend toward the democratisation of the self, a not entirely positive phenomenon.

The rise of the self is sometimes as seen as an expression of the best of enlightenment values, another face of the rise of the individual, of personal liberty, of freedom from assigned collective identities, and of freedom to craft one's own path from the raw materials of birth, context and social stereotypes. But that potential has now become a big part of the mineable self of our digital era. The intelligence of the artificial competes with previously human monopolies over affect, judgement and intuition. The classical individual is now an unstable composite of credit scores, actuarial charts, algorithmic storehouses, and consumer profiles, with virtually no need for a unified or continuous anchor in a singular person.

Thus, what the philosopher Charles Taylor studied as “The Sources of the Self” might today be retold as the story of the “sources of the selfie”. The selfie taken with a celebrity, even by photobombing, is a quintessential expression of the democratisation of the self, equal to anyone else before the lens.

### The chain of storytelling

This trend is now at the cutting edge of mining the self. Everyone has the right to have a self-centered story, whether of heroism, victimhood, martyrdom, or redemption, and anyone can get help to tell their story better with the paid help of influencers, coaches, writing apps, publishing platforms or, sometimes, through selling the right to mine their stories to entertainers, journalists, publicists or scriptwriters. The great chain of storytelling always strives for more ears and eyeballs. The careers of many YouTube stars have been powered by nothing more than the lucky virality of often trivial self-narrations.

Thus, two slogans meet one another in the global market for selves. One is that every self has a story, and the other one is that every such story deserves an audience. These two pieces of recent common sense fuel the rush to drill into every living minshaft, looking for a chunk of ourselves with the tools that we have so recently invented. What we have now is a new super-commodity, bound only by our appetite for mining ourselves.

## A chance for India to polish the Kimberley Process

**I**ndia has assumed the chair of the Kimberley Process (KP) for the year 2026. The KP is a multinational mechanism or structure for governing the trade of ‘conflict diamonds’ – the rough (or pre-polished) diamonds which are used illegally by rebel or insurgent groups across the world to undermine or threaten legitimate governments. The KP was initiated in May 2000 when the countries of southern Africa initiated dialogues to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds. Negotiations with 37 signatory parties, in 2003, led to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). Today, the KP has 60 participants, representing 86 countries, and accounts for approximately 99.8% of the global rough diamond production.

### The current structure

The KPCS is the mechanism to prevent the trade of conflict diamonds, which is enforced individually by KP participant countries to ensure that rough diamonds in the legitimate supply chain are KP-compliant. Each consignment is accompanied by a KP certificate corroborated by a participant country. The rough diamonds trade is permitted only between certified KP members who comply fully with these international standards. Additionally, participant countries are obliged to share timely and accurate statistical data for diamond production and trade.

Angola, Botswana, Canada, Congo, Namibia and Russia alone account for more than 85% of the production of rough diamonds, in quantity and value terms. Though India is not a producer, it is a major importer of rough diamonds, importing roughly 40% of the total global imports, both in quantity and value. As the world's leading cutting and polishing hub, centered in Surat and Mumbai, India re-exports polished diamonds to major markets which include China, Hong Kong, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. India's strategic position, at the heart of the global diamond value chain, gives it unique leverage



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As chair of the Kimberley Process for 2026, India can steer meaningful reforms in global diamond governance

within the KP to steer meaningful reforms in global diamond governance.

### The core issues for India

The KP, a tripartite setup of governments, industry organisations and civil society, faces much criticism and challenges. First, a long-standing criticism is about the definition of ‘conflict diamonds’. Its scope is very narrow, capturing only the financial mechanism between rebel groups and governments, while ignoring the illicit use of rough diamonds in state-linked abuses, human rights violations and human trafficking, environmental harm, abuses in artisanal mining, and illicit trade channels.

There are also fundamental questions about the decision-making process. Civil society asks how the KP can ever identify ‘conflict diamonds’ if any such decision is subject to political veto. Under the current system, any determination can be blocked. What happens when the KP identifies conflict diamonds?

The case of the Central African Republic, which was banned from exporting rough diamonds in 2013 and rejoined in 2024, shows that embargoes without strong support measures tend to increase smuggling and worsen violence rather than stop it. Additionally, while many governments highlighted the need to protect the mining communities, there was less agreement on whether the KP should also address state-related violence. A more inclusive approach would better reflect the full range of challenges communities experience.

Going forward, India may broaden the agenda, without reopening political fights, by forming a technical working group on violence and human rights risks beyond rebel insurrections. The findings/recommendations from this group may build a consensus before any re-definition of conflict diamonds.

India can leverage its technological strengths to promote digital, tamper-proof KP certificates and harmonised customs data exchange. A

blockchain-based certification system, where each shipment carries a unique, immutable and time-stamped digital record linked to key shipment details, would significantly reduce fraud, enhance transparency, and modernise KP operations.

At the same time, India can support producer countries by establishing regional KP technical hubs in key producing areas, particularly in central and eastern Africa, offering training, IT support, certification assistance and forensic capacity. Such capacity-building would make reforms more feasible and collaborative rather than punitive.

Additionally, India can advance institutional reforms by adopting independent or third-party audits in a subset of participants and push for full public release of granular KP statistics from participant countries. This is a step towards greater transparency. Since the KP's strength is its tripartite structure, India can ensure that civil society engagement remains robust by facilitating open communication channels.

### Focus on Africa

To address the community challenges, India can highlight how diamonds contribute to livelihoods in Africa. It can push the KP to explicitly acknowledge this reality by aligning its work with relevant Sustainable Development Goals, such as decent work, poverty reduction and responsible consumption. India can help ensure that the KP framework channels diamond revenues toward community development, supporting health, education, and local infrastructure, rather than allowing mining regions to be bypassed. This would help shift the KP's narrative from blocking bad diamonds to enabling a responsible and inclusive diamond trade.

India, as the KP chair and the leader of the Global South, should start pursuing the reform agenda more aggressively to make it a more inclusive, progressive, sustainable, and rule-based multilateral body.

go beyond partisan politics. If political messaging uses imagery that can be read as targeting religious communities, it risks

eroding the constitutional promise of equality and social harmony. While the legal merits of the complaint will be decided by due process, the episode highlights the need for greater responsibility in public communication by those holding high office. In a diverse democracy,

symbolism and rhetoric carry real consequences, shaping public behaviour and social trust.

Political contestation must remain vigorous. But it must also remain within constitutional and ethical limits.

**Gopalaswamy J.,**  
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Parliamentary anarchism

We boast of our talent and traditions, but the dismal image which our Parliament presents shows how immature we are, lacking the basic decency to debate and discuss issues. Many in the nation have their fingers crossed, in hope, awaiting the day our parliamentarians behave in a consistent manner and save our precious time and money. The Speaker too cannot put all the blame on

the Opposition and the Treasury benches. Let us show professionalism, and not anarchism, in the conduct of Parliament.

**Brij B. Goyal,**  
Ludhiana, Punjab

For some years now, the Prime Minister, ahead of the board examinations, has been counselling students through his ‘*Parksha pe Charcha* (Discussion on Exams)’. Whether this is

about examination stress or early bonding with future voters is beside the point. What is missing is ‘*Parliament mein Charcha*’, where the Prime Minister answers questions from Opposition Members of Parliament. After all,

Parliament's monsoon, winter and Budget sessions are its quarterly, half-yearly and annual examinations. Curiously, the Speaker sensed an “unforeseen situation” near the Prime

Minister's seat and advised him to stay away.

**N. Nagarajan,**  
Secunderabad

**Rhetoric and responsibility**  
The reported controversy over a video uploaded by the Assam Chief Minister – and later deleted – and the complaint filed by All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen leader and Hyderabad Member of Parliament Asaduddin Owaisi, raise concerns that

## Lessons about job creation from Milky Mist

**A** recent visit to a dairy processing plant in Erode taught us more about job creation than all the TV debates on the Indian economy. Erode has been key to Tamil Nadu's economic story for decades. Business owners mentioned multiple constraints holding them back: access to credit, skills gaps, regulatory complexity, tariff structures. To understand how these constraints operate in practice, we visited the main plant of Milky Mist, a mid-sized company in western Tamil Nadu. There, we found that even when ambition, demand, and infrastructure exist, structural barriers prevent growth. Yet the visit also revealed reasons for optimism about India's employment challenge.

### The constraints

Milky Mist has an impressive capital-intensive facility, with a sophisticated plant designed to handle far more milk than it receives. It is not a startup – with over ₹2,500 crore in annual turnover, it is a serious operation. It sources milk from about 2,000 dairy farmers. Yet management estimates that the plant could integrate supply from nearly 70,000 farmers without significant additional investment at the processing end. The constraint is not demand for dairy products, nor is it a lack of infrastructure. It is the limited ability of small dairy farmers to expand production because they lack access to affordable and reliable credit.

For small dairy farmers, purchasing additional cattle, ensuring consistent feed supply, investing in basic sheds, and accessing veterinary care all require upfront expenditure. Reserve Bank of India data show that small and marginal farmers, who account for over 85% of operational landholdings, receive a disproportionately small share of formal agricultural credit. The alternative remains informal borrowing at high interest rates, which raises risk and discourages



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**Anand Srinivasan**

Expert in personal finance and member, Indian National Congress

investment. Milky Mist and its supplier farmers can grow together – but only if policy enables those who can create output, jobs, and income.

Milky Mist has ambitious growth plans, inspired by the success of giants such as Amul. Amul's cooperative network today includes roughly 3.6 million dairy farmers. Daily milk procurement is close to 35 million litres, and the Amul group's turnover has crossed ₹80,000 crore. These numbers reflect not just consumer demand or brand strength, but the power of aggregation combined with institutional support. Amul's model reduces risk for farmers by ensuring predictable procurement and facilitating access to services and finance. The lesson is not that private firms must become cooperatives. It is that without solving credit constraints at the producer level, scaling up becomes nearly impossible. Milky Mist's experience highlights how much untapped potential exists between India's small private firms and its national champions.

Looking beyond dairy, Erode's broader industrial landscape reinforces the same pattern. The district has long been a hub for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly in textiles and manufacturing, built on dense clusters shaped by reinvestment, local networks, and market responsiveness. During a meeting with around 50 SME owners, there was no shortage of ideas or demand. But nearly all of them pointed to constraints that limit growth and employment. Skill shortages are emerging as production becomes more technologically demanding. Regulatory complexity and compliance costs weigh disproportionately on smaller firms. Tax uncertainty strains cash flows, while tariff structures raise input costs for manufacturers dependent on imports. Together, these constraints determine whether firms can scale and integrate into national and global value chains – the process

The lack of access to affordable and reliable credit is one of the factors at the heart of India's job crisis

through which job-intensive growth is created.

International evidence shows that SMEs account for a disproportionate share of net job creation, particularly in labour-abundant economies. The World Bank estimates that SMEs provide nearly 70% of global employment and are the primary source of new jobs in developing countries. When these firms are unable to grow, employment creation slows even if headline GDP numbers look strong. Capital-intensive investments may raise output, but they cannot absorb labour at the scale India's demographics demand.

### Demographic trajectory

The urgency of addressing these constraints heightened by India's demographic trajectory. Most projections suggest that India's working-age population advantage will begin to narrow within the next two decades. If sufficient quality jobs are not created during this period, the opportunity will be lost. Large infrastructure projects and headline investment announcements, while important, will not by themselves absorb India's labour force. Employment at scale will come from MSMEs, agro-processing, and value chains that link small producers to markets.

When SMEs are enabled to grow, they strengthen the entire economic ecosystem. Firms scale organically, smaller suppliers raise incomes sustainably, and workers find better jobs closer to home. India's growth story won't be written by its largest corporations alone – it will be written by millions of smaller enterprises, farmers, and workers who are ready to grow right now. In Erode, that readiness is already visible.

The question is not whether India can create jobs at scale. It is whether it will remove the constraints, starting with credit access, before the demographic dividend expires. We likely have two decades. The clock is ticking.

## Don't let poachers sneak through

The Forest Department's amnesty scheme must not legitimise illegal wildlife possession

### STATE OF PLAY

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**W**ildlife-related issues, particularly incidents of wild animals straying into human habitations and causing loss of life and property, often dominate headlines in Kerala. This time, however, the focus has shifted to wildlife articles.

The State Forest Department's decision to offer a one-time amnesty scheme for the keepers of undeclared wildlife articles has generated unusual interest in the State, where many people are believed to possess such articles. Officials say they have been receiving applications from people who want to declare inherited animal trophies and obtain ownership certificates, or surrender them without any case being registered.

The proposal, which the Forest Department had been pushing for some time, gained particular significance following a recent Kerala High Court judgment that cancelled the ownership certificates issued for two sets of ivory and 13 ivory idols found in the illegal possession of actor Mohanlal.

In fact, even before the High Court order, the Forest Department had got approval for the proposal at a meeting of the State Wildlife Advisory Board held on June 18, 2025, chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The proposal allowed legal owners of wildlife articles to surrender them to the department. The proposal has to be ratified by the Union Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change.

Section 40(2B) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, notes that the keepers of wildlife articles or trophies must

submit a declaration to the Chief Wildlife Warden within 90 days of inheriting them.

This ensures that these articles are registered and not illegally traded. However, according to the Forest Department, most people, due to ignorance, submit their applications after the legal deadline. It adds that there also may be many people who inherit trophies but never declare them. The amnesty scheme, it argues, offers such individuals one final opportunity.

In Kerala, the statutory deadline for declaring such articles expired on October 18, 2003. The Act also requires the Forest Department to conduct an inquiry into the legality of possession before accepting surrendered articles or issuing ownership certificates.

A plain reading of the Act makes it clear that only legally owned or legally inherited wildlife articles are eligible for declaration and certification. Articles illegally acquired cannot be legitimised merely by surrender. The crucial safeguard, therefore, lies in the inquiry to be conducted by the Chief Wildlife Warden or an authorised officer to determine whether the possession is lawful.

In the case of Mr. Mohanlal, ownership certificates were issued for two sets of ivory and several ivory idols that came to light during an Income Tax raid at his Kochi residence a few years ago. These certificates were granted following

an inquiry by a forest official. However, the articles were neither inherited by the actor nor derived from animals he legally owned. The petitioners who challenged the granting of the certificates to him said that the Forest Department failed to conduct a proper inquiry and the notifications were not published in the government gazette.

While the Kerala High Court did not delve into the issue of the adequacy of the inquiry, the Bench comprising Justices A. K. Jayasankaran Nambiar and Jobin Sebastian declared the orders issuing the ownership certificates void ab initio and legally unenforceable. The Bench also observed that the State government was free to issue "a fresh notification for conferring the immunity envisaged under the statutory provision, to persons or a class of persons envisaged under the statute."

The government's amnesty initiative comes at a time when celebrities, including Union Minister and actor Suresh Gopi and rapper Vedan (Hirandas Murali), are under investigation for the alleged possession of ornaments made from wildlife articles. While the government may justifiably consider genuine cases involving the surrender of legally acquired wildlife articles and protect such keepers from prolonged litigation, the amnesty must not become a backdoor mechanism to legitimise illegal possession. Wildlife trophies obtained unlawfully constitute a punishable offence under the Act.

The government must also ensure that legal safeguards are not diluted, as was alleged in the Mohanlal case, since any such dilution would encourage wildlife crime and illegal trade, ultimately endangering protected species.

## Tale of two consumers: Rural aspiration vs. urban caution

The demand among rural consumers for non-essentials remains strong despite weakening sentiments in urban areas

### DATA POINT

**Vignesh Radhakrishnan**  
**Devyanshi Bihani**

**W**hile rural Indians began the year feeling relatively confident, their urban counterparts remained cautious, according to a reading of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s consumer confidence survey. While the rural population is driving consumption beyond essentials, urban consumers remain financially conservative, despite enjoying slightly better income stability, the survey results suggest. The conclusions are based on the January 2026 round of the survey.

**Tables 1** and **2** summarise the survey findings based on the net responses of participants. A net response represents the difference between the share of respondents reporting optimism and those reporting pessimism on a specific subject. Values range from +100 (maximum optimism) to -100 (maximum pessimism), with any score above zero indicating optimism and any score below zero indicating pessimism. Tables show both current perceptions (how respondents felt compared to a year ago) and expectations (what respondents expect one year ahead).

Blue arrows represent positive sentiments: an upward arrow signals improvement from the last round, a downward arrow indicates deterioration, and a double-headed arrow signifies no change. Conversely, red arrows represent negative sentiments, while their directions have the same meaning.

Urban consumers are pessimistic about the economic situation, employment opportunities, and price levels, which keeps their Consumer Confidence Index in the negative sentiment category. In contrast, while rural consumers are pessimistic about income and price levels, they are upbeat about the general economic situation and employment opportunities;

consequently, their overall index is in the positive sentiment category.

The directionality of the arrows offers an interesting reading. Urban consumers are not only pessimistic about the economic situation and price levels, but their pessimism has deepened since the last round. In contrast, positive sentiment regarding the economic situation has strengthened among rural consumers, as have outlooks on employment opportunities. Table 1 indicates that rural consumers are also positive about the future, whereas Table 2 shows that urban consumers are more cautious with discretionary spending.

A higher share of net respondents in both urban and rural areas reported an increase in spending compared to a year ago. However, the true distinction lies in what they are spending on. The RBI survey distinguishes between essential and non-essential items: generally, a rise in essential spending may point towards inflationary pressure, whereas an increase in non-essential spending possibly indicates an aspiration for a better lifestyle. Notably, a significantly higher share of rural consumers reported an increase in spending on non-essential items compared to their urban counterparts.

**Charts 3** and **4** illustrate the proportion of rural and urban consumers who perceived an increase/improvement or a decrease/deterioration in various factors. The difference between these two figures constitutes the net responses presented in Tables 1 and 2. Interestingly, 25.9% of rural consumers reported a decrease in current income levels compared to a year ago, while only 22.6% reported an increase, resulting in a net response of -3.3%. In contrast, 23% of urban consumers reported a decrease against 26.3% who saw an increase, yielding a net response of +3.3%. Despite this pessimistic income outlook, the share of rural consumers with increased spending on non-essential items remains notably high.

### Rural-urban spending gap

The data were sourced from the Reserve Bank of India's Urban Consumer Confidence Survey and Rural Consumer Confidence Survey

**TABLE 1:**

Summary based on net responses across rural consumer confidence indicators (in %)

Rural confidence indicators	Current perceptions (Nov. '25)	Current perceptions (Jan. '26)	Change	One year ahead expectations (Nov. '25)	One year ahead expectations (Jan. '26)	Change
Economic situation	7.3	7.5	▲	40.4	42	▲
Employment	4.7	5.2	▲	40.6	41.6	▲
Price level	-87.4	-89	▼	-76.7	-77.1	▼
Income	-2.2	-3.3	▼	51.7	52	▲
Spending	81.5	82	▲	86.9	88	▲
Rural Consumer Confidence Index	100.8	100.5	▼	128.6	129.3	▲

▲ Positive sentiments with a sign of improvement compared to last round

▲ Negative sentiments with a sign of improvement compared to last round



▼ Positive sentiments with a sign of deterioration compared to last round

▼ Negative sentiments with a sign of deterioration compared to last round

◆ Positive sentiments with no change compared to last round

◆ Negative sentiments with no change compared to last round

**TABLE 2:**

Summary based on net responses across urban consumer confidence indicators (in %)

Urban confidence indicators	Current Perceptions (Nov. '25)	Current Perceptions (Jan. '26)	Change	One year ahead Expectations (Nov. '25)	One year ahead Expectations (Jan. '26)	Change
Economic Situation	-2.5	-3.5	▼	32.9	29.3	▼
Employment	-6.3	-6.3	↔	31.6	33	▲
Price Level	-78.9	-81.2	▼	-68.8	-75.2	▼
Income	3.5	3.3	▼	53.1	50.1	▼
Spending	76.1	78	▲	79.3	80	▲
Urban Consumer Confidence Index	98.4	98.1	▼	125.6	123.4	▼

▲ Positive sentiments with a sign of improvement compared to last round

▲ Negative sentiments with a sign of improvement compared to last round

▼ Positive sentiments with a sign of deterioration compared to last round

▼ Negative sentiments with a sign of deterioration compared to last round

↔ Positive sentiments with no change compared to last round

↔ Negative sentiments with no change compared to last round

**CHART 3:**

Rural responses showing current perception across parameters in Jan. 2026 compared to a year ago

Figures are % of respondents who said:

■ Increased/improved ■ Decreased/deteriorated

General economic situation

Employment opportunities

Price level

Income level

Spending level

Essential spending

Non-essential spending

Figures are % of respondents who said:

■ Increased/improved ■ Decreased/deteriorated

General economic situation

Employment opportunities

Price level

Income level

Spending level

Essential spending

Non-essential spending

Figures are % of respondents who said:

■ Increased/improved ■ Decreased/d

## From Page One

## 'Restrictive' software being used for SIR: SC

The court said the poll body could deploy suitable officers from the fresh batch for duties as EROs and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROS). The remaining could be made to work along with micro-observers to assist in the scrutiny of documents.

The hearing commenced with Mr. Divan submitting that micro-observers were superseding EROs and AEROS to decide the fate of electors on the voters' list.

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, for the West Bengal government, said micro-observers were drawn from Central government services and public sector undertakings with no ground knowledge of West Bengal or its idiosyncrasies.

"They just ran a computer programme... There have been mass exclusions in the name of logical discrepancies. Here, the computer has become a tyrant, deciding with the use of some software, who remains and who has to be purged," Mr. Divan submitted.

Mr. Naidu, for the EC, remarked orally that the petitioners - State of West Bengal, its Chief Minister and leaders of the ruling Trinamool Congress Party - were making a "mountain out of a molehill".

But Justice Bagchi agreed with Mr. Divan that even those mapped had been called for presentation of documents to verify citizenship. The judge said the programme used by the EC in certain cases has created a "policy challenge" without understanding the ground realities, resulting in notices going out to a "wider net of people".

Mr. Naidu said the court was only seeing the "tip of the iceberg". He illustrated that the EC's scrutiny of the electoral roll had instances of 200 people being linked to a single parent.

"You definitely have a right to send a hearing notice to people found with 50 grandchildren. But you are issuing notice to even persons with five or six children," Justice Bagchi responded.

## Gaurav Gogoi dares Assam CM to release SIT report on Pakistan trip

**The Hindu Bureau**  
GUWAHATI

Assam Congress president and Jorhat MP Gaurav Gogoi on Monday threatened to sue Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for circulating private information about his children.

Mr. Gogoi said Mr. Sarma could not provide any evidence of his alleged links with Pakistan, and dared the Chief Minister to make the findings of Assam police's Special Investigation Team (SIT) public. The Congress leader asked why Mr. Sarma sat on the probe report for six months after receiving it on September 10, 2025.

On Sunday, Mr. Sarma had asked the Congress MP to disclose his activities during a 10-day visit to Pakistan in 2013 when he was not an MP and those of his British wife, Elizabeth Colburn Gogoi, who worked at LEAD Pakistan, a climate organisation in Islamabad.

"He [Mr. Sarma] stooped so low that he shared the private information of my minor children, which we cannot make public. People know what happened or did not happen with the Chief Minister's son and daughter. Don't force me to speak up," Mr. Gogoi said.



Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi, left, addresses a press conference in Guwahati on Monday. PTI

said, adding that the passport of Mr. Gogoi's daughter mentions her religion as Christian since birth.

**Lack of evidence**

Mr. Gogoi said he did not approach the court against the SIT probe linked to his Pakistani visit as the ruling BJP would have said he did not want it to proceed.

"We wanted the report to come out... We are happy that the Chief Minister has fallen into our trap. He took more than two hours but could not convince the media persons [with the questions and allegations he raised]," he said.

The Chief Minister had claimed that Mr. Gogoi surrendered his nine-year-old son's passport so that he could get British citizenship.

"It was mentioned in the passport that the child (son) was a Hindu. However, the religion column was left blank when he was issued a British passport," he

said, adding that the passport of Mr. Gogoi's daughter mentions her religion as Christian since birth.

"Earlier, the Chief Minister said I went to Pakistan for 15 days and that I, as an MP, should have obtained permission before my visit. Yesterday, he said I went there for 10 days and that I visited the country before becoming an MP," he said.

Mr. Gogoi said Mr. Sarma had claimed the Centre had no knowledge about his Pakistan trip, although he possessed the necessary travel documents and followed legal procedures while crossing the border.

Mr. Gogoi said the trip was initially planned for Lahore, but he sought permission to add Islamabad, where his wife worked, to the itinerary.

He said the BJP government had no issues when he submitted his passport.

Countering Mr. Sarma's charges that he asked "sensitive" questions in Parliament on national security, Mr. Gogoi said an MP has the right to ask questions on any issue of national and international importance.

## Rich culture and heritage, not explosives, are Bastar's true identity: Home Minister

**The Hindu Bureau**  
RAIPUR

The identity of Bastar region in Chhattisgarh cannot be explosives but its rich culture and heritage, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Monday.

Mr. Shah was speaking at the closing ceremony of a three-day division-level 'Bastar Pandum 2026' cultural event at Jagdalpur, the headquarters of Bastar district.

"The government is committed to preserving Bastar's culture for decades. Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to take Bastar's culture to the entire country and the world. Barood (explosives) cannot be Bastar's identity. Its true identity is its culture and heritage," he said.

Maoism had never benefited any society, and had spread destruction wherever it existed, Mr. Shah said, citing examples, including Columbia, Peru, and Cambodia.

The Maoist menace would be uprooted completely from the nation by March 31, the Minister said, while once again appealing to the remaining active Maoist cadres to lay down arms.

He expressed concern that young tribal girls were among the active cadres. "They [young tribal girls] must be sent for rehabilitation as their whole lives lie ahead of them," Mr. Shah said.



Amit Shah

met with a firm response. If someone holds weapons, the response will also be with weapons," he said.

Bastar was shining as a great brand before the entire country, Mr. Shah said. He said that many schools that had been closed for 40 years had been reopened by the Chhattisgarh government.

"Who did the Naxalites benefit by closing schools?" Mr. Shah said he wanted to ask his tribal brothers and sisters this question. "Our new generation was deprived of literacy," he said.

In the next five years, Bastar would become the most developed of all tribal areas, and new tourism activities would enrich Bastar with employment, Mr. Shah said.

**Firm response**

While he said that surrendered Maoists would not face any harm, the Home Minister warned that those who "continue to fire bullets, plant IEDs, and torch schools and hospitals" would not be spared.

"Armed violence will be

SC requests Delhi HC to hear appeal by Sengar

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court requested the Delhi High Court on Monday to provide "out-of-turn" hearing to an appeal filed by former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar challenging his conviction and 10-year sentence in the custodial death of the father of Unnao rape survivor.

The High Court refused to suspend his sentence or grant Sengar bail on January 19. It had cited various reasons, including the fact that the former lawmaker was serving a life sentence for the rape of the man's minor daughter.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, senior advocate Siddharth Dave, for Sengar, said his client had already spent seven years and six months as part of his actual sentence in the custodial death case. The High Court had kept his appeal pending while refusing to suspend his sentence.

The Bench requested the High Court to take up the case on February 11 and decide the appeal within three months.

**Bihar govt. to probe visits by foreigners to Gopalganj**

**Amarnath Tewary**  
PATNA

The Bihar government asserted in the Legislative Assembly on Monday that it would conduct a thorough investigation into the arrival of 173 foreign nationals in Gopalganj district on "missionary visas" between 1990 and 2015. Of these visitors, 168 were from Pakistan and the others from Britain, Russia, and Uzbekistan, the government said in the ongoing Budget Session of the State Legislature.

In the Assembly, Mithilesh Tiwary, BJP MLA from Baikunthpur in Gopalganj district, raised the issue. Demanding a probe into the matter, he wondered why so many foreign nationals on "religious visa", a majority of them from Pakistan, visited a district like Gopalganj, where, except the Durga temple at Thawe, there was no other famous religious place to visit. Earlier, the BJP MLA said that most visitors from Pakistan were from Karachi and Rawalpindi and asked if the foreign nationals were involved in anti-India activities.

## Kanpur pan masala baron's son booked after car crash

**Mayank Kumar**  
LUCKNOW

The Kanpur Police on Monday booked pan masala baron K.K. Mishra's son, Shivam Mishra, in case of speeding of a Lamborghini sports car that hit pedestrians and two-wheeler on VIP Road in Kanpur's upscale Gwaltoli area, injuring six persons and triggering local outrage.

The First Information Report (FIR) was registered at the Gwaltoli police station under Sections 125 (a & b) (rash or negligent acts endangering human life or personal safety), 281 (rash or negligent driving/riding

**The speeding car had rammed into pedestrians and two-wheeler, injuring six persons**

on a public way that endangers human life or personal safety), and 324 (4) (mischief) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

"The vehicle struck a parked motorcycle, causing it to be crushed under the vehicle. The motorcycle belonged to a man named Taufiq, who suffered injuries in the arms and legs in the accident... The vehicle is in police custody," said Mr. Lal.

ice station and submitted a petition, based on which an FIR has been registered...," Police Commissioner of Kanpur Nagar, Raghbir Lal, said.

He said preliminary investigations revealed that the vehicle was being driven by Shivam Mishra.

Following the accident, the driver was extricated by two bouncers present in the vehicle. It was reported that the driver had a medical issue and was sent for first aid.

"Legal action was being taken against him and investigation is underway. The vehicle is in police custody," said Mr. Lal.

## India and Greece agree to strengthen defence industrial cooperation in five-year road map

**Saurabh Trivedi**  
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a bilateral meeting with Greece's Minister of National Defence, Nikolas Georgios Dendias, in New Delhi on Monday.

The meeting focused on strengthening defence cooperation under the India-Greece Strategic Partnership.

According to the Defence Ministry, both Ministers reiterated that the partnership was rooted in shared values of peace, stability, freedom, and mutual respect. They agreed to expand the capacities of their indigenous defence industries by aligning India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Greek counterpart Nikolas Georgios Dendias in New Delhi on Monday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

initiative with Greece's defence reforms under Agenda 2030. A Joint Declaration of In-

tent on strengthening defence industrial cooperation was signed, marking the beginning of work on a five-year road map. The two sides also exchanged a Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan for 2026, outlining future military engagements between the armed forces of both countries, the Ministry added.

**Peace, security**  
The discussions covered regional peace and security, with both leaders acknowledging the steady deepening of bilateral defence cooperation and strategic ties. Convergence on key

maritime issues was highlighted, reflecting the shared outlook of the two ancient seafaring nations.

The Greek side announced the deployment of a Greek International Liaison Officer at the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram, underlining enhanced maritime cooperation.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Dendias laid a wreath at the National War Memorial and paid homage to fallen soldiers. He also inspected a Tri-Service Guard of Honour at the Manekshaw Centre.

Rahul has no interest in meaningful debate: BJP

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday accused Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi of "systematic sabotage" of parliamentary functioning and undermining of constitutional institutions on Monday.

BJP MP Anil Baluni said, "It is now abundantly clear that Rahul Gandhi has no interest in meaningful parliamentary debate. His objective is to convert the temple of democracy into a political battleground. His sole agenda is to obstruct India's progress and damage the nation's global standing." He said despite being repeatedly given opportunities to speak in the House, Mr. Gandhi "remains fixated on a 'defame India' narrative". "By disrupting the President's Address, Rahul Gandhi not only showed contempt for Parliament but also committed a grave insult to India's first tribal woman President," Mr. Baluni said.

Targeting the Congress for its "absence from crucial debates", he said throwing papers towards the Speaker's chair and "heckling" Prime Minister Narendra Modi exposed its "complete bankruptcy on people-centric issues".

"The audacity to even attempt conspiracies against the Prime Minister within the precincts of Parliament is beyond condemnation," he said.

# Opposition mulls motion to remove Speaker Birla

Denying Rahul an opportunity to speak, suspension of MPs, allegations against women members among reasons cited; Opposition can bring motion, but it doesn't have the numbers, says Rijiju

Sandeep Phukan  
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties belonging to the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) are considering moving a no-confidence motion against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, accusing him of acting in a partisan manner and denying Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi the opportunity to speak during the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her Address to the joint sitting of Parliament.

The move is also based on the suspension of eight Opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha, the alleged failure to initiate action against BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for objectionable remarks against former Prime Ministers and the "unsubstantiated" charges against the women MPs. The decision was taken at a meeting at the Parliament office of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

Reacting to reports of a possible resolution, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said that while the Opposition is free to bring such a motion in a parliamentary democracy, it lacks the numbers to carry it through. "They can bring [the no confidence motion], but the issue is they [the opposition] have



Voice out: Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra with suspended party MPs staging a protest in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

insulted the institution of the Honourable Speaker. They climbed onto the table of the Chair, table of officers and stormed the Speaker's chamber," he said.

Under Article 94(c) of the Constitution, a Lok Sabha member may give a written notice of intention to move a resolution for the removal of the Speaker to the Secretary-General, with at least 14 days' notice.

Over 100 MPs, including those from the Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and Samajwadi Party, are said to have signed such a notice, said a source. However, Congress MP K. C. Venugopal said, "I

can't comment on reports. Wait for action."

Efforts to break the parliamentary logjam continued, with a delegation of senior Opposition leaders, including Mr. Gandhi, calling on Mr. Birla to convey their grievance that the House is being "run one-sided".

When Mr. Birla told them that it was their right to bring a notice against him, the Opposition leaders said that they wanted the House to function, but insisted on his action on four specific points.

Mr. Gandhi was accompanied by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee, and DMK MP T.R. Baalu.

The Trinamool wants to raise the issue of the SIR, while the SP plans to discuss the alleged vandalism of the statue of Malwa queen Ahilyabai Holkar.

However, the stand-off between the Union government and the Opposition continued, with proceedings in the Lok Sabha remaining paralysed on Monday. A discussion on the Budget, which was listed for the day, could not be taken up due to repeated disruptions.

Mr. Gandhi wanted to raise a few issues before his colleague Shashi Tharoor could speak on the Budget but he was not allowed, leading to protests and adjournments.

# Opposition MPs continue protests over Rahul issue, trade deal; walk out of RS

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Opposition staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, protesting against developments in the Lok Sabha where Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi could not finish his speech during a debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President for her Address to the joint sitting.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, sought to raise the issue at the start of the day's proceedings. He referred to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal addressing the press on the interim India-U.S. trade deal instead of making a statement in Parliament.

Mr. Kharge attempted to raise the matter again at noon, at the beginning of the Question Hour. Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan allowed him to speak but cautioned him against referring to proceedings in the other House.

"I am only raising issues concerning the Constitution. Parliament consists of our House and Lok Sabha... and the Constitution recognises these two Houses. We have to run according to procedures and rules," Mr. Kharge said, before adding that the Leader of Opposition in the Lower House was "not being allowed to speak".

Mr. Radhakrishnan, ho-



Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Sonia Gandhi and other MPs protest in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. SANSAD TV

wever, interjected, reminding Mr. Kharge of his earlier ruling, where he had cited former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's suggestion that proceedings of one House should not be discussed in the other. He then proceeded with the Question Hour.

**Insulting women MPs'**

However, Mr. Kharge and other Opposition leaders continued to stand in their seats, demanding that they be allowed to speak. As the Chairman did not relent, Opposition MPs raised slogans, accusing the ruling BJP of insulting women MPs. MPs of all the INDIA bloc parties, except the Trinamool Congress, were on their feet.

After raising slogans for a while, the Opposition MPs staged a walkout from the House, and the Question Hour continued.

The Lok Sabha has witnessed repeated disrupt-

tions since February 3 after Mr. Gandhi was disallowed by the Chair from quoting from an article based on excerpts from former Army chief M.M. Naravane's unpublished memoir, which refers to the India-China conflict of 2020. Eight Opposition MPs have since been suspended from the House.

Later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stayed away from proceedings amid allegations that some women MPs could have attacked him.

On February 5, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said he had "concrete information" that many Congress members might move towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's seat and carry out "some unexpected act", following which he requested the Prime Minister not to come to the House to reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks.

Mr. Radhakrishnan, ho-

# PM's absence during Motion of Thanks due to 'fear', say women MPs in letter to Birla

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Women MPs of the Congress on Monday told Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's absence from the House during the Motion of Thanks to the President was not due to any threat from them, but was "an act of fear" as Mr. Modi did not have the courage to face the Opposition.

In a letter to Mr. Birla, the women MPs said they were being targeted because they had consistently fought against Mr. Modi's "anti-people" government and demanded accountability". The letter was signed by MPs including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Jyotsna Charandas Mahant, R. Sudha, Varsha Ekta Gaikwad, and S. Jothimani.

The letter comes days after the Speaker had said in the House that he had "concrete information" that many Congress members might move towards



There is so much pressure on the Speaker which is not right. There is no question of anyone raising a hand on the PM or do anything like this

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA  
Congress MP

Mr. Modi's seat and carry out "some unexpected act" and thus he had requested him not to come to the House to reply to the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President.

The Lok Sabha last week passed the Motion of Thanks without the Prime Minister's customary reply amid relentless protests by Opposition members.

**'Under pressure'**

Urging the Speaker to act as an impartial custodian, the letter said Mr. Birla was clearly pressured by the ruling party to defend the "non-appearance of the

Prime Minister", and had thus issued a statement making grave allegations against the women MPs of the party.

"There is so much pressure on the Speaker which is not right. There is no question of anyone raising a hand on the PM or do anything like this. There are 11 women MPs, they are all serious MPs," Ms. Vadra, Wayanad MP, later said about the letter.

"We believe that transparency is the only way to restore the dignity of the Speaker's office and the credibility of this House," they said.

The women MPs further said they had the utmost respect for the Speaker's office and for his good self.

"However, it is amply clear that you are under sustained pressure from the ruling party. We urge you once again to act as the impartial custodian of the Lok Sabha. We will stand with you and support you wholeheartedly in this endeavour," they said.

## DMK's Tiruchi Siva moves notice against Piyush Goyal

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva on Monday informed the Rajya Sabha that he had submitted a breach of privilege notice against Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal for sharing details of an interim trade deal between India and the U.S. in a media interview while Parliament was in session.

Raising the issue soon after the House met at 11 a.m. and papers were tabled, Mr. Siva said, "I have given a notice of breach of privilege against Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal." He was supported by Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge.

Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan said he would look into the matter.

# Misri doesn't refute U.S. claims, says 'national interests' guide oil imports

Suhasini Haidar  
Sobhana K. Nair  
NEW DELHI

India's oil imports will be guided by "national interests", Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on Monday, but did not refute U.S. President Donald Trump's claim that India has committed to stopping buying Russian oil.

Mr. Misri's statement came even as the government prepared to brief MPs about the trade deals finalised with the European Union and the U.S., as well as on trade ties with Bangladesh.

A notice sent out on Monday said that the External Affairs Ministry will brief the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Congress leader Shashi



Our approach is to maintain multiple sources of supply and diversify them as appropriate to ensure stability

VIKRAM MISRI  
Foreign Secretary

Tharoor, on Tuesday.

"What I can firmly and confidently say is that whether it is the government or indeed our business [sector], at the end of the day, national interests will be the guiding factor for us in our choices," Mr. Misri told presspersons at a briefing meant to discuss Seychelles President Patrick Herminie's visit to India.

Mr. Misri said that the key drivers of India's energy policy are "adequate

availability, fair pricing, and reliability of supply", calling it a "rather complex matrix of issues".

However, he did not respond or comment directly on the U.S. President's Executive Order issued on Friday that, while cancelling 25% tariffs on India, said that India had already begun to stop buying Russian oil, and threatened to resume the tariffs if India buys more.

"Our approach is to maintain multiple sources

of supply and diversify them as appropriate to ensure stability. Therefore, I would say that the more diversified we are in this area, the more secure we are," Mr. Misri added.

**Falling imports**

While nearly 25% of India's oil imports are still being sourced from Russia, India is expected to raise its imports from other countries including the U.S. and Venezuela. As *The Hindu* reported last week, India's purchases of Russian oil were down to a 38-month low in December 2025, and a number of news agencies confirmed on Monday that India's major refiners Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Reliance Industries have so far avoided advance orders for the month of April entirely.

# Congress seeks answers from Centre over 'missing' Epstein files

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday alleged that documents related to India among the "Epstein files" had "disappeared" from the search results of the U.S. Department of Justice website. The Opposition party sought an explanation from the Union government, linking the development to the recently concluded trade agreement

framework with the U.S. In a series of posts on social media platform X, Congress leader Pawan Khera claimed that a search for the word "India" in the documents on February 6 returned 484 pages of results, with 10 documents on each page. A fresh search now showed only 478 pages, suggesting that six pages, or around 60 files, had been removed. "The only development

that took place in between is the pro-U.S. trade deal," Mr. Khera said. "Was an anti-India trade deal the price paid to make scandalous material disappear? Did the government trade away India's interests just to rescue its rapidly collapsing reputation?"

Mr. Khera alleged that results linked to the International Peace Institute, where Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri earlier worked were also missing.

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Opposition members highlighted issues such as unemployment, sluggish economy, and impact of the bilateral trade deal with the United States on the agriculture sector during the debate on the Budget in the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

The BJP said the country signed six trade pacts recently, which is an indication that India is becoming a global hub.

Senior Congress MP P. Chidambaram initiated the debate and termed the Budget "forgettable", which had been prepared by a Finance Minister who forgot her promises



they were four or five years ago," he said.

The Prime Minister's Internship Scheme could offer 1,65,000 positions, the Congress leader said. "Only 33,000 were accepted. Are there no young men and women to accept an internship in big companies? ...and of the 33,000 that were accepted, 6,000 left the job. What is wrong with the internship scheme?" he asked.

On the decrease in capital investment, he said that for almost 12 years, capital investment, gross fixed capital formation, is stuck at 30% of GDP.

In his speech, senior BJP MP Arun Singh said the whole world was turning towards India. "From cre-

Sharad Pawar hospitalised due to chest congestion

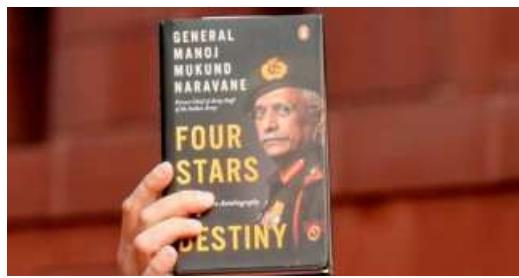
The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

NCP(S) leader Sharad Pawar was on Monday admitted to a hospital in Pune after he went through a bout of coughing and breathing difficulties, his family said.

A decision on whether the veteran politician would be moved to Mumbai for further treatment will be taken after his medical tests are conducted, the family members said.

Doctors at the Pune hospital have said that his condition is stable. "This is due to physical exertion. He has chest congestion. His treatment is going on," a doctor said.

## IN BRIEF



## Delhi Police to investigate leak of Naravane's book

The Delhi Police on Monday took cognisance of a pre-print copy of the controversial book *Four Stars of Destiny*, authored by General Manoj Naravane (retd), being circulated online. The Special Cell has registered a case and taken up investigation into the purported leak of the copy. It was also reported that necessary clearance for publication of the book was yet to be received from the relevant authorities. In a separate statement, Penguin Random House India said the book has not gone into publication and no copies have been published, distributed, or sold. The publisher added that it "shall be exercising remedies available in law against the illegal and unauthorised dissemination of the book".

## Law student kills classmate in Punjab college; shoots himself

A first-year law student of a private college in Punjab's Tarn Taran district on Monday allegedly shot dead a female classmate inside the classroom before shooting himself, the police said. The accused has been identified as Prince Raj, 20, and the victim as Sandeep Kaur, 19. CCTV footage shows the boy engaging in a brief conversation with the girl before pointing a gun at her and firing at point-blank range. "The matter is being probed from all angles. A friendship angle is also being investigated. Mobiles of both individuals have been seized for examination," Surendra Lamba, Senior Superintendent of Police, Tarn Taran, said.

## Inmate kills terror suspect inside prison in Faridabad

The Hindu Bureau  
GURUGRAM

Terror suspect Abdul Rehman, 20, was murdered allegedly by a fellow inmate, Arun Choudhary, inside a high-security cell at Neemka jail in Faridabad of Haryana on Monday.

Rehman was arrested in a joint operation by the Haryana Special Task Force (STF) and the Gujarat Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) at Pali village in Faridabad on March 2 last year. He was suspected to be planning an attack on the Ram temple in Ayodhya and was in possession of two hand grenades.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Tigaoon) Ashok Kumar told presspersons that Choudhary attacked Rehman with a sharp-edged stone-like object around 2 a.m. in his sleep.

## Anaemia, blood disorders can distort diabetes test HbA1c results, says study

Bindu Shajan Perappadan  
NEW DELHI

Reliance solely on HbA1c is constrained by several clinical and biological factors in India, say experts.

Poorly standardised HbA1c assay methods complicate interpretation of HbA1c values.

"Overall, reliance solely on HbA1c is constrained by several clinical and biological factors in India. A multiparametric, risk-stratified approach that integrates oral glucose tolerance test, self-monitoring of blood glucose, and whenever possible, continuous glucose moni-

toring, in addition to relevant haematologic assessments, are essential to enhance diagnostic and monitoring accuracy and inform appropriate treatment decisions, especially in primary care and resource-limited settings," Dr. Misra says.

Any condition that affects the quantity, structure, or lifespan of haemoglobin – such as anaemia,

haemoglobinopathies, or other red blood cell disorders – can distort HbA1c values and lead to misleading estimates of average blood glucose, the viewpoint article notes.

Co-author Shashank Joshi, from Joshi Clinic, Mumbai, explains that in some regions of India, people are nutritionally challenged and have iron-deficiency anaemia, which can distort HbA1c readings.

"This would affect both diagnosis and monitoring thus misleading clinicians. Reliance on HbA1c alone could delay diagnosis by up to four years in men with undetected G6PD deficiency, potentially increasing risk of complications," Dr. Joshi says.

The article explains that in patients with Type 1 diabetes, a non-linear relationship between mean blood glucose and HbA1c has been documented.

## Workers, employers found Labour Codes forward-looking'

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

on February 12 against the implementation of the four Labour Codes.

"The study finds a positive assessment of the potential impact of the Labour Codes on working conditions, wages, and income security. Workers perceive that the Codes will lead to improved regulation of working hours, better leave practices, and regularity in wage payments," it added. Sixty per cent of surveyed workers expect working conditions to improve over time.

It added that "71% of employers express confidence that the Labour Codes support women's participation in employment, while 66% of workers believe that safety, transport, and monitoring requirements will improve protection for women workers".

## Two persons booked in M.P. for beating woman: police

The Hindu Bureau  
Bhopal

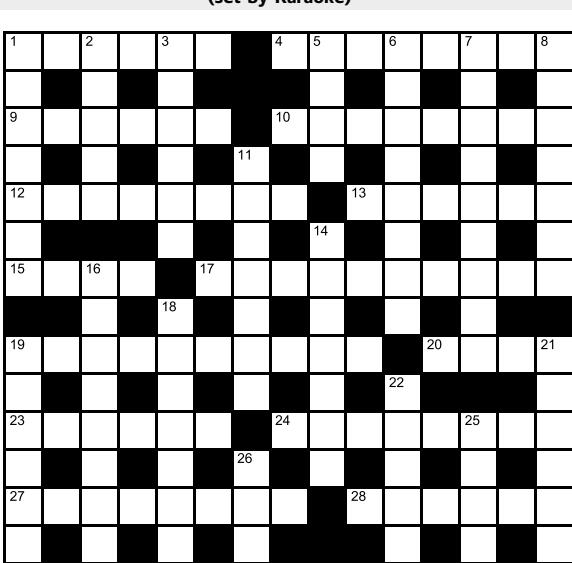
The Madhya Pradesh Police have registered a case against two persons for allegedly beating a woman in Siddhi district, officials said on Monday. The Congress alleged that one of the accused is a BJP leader.

Siddhi's Additional Superintendent of Police, Arvind Srivastava, said an FIR had been registered against Santosh Pathak and Rahul Dwivedi, who are absconding. A video of the incident has gone viral on the Internet in which Mr. Pathak is seen punching and kicking Hema Singh.

Sharing the video on X, the Congress said, "Madhya Pradesh's Jungle Raj. This is BJP leader Santosh Pathak, who is brutally beating a woman in the middle of the road."

TH CROSSWORD + 14713  
(set by Karaoke)

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



## Across

- Appeal to umpire by Zimbabwe rejected after outlandish oath outside (6)
- Content removed from nightshirt following a day in satellite (8)
- The Apostles perhaps in between solvers' hearts (6)
- This animal in the room, you would not like to talk about difficult situation (8)

- Eternity, free-for-all (8)
- Shots in the arm to the Devil, mostly by saint (6)
- Fine clue, bottom to top (4)
- Sink in latrine, fit to be destroyed (10)
- Cooking appliance in resort is defective and extremely inaccurate (10)
- Small rodent inside treasure, it may spread disease (4)
- Something wrong with a very troublesome child? (6)
- Never compose music outright without expertise initially (3,2,3)
- It's the character of Indian settler to get energy by force (8)
- Rogue conceals degree in suitcase (3,3)
- Comedians possibly cracked satires about model (8)
- I am told to get permission for skirt (6)
- Stolen base? Criminals may end up here (3,4)
- Take away by force from others, according to reports (5)
- Loudly say state recruits director on board basically (6)
- Shop's key with setter (4)
- Makes use of old pistol in rebellion (8)
- Kill time with girlfriend eating ice cream mainly (9)
- How much salt you add for a pleasing result? (2,5)
- Vocalist hugs model in cocktail (7)
- Potentially AI is no ultimate tool for working relationship (7)
- Meet veteran heartily participating in cricket? (9)
- Provided exorbitant loans? Boastful talk (2,4,2)
- Wine container unopened and returned (7)
- Blasphemes representation of lingams (7)
- Celebration with semi-sexy stars (6)
- Primarily athletes regularly entertain nail-biting audience here (5)
- Topless pair in competition (4)

## SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## FAITH

## Faith anchored in dharma

Faith, trust, and confidence are as essential as the air we breathe. Only when mutual trust and confidence prevail, can relationships and friendships endure. Friendships founded on unrighteousness cannot last. Associating with unsocial and undesirable individuals often leads only to difficulties and distress. Valluvar advises that when enemies seek friendship, one may maintain a courteous exterior but should wisely refrain from forming close ties (*Kural 830*). Where dharma is absent, peace of mind and inner tranquillity can never exist.

Thanneerpal Sri Krishnan Swami, in a discourse, emphasised that people should place their faith and confidence not only in God but also in the various forms of dharma established by Him. Avvaiyar, in *Aathichudi*, urges us to cultivate a longing to do good (*Aram Seyya Virumbu*). Righteous deeds have the power to erase our sins. Sage Veda Vyasa declares that those who protect dharma will, in turn, be protected by dharma itself. Lord Krishna affirms this eternal truth in the Bhagavad Gita, proclaiming that whenever dharma declines, adharma rises, He incarnates to restore righteousness (Chapter 4 – Verse 7).

Stealing or taking others' property or belongings without their knowledge constitutes theft and may even involve claiming or celebrating ownership. Likewise, the soul that resides within us is the absolute property of God, and all beings are His subjects. Forgetting this fundamental truth and imagining oneself to be independent is also a form of theft. This is known as *atma apahara chauryam* – the theft of the self.

Solution to previous puzzle								
F	O	R	C	E	X	C	H	A
E	E	V	L	O	M	U	E	
L	I	Q	U	N	U	T	I	
L	U	K	E	J	E	D	I	
O	P	I	N	S	R	F	E	
W	T	D	S	G	A	V		
S	T	A	C	T	T	E		
L	F	U	E	U	E	L		
M	I	S	S	T	A			
E	R	D	E	A	C	W		
S	E	B	A	C	E			
U	P	R	E	H	M			
U	S	U	R	E	P			
S	H	E	P	S	K			

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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



The court says the definition of 'suspicious transaction' must be expanded.

crore was misappropriated according to your own report," Justice Bagchi told Mr. Venkataramani.

The court directed the Home Ministry to formally adopt and implement, across India, the Standard Operating Procedure issued on January 2 to ensure effective inter-agency coordination in cases of cyber-enabled frauds, including identifying the location of defrauded parties. It further ordered that the necessary rules for implementation be notified.

The top law officer said the government was finalising a memorandum of understanding for sharing suspect registry of data and mule account detection tools, both preventive and responsive, to help in blocking fraudulent transactions.

## IN BRIEF



## Moody's projects India's GDP to grow 6.4% in FY27

Moody's Ratings on Monday projected India's GDP to grow at 6.4% in the next fiscal, the fastest pace among G-20 economies, driven by strong domestic consumption, policy measures, and a stable banking system. In its banking system outlook report, Moody's said their asset quality will remain resilient, with some stress among micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Regardless, banks have sufficient reserves to absorb loan losses, it said. PTI

## India to support steel exports hit by Europe's carbon tax

India's steel exports will continue to be impacted by the European Union's carbon tax and import quotas, and the government will take steps to help the sector, Steel Secretary Sandeep Poundrik said at a government event in New Delhi on Monday. The comment comes days after India and the European Union signed a trade deal which slashed tariffs on several sectors, but left the bloc's carbon border tariff, called Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, intact. REUTERS

## MSIL's rail despatches rise 18% to over 5.85 lakh units in CY25

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. said it despatched over 5.85 lakh vehicles through rail in CY25, a growth of 18% over CY24. Also, in the past decade, MSIL said its share of rail mode in outbound logistics had grown sharply, rising from 5.1% in 2016 to 26% in 2025, significantly reducing carbon emissions and easing road congestion. Rail-based vehicle despatch volumes have grown over 7.5 times, reaching over 5.85 lakh units in 2025 from nearly 77,000 units in 2016, the automaker said.

## Adani stocks most bought by private promoters in Q3FY26

Ashokamithran T.  
MUMBAI

Adani Enterprises Ltd. (AEL) and Adani Ports and SEZ's Ltd. (APSL) were the most preferred stocks of private promoters in the December quarter of fiscal 2026, according to a report by Prime Database.

The number of shares private promoters held in AEL and APSL increased 12% and 10% quarter-on-quarter respectively to 95.6 crore and 156.7 crore.

Net bought in AEL climbed to 9% of the ₹2.7 lakh crore market capitalisation (mcap). For APSL, this was 6.5% of the ₹3.25 lakh crore mcap.

Market capitalisation is the number of outstanding shares multiplied by the

## RBI tells banks not to insist on collateral for loans to MSMEs

Regulator advises banks to extend collateral-free loans up to ₹20 lakh to all units financed under PM Employment Generation Programme

Lalatendu Mishra  
MUMBAI

**T**he Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday asked banks not to insist on collateral security for loans up to ₹20 lakh extended to units in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector.

"Banks are also advised to extend collateral-free loans up to ₹20 lakh to all units financed under the Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) administered by KVIC," the central bank said in its Lending to Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) Sector (Amendment) Directions, 2026.

"Banks may, on the basis of good track record and financial position of the MSE units, increase the limit to dispense with the collateral requirement for



**Fund push:** The move is aimed at facilitating improved access to formal credit and to support entrepreneurial activity. PERIASAMY M

loans up to ₹25 lakh as per their internal policy," the banking regulator said and added that banks may avail the benefit of credit guarantee scheme cover, where applicable.

"However, accepting gold and silver as collateral pledged voluntarily by borrowers for loans sanctioned by the banks up to the collateral free limit, will not be construed as a violation of the above mandate," the Reserve Bank

said in the circular.

"With a view to facilitating improved access to formal credit, support entrepreneurial activity and strengthen last mile credit delivery for MSEs with limited collateral, it has been decided to enhance the limit of collateral free loans to MSEs from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh," RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said in a statement on development and regulatory policies on Friday.

## IOC, HPCL buy Venezuelan oil through trader'

Press Trust of India  
NEW DELHI

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL) have jointly bought 2 million barrels of Venezuelan crude oil – the second deal Indian refiners have struck since oil restarted flowing into international markets.

The two firms have bought 2 million barrels of Merey crude from Trafigura for delivery in the second half of April, sources said. 1.5 million barrels of oil will be delivered to IOC's Paradip refinery in Odisha and rest 5,00,000 barrels to HPCL's Visakhapatnam unit in Andhra Pradesh. This is the second deal for Venezuelan crude after Reliance Industries bought 2 million barrels of Venezuelan oil for April delivery from Vitol.

The world's third-largest oil consumer halted Venezuelan crude purchases after U.S. sanctions were reimposed. It resumed imports after the U.S. granted

## The two firms have bought 2 mn barrels of Merey crude from Trafigura for delivery in April's second half

Vitol and Trafigura a licence to sell Venezuelan oil after President Nicolás Maduro was seized in a military operation and Washington asserted control over the nation's energy industry.

India imported Venezuelan crude until 2019-20 before U.S. sanctions on the South American country's state oil company PDVSA stopped that. It resumed purchases in 2023-24 but halted them again when Washington reimposed restrictions on Venezuela's oil sector.

U.S. President Donald Trump said last week that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had agreed to stop buying Russian oil and purchase more oil from the U.S., and possibly Venezuela, following a key U.S. trade deal with India.

## MARKETS

## MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	84,066	0.58
US Dollar	90.66	-0.01
Gold	1,58,500	0.82
Brent oil	68.74	—

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2250.10	23.70
Adani Ports	1561.70	11.00
Apollo Hosp.	7211.00	58.50
Asian Paints	247.40	16.30
Axis Bank	1341.40	-0.20
Bajaj Auto	9590.00	71.50
Bajaj Finance	983.15	1.45
Bharat Elec.	437.30	7.65
Bharti Airtel	2038.20	-0.20
Cipla	1342.50	12.50
Coal India	431.70	-1.10
Dr Reddy's Lab.	1275.50	34.30
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	DE*
Eicher Motors	7195.50	18.00
Etihad Ltd.	288.85	5.30
Grasim Ind.	2926.30	89.40
HCL Tech	1602.00	8.30
HDIFC Bank	937.25	3.85
HDIFC Life	707.90	4.40
Hindalco	964.25	21.70
Hind Unilever	2435.00	10.80
ICICI Bank	1396.30	9.80
InterglobeAvi.	4964.10	54.70
Infosys	1497.20	9.90
ITC	322.80	23.00
Jio Financial Servic.	269.25	1.15
JSW Steel	1245.00	8.80
Kotak Bank	428.80	6.45
L&T	4113.60	45.50
M&M	3609.60	31.60
Maruti Suzuki	14978.00	-19.00
Max HealthCare	1010.00	-29.85
NestleIndia	1295.60	7.70
NTPC	361.90	3.15
ONGC	266.60	2.35
PowerGrid Corp	289.75	-3.00
Reliance Ind.	1461.60	10.80
SBI Life	2024.00	27.30
State Bank.	1146.00	79.60
Shriram Finance	1062.70	60.20
Sun Pharma	1704.60	9.50
TataConsumerProduct.	1167.20	7.90
Tata Steel	202.00	4.94
TCS	2948.20	6.60
Tech Mahindra	1621.70	1.80
Titan	4257.80	116.80
Tata Motors PV.	377.40	7.90
Trent Ltd.	4171.20	57.40
UltraTech Cement	13048.00	326.00
Wipro	230.08	-0.64

DE: Demerged Entity

## Adani Energy bags Japanese funding

Adani Energy Solutions (AESL) said it had secured long-term financing from a consortium of Japanese banks for the Bhadla-Fatehpur, high-voltage direct current transmission project. PTI

## Gross NPAs of SCBs at a historic low of 2.15% as of September

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

The gross non-performing assets (NPA) ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) for domestic operations was at a historic low of 2.15% as of 2025-end (provisional data), which is

lower than 2010-11 level, the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

Gross NPA has been continuously declining during the last eight financial years, the Ministry informed the Lok Sabha.

This continuous decline in gross NPAs of SCBs, in-

cluding Public Sector Banks (PSBs), has led to reduced provisioning by them, which in turn has improved their profitability, thereby causing positive impact on the business growth, the Ministry said.

This also indicates that the asset quality as well as

underwriting has improved in PSBs supported by a strong balance sheet and sustained profitability, the Ministry said in a note.

The Reserve Bank of India initiated the Asset Quality Review (AQR) in 2015, post which the government initiated 4R's strategy

of recognising NPAs, resolving and recovering value from stressed accounts through clean and effective laws and processes, recapitalising PSBs, and reforms in banks and the financial ecosystem to address the problem of growing loan default.

## Aurobindo Q3 net up 7.6% to ₹910 crore on Europe, ARV revenue

The Hindu Bureau  
HYDERABAD

Generic drugmaker Aurobindo Pharma reported December quarter consolidated net profit rose 7.6% year-on-year to ₹910 crore.

The profit came on a more than 8% increase in revenue from operations to ₹8,646 crore. Europe formulations sales which climbed 27.4% to ₹2,703 crore and ARV offtake that increased 22.4% to ₹376 crore aided revenue boost.

Mainstay U.S. formulations sales were up 2.2% to ₹3,739 crore.. The profit is inclusive of a one-time cost of ₹65 crore for Labour Code.

"Growth remained measured, with continued focus on operational disci-

pline and a balanced approach to growth and profitability," vice-chairman and MD K. Nithyanandha Reddy said.

On a standalone basis, the firm reported a net profit of ₹582 crore (₹472 crore) on a dip in revenue from operations to ₹2,747.2 crore (₹2,916.6 crore).

The board okayed a plan to file before the NCLT, an amalgamation scheme for merger of step-down subsidiary Auro Vaccines with wholly owned Curateq Biologics. It also approved ₹66 crore investment for buying 26% stake in Garuda Renewables.

The firm named ex-se-nior MD and CIO, Black-stone Asia Advisors Punita Kumar Sinha as non-executive independent director.

For Registration & General Enquiry : Shri. Remil Rashid, Manager, MSTC, Mobile: 9946473645  
2. For Inspection Enquiry : Assistant General Manager, (Banking) Ramanathapuram District Central Cooperative Bank, Mobile: 8012551625  
DIPR/835/TENDER/2026

The Ramanathapuram District Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. is interested to sell its immovable properties through M/s MSTC Limited following e-Auction process. For participation in e-Auction the prospective buyers are required to register with M/s MSTC Ltd. (service provider of the Bank) on its website www.mstccommerce.com. For further details of the properties terms & conditions, schedule of e-Auction please visit the following websites: www.mstccomdia.co.in and www.mstccommerce.com Contact Persons

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DIPR/835/TENDER/2026

**ODESA**

**Child among four killed in Ukraine after overnight Russian airstrikes**



A barrage of Russian drones and missiles on Ukraine killed at least four people in cities across the country, including a 10-year-old boy, regional officials said on Monday. The Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched 11 ballistic missiles and 149 drones at the country from Sunday evening into the early hours of Monday. AFP

**CARACAS**

**Venezuela rearrests Machado's key ally hours after release from prison**



Venezuela's top prosecutor said on Monday that his office had requested the arrest of one of the closest allies of opposition leader María Corina Machado, less than 12 hours after his release from a detention facility. Ms. Machado said on Sunday that close ally Juan Pablo Guanipa was kidnapped, just hours after his release. AP

**BANGKOK**

**Thailand's ruling party readies for coalition talks after election win**



Thailand faced a realignment of conservative politics on Monday after Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's Bhumjaithai Party won a stronger-than-expected general election victory, with coalition talks to start in the coming days. With 94% of votes counted, Bhumjaithai was way ahead of its rivals, securing 192 of the 500 seats. Reuters

**WASHINGTON**

**Epstein accomplice Maxwell seeks Trump clemency before testimony**



Jeffrey Epstein's accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell refused on Monday to answer questions from a U.S. congressional panel but said she was prepared to speak if granted clemency by President Donald Trump. The 64-year-old, serving a 20-year prison sentence for sex trafficking, was deposed to discuss her relations with Epstein. AFP

## Bangladesh poll rivals claim legacies of 1971 Liberation war, 2024 uprising

**Major parties BNP and Jamaat pit each other to 'own legacies' as electioneering ends; Jamaat conveys it wants to engage all sides and turn a new page in national politics; BNP seeks forgiveness for any mistakes made during its past governance**

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**

DHAKA

**H**ours before the conclusion of the campaign for the 13th national election, leaders of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (Jei), in nationally telecast speeches, claimed the common legacies of the Liberation War of 1971 and the anti-Hasina uprising of July 2024, and pledged to set Bangladesh on track for economic development.

Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman said the ruling elite of Bangladesh had turned against the people after previous elections and urged voters to support his party.

In a speech focused on



**Gaining momentum:** Supporters at a BNP rally on the final day of election campaigning in Dhaka on Monday. AFP

development agenda, BNP chairman Tarique Rahman sought forgiveness for any mistakes that his party might have committed during its past governance.

Mr. Rahman paid tributes to the sacrifices made during 1971 and the anti-Hasina struggle of

2024. The mention of 1971 in Mr. Rahman's speech has drawn attention as the group is known for being supportive of Pakistan during the Liberation War.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a spokesperson of Jamaat clarified the party's position on the war.

"The main issue of 2024 was discrimination by a government against our people and the main problem of 1971 was discrimination by Pakistan against the people of Bangladesh. That is why we want to own both the legacies," Mohammed Fakhru Islam said.

He added that Jamaat wants to engage all sides and turn a new page in national politics.

In his speech on Monday, Mr. Rahman recalled BNP founder General Ziaur Rahman's role in the war of 1971, as well as on his handling of the country's affairs in the aftermath of the assassination of its founding President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other national leaders in 1975. He also highlighted the party's

role in bringing down the military rule of Hossein Mohammed Ershad in 1990 and the uprising in July-August 2024 that toppled deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League head, Tim Allan.

Countering the generally orthodox attitude of Jei on gender issues, the BNP chief promised women would be in leading positions if his party was elected to power.

"With your support, the BNP had shouldered the responsibility of governance more than once in the past. We might have committed mistakes unwillingly during that time. For that, I express my sincere regrets to the people of my country," Mr. Rahman.

## Scottish Labour Party leader seeks Starmer's resignation

**Sriram Lakshman**

LONDON



U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer came under increasing pressure on Monday as Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar called for him to step down following the resignation, earlier on Monday, of Mr. Starmer's communications head, Tim Allan.

Mr. Allan, who quit to "allow a new No. 10 team to be built", departed less than a day after Chief of Staff Morgan McSweeney resigned, taking "full responsibility" for the appointment of Peter Mandelson as Britain's U.S. envoy. Mr. Mandelson was sacked by Mr. Starmer in September after it came to light that his ties with child sex-offender and financier Jeffrey Epstein were stronger than was previously known to the public.

Mr. Allan who was part

Welsh legislatures), Mr. Sarwar called on Mr. Starmer to step down.

"There have been too many incidences where the wrong judgment calls have been made," Mr. Sarwar said. The opportunity to get rid of the ruling Scottish National Party (SNP) in May was "too important to be missed", he added.

In Westminster, however, Mr. Starmer got the backing of many of his Cabinet colleagues, including Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves, Energy Secretary Ed Miliband and Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy.

Labour, under Mr. Starmer, won a large majority in the U.K. Parliament in July 2024, but his government has been beleaguered by rifts within the party over issues including welfare spending and tax rate commitments.

## Muslim nations protest as Israel tightens grip on West Bank

**Stanly Johny**

Israel's security cabinet has approved new measures aimed at easing Jewish settlements in the West Bank and tightening Tel Aviv's control over the occupied Palestinian territory. Eight Muslim majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Pakistan, have condemned the move "in the strongest terms".

The rules "are intended to remove decades-old barriers, repeal discriminatory Jordanian legislation, and enable accelerated development of settlement on the ground," Defence Minister Israel Katz and Fi-

nance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said in a joint statement.

The new measures include declassifying land registries in the West Bank so that property lists will be open for the public and allowing Jewish individuals to buy land in the Palestinian areas. Until now, Jews could buy land in the West Bank only through companies registered in the area, not individually.

Jews will now be allowed "to purchase land in Judea and Samaria just as they purchase in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem," said the statement, referring to the biblical terminology for the West Bank, Israeli me-



A Palestinian puts on a keffiyeh as an Israeli soldier keeps vigil in Hebron, occupied West Bank

dia reported. Israel will also expand oversight and enforcement activities in Areas A and B of the West Bank, which are partially governed by the Palesti-

nian Authority as per the Oslo Accords. Area C of the West Bank is under full Israeli control.

The plan also transfers authority over issuing building permits for Jewish settlements in Hebron from the Hebron Municipality, run by Palestinians, to the Israeli government.

West Bank has witnessed growing number of attacks by settlers on local Arab communities in recent years. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, at least 870 Palestinians, including 177 children, were killed by settlers and the Israeli forces since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel.

Between October 7, 2023 and January 2026, six entire communities comprising 112 families have been forcibly displaced in the northern Jordan Valley, according to a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) dated January 19, 2026. "In the same period, 4,037 Palestinians have been displaced due to settler violence across the West Bank."

On Tuesday, the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar and Egypt condemned the "illegal Israeli decisions and measures aimed

at imposing unlawful Israeli sovereignty, entrenching settlement activity, and enforcing a new legal and administrative reality in the occupied West Bank, thereby accelerating attempts at its illegal annexation and the displacement of the Palestinian people".

The Ministers reaffirmed that Israel has no sovereignty over the West Bank and said Israel's actions "undermine the two-state solution and represent an assault on the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to realise their independent and sovereign state on the 1967 lines with occupied Jerusalem as its capital."

## Hong Kong court sentences Jimmy Lai to 20 years in prison

**Agence France-Presse**

HONG KONG

December of urging foreign countries to impose sanctions on Hong Kong and for publishing "sedition" articles in his paper.

The sentence is by far the harshest handed out under the Beijing-imposed national security law.

"The harsh 20-year sentence against 78-year-old Jimmy Lai is effectively a death sentence. A sentence of this magnitude is both cruel and profoundly unjust," Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

## Iran arrests four reformist members amid crackdown

**Reuters**

DUBAI

The Islamic Iran Nation's Union Party sought the release of secretary-general Azar Mansouri, the *Shargh* newspaper said on Monday, after her arrest along with other members of the Reform Front, an umbrella body of Iranian reformists and moderates.

A campaign of mass arrests and intimidation has led to the arrests of thousands as authorities seek to deter further protests after last month's crackdown on the bloodiest unrest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

On Sunday, state media said three senior figures from Iran's Reform Front were arrested, among them Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, Mohsen Amirkhan, and Azar Mansouri, who acts as the front's head.

*Shargh* said at least two more Reform Front members were asked to report to the prosecutor's office in Tehran's Evin prison on Tuesday.

The Reform Front's spokesper-

son, Javad Emam, was also arrested. Mr. Mansouri's lawyer, Hojjat Kermani, said on Monday, adding that it was unclear what charges faced those detained.

"We basically don't know what caused these arrests, because the Reform Front has not yet issued a statement about the recent events (protests)," Mr. Kermani told the *Iranian Labour News Agency*.

**Cites links to Israel, U.S.** On Sunday, the judiciary's media outlet *Mizan* said "four important political elements supporting the Zionist (regime) and the United States" were indicted, but gave no details.

Tehran has blamed unrest-related violence on "rioters and armed terrorists" it says were backed by its key enemies, Israel and the United States. Past Reform Front statements have been highly critical of authorities. After the 12-day war against Israel, its members warned that "incremental collapse" awaited the country if it did not adopt fundamental reforms.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA E-mail :- eerwssbp@gmail.com**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, R.W.S & S DIVISION, SAMBALPUR**  
**"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
**Bid Identification No. RWSS (SBP)- 12 / 2025-26**

1. Name of the Work : Operation (including Supply of Staff Pattern) of 5 MLD WTP for Piped Water Supply Scheme to 23 Villages of Dhanakauda & Rengali Block for Two Years (730 days).  
2. Total Number of Work : 01 No (One)  
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.200.65 Lakhs  
4. Amount put to Tender : Rs.170.04 lakhs  
4. Class of Contractor : B & A  
5. Agrmnt. Period : 02 Years

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender online for bidding
Superintending Engineer, RWSS Division, Sambalpur	RWSS (SBP) :- 12 / 2025-26	From 09.02.2026 11:00 am up to 5.00 PM of 18.02.2026
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal " <a href="http://www.tendersistema.gov.in">www.tendersistema.gov.in</a> ". Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the website only.		
Superintending Engineer, R.W.S&S. Division, Sambalpur. OIPR-25001/25015/1/25-26/0001		

**ODISHA STATE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD (OSAMB)**  
(A Statutory Organization of Govt. of Odisha)  
Plot No.1800 (P), Baramunda, Post-Khandagiri, Near Indian Oil Petrol Pump, Bhubaneswar, Ph.No.0674-2351811/2351311, Email: [osamboard99@yahoo.com](mailto:osamboard99@yahoo.com)  
No.Eng.101/2025-26 Dated : 17.01.2026

**Selection of Programme Management Consultant (PgMC) for providing Engineering Services for various projects of Odisha State Agricultural Marketing Board (OSAM Board)**

**"Selection of Programme Management Consultant (PgMC)"**  
The RFP documents covering the details of information, eligibility criteria, selection process and other terms & conditions can be downloaded from <https://osamb.odisha.gov.in> / <https://coop.odisha.gov.in> from 10.02.2026. The last date for submitting the RFP documents along with processing fees of Rs.10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand) only in shape of DD in favour of "Odisha State Agricultural Marketing Board" payable at Bhubaneswar through Regd./ Courier is 05.03.2026 by 05:00 P.M. The technical bids will be opened on 06.03.2026 at 11:30 A.M.  
The date of opening of financial bids will be intimated subsequently. The Authority reserves the right to reject any / all proposals without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- General Manager, OSAM Board, Bhubaneswar  
OIPR-39001/39024/1/25-26/0001

**Uttarakhand Urban Sector Development Agency (UUSDA)**  
Urban Development Department, Government of Uttarakhand  
777 Saatvik Tower, Kaulagarh Road, Rajender Nagar Dehradun  
Telephone +91-135-2753894, Tele-fax +91-135-2754895  
Email: [usdip@gmail.com](mailto:usdip@gmail.com), Website: [www.uusda.uk.gov.in](http://www.uusda.uk.gov.in)

**Advt. No: UUSDA/P-101/246**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)**  
**(REBID-1)**

The "Program Director", Uttarakhand Urban Sector Development Agency (UUSDA), Government of Uttarakhand" (the Employer) invites online bids through the Uttarakhand state e-procurement portal <https://uktenders.gov.in>, from eligible Bidders for the execution of the work as detailed below:

S. No.	Name of Work	Package No.	Last Date & Time of Submission
1	Design and Construction of Water Supply, Sewerage System & Sewage Treatment Plant, House Service Connections and Allied Works with 5 Years. Operation and Maintenance Period in Jyotirmath Town, Chamoli District, Uttarakhand	WS&WW-JM-01	11.03.2026 upto 15:00 hours IST

Date: 09.02.2026

**Date of publication of Bidding document** 11.02.2026 at 16:00 hours IST  
**Date of Pre-Bid Meeting** 21.02.2026 - 11:00 hours IST  
**Date and Time of availability of the Bidding Document** 11.02.2026 - 16:00 hours IST  
**Last date for submission of original EMD and tender fee in the office of bid inviting officer** 10.03.2026 upto 16:00 hours IST  
**Last Date and Time for downloading of the Bidding document** 11.03.2026 upto 15:00 hours IST  
**Date and Time for opening of the bids** 11.03.2026 - 16:00 hours IST

The prospective bidders can download the detailed bidding document and upload the bid on the website, <https://uktenders.gov.in>. Program Director, UUSDA reserves the right to reject any or all the proposals or to cancel the entire process without assigning any reason thereof. Further details of the bid document including subsequent addendum/corrigendum/ cancellation etc. may be downloaded from the website <https://uktenders.gov.in>.

**Program Director**  
UUSDA

"हमारा संकल्प" आपका सहयोग बैठते कल'

**GOOD OUTING**

We were solid in all the three departments, says Markram



South Africa captain Aiden Markram said his side clicked in all three departments in the 57-run victory over Canada. "Important [to win], we've seen at the start, anyone can beat anyone. You don't take anyone lightly. We were solid in all three departments," Markram said.

**UPBEAT**

Scotland captain Berrington targets upset win over England



Scotland captain Richie Berrington believes his team has the firepower to upset two-time champion England in their T20 WC Group C match in Kolkata. "If we stick to our strengths and perform well, we can put anyone under pressure. Obviously we know it's going to be tough against England. They're a world-class team".

## South Africa starts off with a thumping win over Canada

Markram leads the charge as the Proteas notch up the highest total of this edition; the minnows find Ngidi too hot to handle as they end up with 156 despite Dhaliwal and Thaker's spirited show

**T20 WORLD CUP**

**N. Sudarshan**  
AHMEDABAD

**S**outh Africa flexed its T20 muscle as it beat Canada by 57 runs in its World Cup campaign-opener at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Monday.

Canada, too, indulged in a small-scale show of strength, refusing to surrender and batting out its full quota of overs to get to 156 for eight while chasing a stiff 214-run target.

But once the Dilpreet Bajwa-led outfit lost four batters inside the PowerPlay with Lungi Ngidi rocking the top-order (four for 31), there was seldom any doubt about the result.

Navneet Dhaliwal (64, 49b, 7x4, 1x6) and Harsh Thaker (33, 29b, 2x4, 2x6) came together for 69 resolute runs for the fifth wicket. The need of the hour, however, was some break-neck batting, and that never materialised.

Earlier, put in to bat, South Africa was off to a fleet-footed start, with skipper Aiden Markram (59, 32b, 10x4, 1x6) and Quinton de Kock (25, 22b, 2x4) putting on 66 runs in the PowerPlay.

Despite de Kock's dismissal, Markram continued his brisk scoring in



Early onslaught: South Africa skipper Markram cut loose at the top of the order. VIJAY SONEJI

## Scotland hands Italy a reality check

**Agence France-Presse**

KOLKATA

T20 World Cup debutant Italy had a bruising introduction to cricket's biggest stage as it suffered a crushing 73-run loss to Scotland at the Eden Gardens here on Monday.

**First win**

Scotland piled up 207 for four as opener George Munsey top-scored with 84. Italy was bowled out for 134 in 16.4 overs in its reply as the Scots posted their first win in Group C after losing their opener to the West Indies.

Off-spinner Michael



Connecting thin air: Oman's Jatinder is castled by Muzarabani. AP

## Zimbabwe returns to the showpiece in style

**Agence France-Presse**

COLOMBO

Zimbabwe returned to the T20 World Cup in emphatic fashion on Monday, strolling to an eight-wicket win over Oman at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club.

In its first T20 World Cup since 2022, Zimbabwe skittled out Oman for 103 before knocking off the runs with 39 balls to spare.

Brian Bennett was unbeaten on 48 and Brendan Taylor, 40, who played in the first T20 World Cup in 2007, made 31 before retiring hurt. Zimbabwe's quick-bowling twin towers Richard Ngarava and Blessing Muzarabani reduced Oman to 27 for five.

A 42-run stand for the sixth wicket between Sufyan Mehmood and Vinayak Shukla gave Oman's total some respectability.

When the chase started, Bennett and Tadiwanashe Marumani raced to 30 off 19 deliveries before two wickets brought Taylor to the crease. Taylor showed some discomfort running between the wickets and retired hurt with 10 runs away, leaving Sikandar Raza to finish the job.

The scores: Oman 103 in 19.5 overs (Richard Ngarava 3/17, Blessing Muzarabani 3/16, Brad Evans 3/18) lost to Zimbabwe 106/2 in 13.3 overs (Brian Bennett 48 n.o., Brendan Taylor ret'd. hurt 31). Toss: Zimbabwe; PoM: Muzarabani.



Star turn: Leask claimed a four-wicket haul. RITU RAJ KONWAR

CYK

## Sport

**OUCH!**

Italy's Madsen injured, doubtful for remaining matches: coach Davison



Italy captain Wayne Madsen is "doubtful" for the remainder of the league stage after suffering a shoulder dislocation during its loss to Scotland in its T20 World Cup debut in Kolkata, head coach John Davison said. Davison said that the experienced skipper could still travel with the squad and join the dugout as "coaching staff."

**KEY PLAYER**

Taylor limping off the ground a concern, says skipper Raza



Wicketkeeper-batter Brendan Taylor limping off the ground after retiring hurt in the match against Oman is a cause for concern for Zimbabwe, said skipper Sikandar Raza on Monday. "The main concern is Brendan Taylor. He's a key member of our team, so I didn't want to take that chance," Raza added.

Pakistan to play India: PM Sharif

**Agencies**

LAHORE

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday cleared the country's cricket team to play India in the ICC T20 World Cup on February 15 in Colombo, ending a week-long stand-off.

"In view of the outcomes achieved in multilateral discussions, as well as the request of friendly countries, the Government of Pakistan hereby directs the Pakistan national team to take the field against India," Sharif posted on X on Monday.

It was clear that the country would withdraw the boycott call after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief Aminul Islam issued a statement urging Pakistan to take the field for the greater good of the game.

**No sanctions on BCB**  
Meanwhile, the ICC said it would not be imposing any penalty on the BCB for refusing to play its T20 World Cup matches in India.

Rohit, Kohli pushed to Grade B; Gill, Bumrah & Jadeja in top tier

**BCCI CONTRACTS**

MUMBAI

Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja have been demoted from Grade A+ while Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have been pushed to Grade B in the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI's) annual retainers for the ongoing 2025-26 season.

**30 men and 21 women**  
BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia officially announced the list of 30 male and 21 female cricketers who have been awarded central contracts on Monday through a media statement.

While Saikia had earlier stated the BCCI is suspending Grade A+ (₹7 crore), it was surprising to see Bumrah being demoted. While Bumrah still remains a key all-format cricketer for India, the team management has been using him sparingly in bilateral series for the last two years.

While Jadeja has retired from T20Is, Kohli and Rohit are single-format



A step down: Rohit and Kohli, who only play ODIs, have been slotted in Category 2. FILE PHOTO: K. R. DEEPAK

players, having retired from Tests and T20Is.

Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Shivam Dube, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep, Dhruv Jurel, Harshit Rana, Varun Chakaravarthy, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Abhishek Sharma, Sai Sudharsan, Ravi Bishnoi, Ruturaj Gaikwad.

**Senior women: Grade A (₹50 lakh):** Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma.

**Grade B (₹30 lakh):** Renuka Singh, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Sneha Rana.

**Grade C (₹10 lakh):** Radha Yadav, Amanpreet Kaur, Pratika Rawal, Kauri Gaud, Uma Chetri, Arundhati Reddy, Sree Charani, Yastika Bhatia, Harleen Deol, Kashvee Gautam, G. Kamalini, Vaishnavi Sharma, Tejal Hasabnis.

**Grade D (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Murali Kartik, Jaydev Unadkat, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade E (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade F (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade G (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade H (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade I (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade J (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade K (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade L (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade M (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade N (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade O (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade P (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade Q (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade R (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade S (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade T (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade U (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade V (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade W (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade X (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade Y (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade Z (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade AA (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade BB (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade CC (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade DD (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade EE (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Kuldeep Singh, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Kuldeep Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer.

**Grade FF (₹1 crore):** Axar Patel, Um

# Pakistan eyes revenge as it takes on USA

The former champion scraped past the Dutch to get its campaign off to a winning start while the Americans let India off the hook in their opener

## T20 WORLD CUP

**Sahil Mathur**  
COLOMBO

The pressure of winning the Group A fixture against a "nothing-to-lose side" like the USA will be firmly on Pakistan, American leg-spinner Mohammad Mohsin said on Monday, on the eve of their clash at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC).

With the USA already one up in the head-to-head against Pakistan, Mohsin said the team is playing with freedom and enjoying its journey in the T20 World Cup 2026.

"We had a good preparatory camp in Sri Lanka (in January), and that's going to reflect in tomorrow's game because we know the conditions a lot better," Mohsin said.

However, Pakistan's Salman Mirza said that the defeat in the previous addition will not add any extra pressure, stressing that every match in a World Cup carries equal importance.

"It's a World Cup, and every match is important



**Time to get going:** Babar, who has made a comeback to the shortest format, will be keen to make his presence felt. AP

in this tournament – whether it's the first or the final."

Both teams will enter unfamiliar territory at the SSC ground, which will host its first-ever day-night T20I. Acknowledging the challenge, Mirza said it was difficult to plan too far in advance. "Once we get to the ground and assess the conditions, only then can we plan properly," Mirza

said. Pakistan scraped past the Netherlands by three wickets in its opening encounter while the USA went down to India by 29 runs after letting the defending champion off the hook.

Meanwhile, the Event Technical Committee has approved Ehsan Adil as a replacement for the injured Jasdeep Singh in the USA squad.

## Today's matches



Delhi, 11 a.m.

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**

Played: 5

Netherlands 3 | Namibia 1

NR 1



Chennai, 3 p.m.

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**

Played: 3

New Zealand 2 | UAE 1



Colombo (SSC), 7 p.m.

**HEAD-TO-HEAD**

Played: 1

Pakistan 0 | USA 1

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR

# Buoyant New Zealand won't take the UAE lightly

**S. Dipak Ragav**

CHENNAI

The first few days of the 2026 T20 World Cup have thrown up exciting matches, with associate countries pushing some of the established full-member outfits hard, even if they haven't ultimately succeeded.

On Tuesday, the United Arab Emirates has a chance to show if it can go that one step further when it takes on New Zealand in its opening match.

Although the Middle Eastern country lost both warm-up games at MAC Stadium, skipper Muhammad Waseem felt it provided vital lessons ahead of

the first match.

"We learnt some things, especially in batting and fielding. On the field, since it's a slightly bigger ground, we are working on how to restrict doubles into singles."

"As a batting unit, we have to bat a little longer. If someone is set, we can always score in the last four to five overs," said Waseem.

UAE has shown in recent years that it is capable of causing upsets, most notably its 2-1 home win over Bangladesh in a three-match T20I series last year.

The UAE has also beaten New Zealand once – back in 2023 – and that is enough reason for the Kiwi

wis, fresh off a victory against Afghanistan, not to take this game lightly.

"I think that's actually been good for the whole tournament as well," said NZ batting coach Luke Ronchi on the performance of the associate teams so far.

"I guess you can have a sort of a lackadaisical mindset going into those sorts of games. But you need to understand that it is a World Cup."

"You have your own style of playing cricket and the standards you want to set. So it's making sure we do that. And that is on the field with bat and ball, and it doesn't matter against whom," he added.



**Something positive:** The UAE has beaten New Zealand once, in 2023. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

# Little time to mull over losses: Ackermann



**Getting ready:** The Dutch players train on the eve of the match against Namibia. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

**Vivek Krishnan**

NEW DELHI

For the Netherlands, a three-wicket defeat to Pakistan in its opening Group-A match of the T20 World Cup in Colombo was a case of what-ifs. What if Max O'Dowd had held onto Faheem Ashraf's catch in the penultimate over when Pakistan still needed 23 more runs? What if the Dutch side hadn't lost seven wickets for 42 runs and managed to get to a total in the range of 165?

As gut-wrenching as the slender loss was, the Netherlands can't afford to let these doubts linger for long. On Tuesday morning, Scott Edwards and Co.

will take on Namibia at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, a chance for either side to get off the mark in a group also featuring India, Pakistan and USA.

All-rounder Colin Ackermann, one of the Netherlands' more experienced heads, stressed the need for the team to look ahead.

"It was naturally a very disappointing result for us. But the nature of this tournament is that the games come thick and fast. So, we've parked that," the South Africa-born Ackermann, 34, said on Monday.

"Part of the DNA of the Netherlands team is that we take ownership of our performances and our roles, and we learn from

past experiences. When we got off the bus in Delhi, coach Ryan Cook said the past is the past – there's nothing we can do about it – and we must look forward to the next game."

While the Netherlands has pulled off a couple of giant-killing highs in recent World Cups, it continues to grapple with the lack of consistent opportunities against top nations.

"The one thing lacking is regular exposure against bigger teams," Ackermann rued. "Coming into this tournament, our last match against a full-member nation was against Bangladesh in August. So, that's something we're trying to change."

# A stronger and sharper Manav confident of a good show

## WTT CONTENDER

**K. Keerthivasan**

CHENNAI

Manav Thakkar will forever be indebted to Chennai for providing a major fillip to his singles career. At the WTT Star Contender here in March last year, the Indian – then ranked World No. 56 – produced a grand show, upsetting a couple of seeded players to reach a historic semifinal. From there on, it has largely been an upward curve for the 25-year-old.

Manav returns to the city stronger and more confident for the WTT Star Contender, beginning on Tuesday at the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University. Now the fourth seed, armed with a career-high world ranking of 33, hopes to repeat – or even better – last year's performance. "I entered



**Lucky venue:** It was at the Chennai Contender last year that Manav created a ripple. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the world's top 50 after the Chennai event and started doing well consistently thereafter. I also played the WTT Champions (for the first time) in Frankfurt in November last, but had to withdraw in the second round due to rashes on my body," he said, reflecting on his breakthrough season.

He has carried that mo-

mentum into 2026, reaching the second round at the WTT Champions Doha and scoring an upset win over World No. 17 Simon Gauzy in the opening round.

"I am at my peak at the moment. I'm really looking forward to playing singles as well as doubles with Manush Shah – we are the top-seeded pair here," Manav told *The Hindu* on Monday.

The qualifiers will be held on Feb. 10 and 11 followed by the main draw on Feb. 12.

**SU** here from February 10. The venue for the event will be the SDAT-High Performance TT Centre situated inside TNPESTU campus. As an Advisory Director of the High-Performance Centre, the 43-year-old is excited to showcase his Academy to the public at large. "I miss the competition as a player. But as an organiser, it's been a huge learning curve," he told *The Hindu* on Monday.

With the Academy being situated at Melakottaiyur, which is more than 40 kms from the heart of the city, Shanth said entry for

spectators will be free. "We want more people to come and watch our facility, which has a seating capacity of around 700," he informed. The World Table Tennis officials, said Shanth, are happy with the venue so far. "They would want to know how good the Academy will be which has been so far used for training, hold up to tournaments," he said.

He added he will soon start the process to select 15 paddlers in the 11-17 age group who will be part of the Academy's residential facility.

# Gritty Sekulic battles past Gray; five Indians progress to the main draw

## CHENNAI OPEN

**C. Shyam Sundar**

CHENNAI

The Challenger events on the ATP Tour are the pathway to the higher echelons of the tennis world and also an avenue for the journeymen to accrue points and prize money. The Chennai Open, which got underway at the SDAT tennis stadium here on Monday, will provide the Indians – the experienced ones as well as rookies – an opportunity to pick up ATP points in their endeavour to climb up the rankings.

The country's top player Sumit Nagal will be eyeing a strong showing here, though he's seeded eighth, while the other Indians like the young Manas Dhamne, Karan Singh and Digvijay Pratap Singh will also be keen to glean as many points as possible.

In the only main draw match of the day, Australia's Philip Sekulic fended off the challenge of Briton Alastair Gray 6-3, 7-6(9) and awaits the winner of the Simakin-Dhamne match in the second round. As many as five Indians – Aditya Vishal Balsekar, Ishaque Eqbal, Aryan Lakshmanan, Nitin Kumar Sinha, and S.D. Prajwal Dev – made it to the main draw, posting wins in the second round of the qualifying.



**Moving ahead:** Sekulic booked a spot in the second round with a hard-fought win. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**The results (first round):** Philip Sekulic (Aus) bt Alastair Gray (GBR) 6-3, 7-6(9).

**Doubles:** S.D. Prajwal Dev & Nitin Kumar Sinha (Ind) bt Petr Bar Biryukov & Ilia Simakin (Rus) 7-6(3), 6-1.

Luca Castelnovo (Sui) & Rio Noguchi (Jpn) 6-2, 6-2.

Jay Clarke (Gbr) & Sasikumar Mukund (Ind) bt Aryan Lakshmanan & Aditya Vishal Balsekar (Ind) 6-3, 6-4.

## International Olympic Academy delegation meets Usha

### Sports Bureau

NEW DELHI

An International Olympic Academy delegation met Indian Olympic Association president P.T. Usha to discuss the development of structured Olympic Education programmes, educator capacity-building, youth engagement and international knowledge exchange among others.

Usha underlined the importance of education in promoting integrity, inclusion and sustainability in sports with athlete welfare education, mental health, safeguarding, anti-doping and transition beyond competitive careers identified as a priority area.

The delegation included academy director Makis Asimakopoulos and Head of NOAS/ NOCs Relations Alexandra Karaikou.

Usha underlined the importance of education in promoting integrity, inclusion and sustainability in sports with athlete welfare education as priority areas

## Sports Bureau

CHENNAI

It was in March last year that Sharath Kamal played his farewell International match in the WTT Star Contender at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here.

Since then, the former India No.1 has donned several roles that has kept him actively involved in the sport. He was elected to the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Athletes' Commission. He also serves on the IOA's Athletes' Commission. Now, he is busy oversee-



Sharath. FILE PHOTO: R. RAVINDRAN

ing preparations for the WTT Star Contender to be held at the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University (TNPESTU) here from February 10. The venue for the event will be the SDAT-High Performance TT Centre situated inside TNPESTU campus.



**Anfield classic:** Haaland celebrates City claiming the lead over Liverpool. AP

## Premier League

**Agence France-Presse**

LIVERPOOL

Manchester City kept the Premier League title race alive with a dramatic late turnaround for a 2-1 win away to Liverpool on Sunday, and to keep leader Arsenal within six points. The defeat was another damaging blow to Liverpool's

chances of Champions League football.

City captain Bernardo Silva said even the team believed the title race would have been over had it lost at Anfield. Silva's equaliser was followed by Erling Haaland's stoppage-time penalty as City won in front of a crowd at Anfield for the first time since 2003.

"We won finally at Anfield," said Pep Guardiola.

## INBRIEF



## Ajith wins elite men's 71kg gold with new mark in snatch

N. Ajith created a new snatch record while totalling 320kg to take the elite men's 71kg gold medal at National weightlifting championships in Modinagar on Monday. Junior champion Yash Khandagale (300kg) bagged the bronze in the elite category behind T. Madhavan (317kg).

**The results (winners only):** Men: 71kg: Elite: N. Ajith (RSPB) snatch 145kg, clean and jerk 175kg, total 320kg; junior: Yash Khandagale (Mah) 138kg, 162kg, 300kg; youth: Abhinob Gogoi (SSCB) 123kg, 153kg, 276kg.



## Laporta steps down as Barca president, to seek re-election

Joan Laporta has resigned as president of Barcelona in order to seek re-election, launching a 35-day countdown to elections set for March 15, the club said on Monday. Laporta, who took office in March, 2021, steps down after nearly five years in charge in line with club statutes. Vice-president Rafa Yuste will act as president.

## LIVE TELECAST

**Men's T20 World Cup:** Star Sports 1, 2 & JioHotstar, 11 a.m. 3 & 7 p.m.

## + Easy for Real; Inter routs Sassuolo



**Opening salvo:** Carreras fires in Real's first against Valencia. AFP

## EURO LEAGUES

**Reuters**  
VALENCIA

Real Madrid stayed within one point of LaLiga leader Barcelona (58 points) with a 2-0 win at Valencia on Sunday as second-half goals by Alvaro Carreras and Kylian Mbappe settled a largely uneventful contest.

In Serie A, Federico Dimarco laid on a hat-trick of assists as Inter Milan thumped 10-man Sassuolo 5-0 to open up an eight-point lead at the top with a commanding performance in Reggio Emilia.

## The results:

**LaLiga:** Athletic Bilbao 4 (Guruzeta 29, 34, Serrano 86, Navarro 90+9) bt Levante 2 (Elgezabal 81, Olasagasti 90+4); Sevilla 1 (Salas 90+2) drew with Girona 1 (Lemar 2); Atletico Madrid 0 lost to Real Betis 1 (Antony 28); Valencia 0 lost to Real Madrid 2 (Carreras 65, Mbappe 90+1).

**Serie A:** Sassuolo 0 lost to Inter Milan 5 (Biscecca 11, Thuram 28, Martinez 50, Akanji 54, Luis Henrique 89); Juventus 2 (McKennie 59, Kalulu 90+6) drew with Lazio 2 (Pedro 45+2, Isaksen 47).

**Bundesliga:** Bayern Munich 5 (Kane 20+pen, 45+pen, Diaz 45+2, 62, 89) bt Hoffenheim 1 (Kramaric 35); Cologne 1 (Thielmann 51) lost to RB Leipzig 2 (Baumgartner 29, 56).

**K-RIDE**  
**RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY (KARNATAKA) LIMITED**  
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of Karnataka & Ministry of Railways)  
CIN: U60100KA2000SGC028171  
No. K-RIDE/HR/195/Vacancy Notification/03/2026 Date: 09.02.2026  
**Vacancy Notice No. 10/2026 & 11/2026**  
K-RIDE, a JV of Govt of Karnataka & Ministry of Railways, executing the BANGALORE SUBURBAN RAIL PROJECT & RAILWAY DOUBLING PROJECTS, invites applications for the following posts on Deputation/Contract basis.

Vacancy Notice No.	Name of the post	No.of Posts	Grade
10/2026	General Manager (Finance)	01	E8
11/2026	Manager/Dy. Manager/ Assistant Manager (Finance)	01	E2/E1/ E0

Last date for submitting applications is 09.03.2026.  
For detailed eligibility conditions and other details please visit: <https://kride.in/careers-in-k-ride/>.

Sd/ GENERAL MANAGER /HR (I/C)

DIPR/CP/5547Zen/2025-26

K ridePrm K ride Bsrp k ride\_bsrp KRIDE\_BSRP

## Rahul, Smaran take Karnataka past Mumbai into the semis

The opener forges a 147-run stand for the fourth wicket with the southpaw as the visiting side chases down 325; the eight-time champion will clash with Uttarakhand for a place in the final

## RANJI TROPHY

**Shayan Acharya**  
MUMBAI

**K**.L. Rahul made optimum use of a reprieve to score a gritty century and R. Smaran hit an unbeaten 83 as Karnataka defeated Mumbai by four wickets to enter the semifinals of the Ranji Trophy here on Monday.

With a calm and composed Rahul (130, 182b, 14x1, 1x6) leading the batting unit and bringing up his 24th First Class hundred, Karnataka survived a scare and eventually chased down the target of 325 on the penultimate day.

Knowing the conditions at the MCA-BKC ground well, Mumbai took the field on the fourth day, hoping its spinners Tanush Kotian and Shams Mulani will make an impact on the surface that offered some turn.

Even though Karnataka lost Karun Nair early on, Rahul looked determined to get the visiting team home. He forged a 147-run partnership with Smaran (123b, 11x4) for the fourth wicket.

Mumbai squandered an opportunity to bounce back as its slip fielders botched up a regulation catch of Rahul, then on 75, off a nippy Shardul Thakur delivery. As Rahul nicked, the ball moved towards



Getting the job done: Smaran took Karnataka home along with Vidyadhar. EMMANUEL YOGINI

Yashavali Jaiswal, stationed in first slip, but in a bizarre move, Siddhesh Lad dived in from the second slip to make an attempt, and eventually dropped the catch.

There was no looking back since. It was a measured innings by the India international as Rahul went on to score a century, but barely celebrated the milestone, raising his bat only briefly before getting back to the job.

With Smaran going for the shots and Rahul holding fort, it seemed a matter of time before Karnataka romped home. However, there was some drama in the post-lunch session as

Rahul mistimed a one-handed hook off Tushar Deshpande and was caught at short third-man by Jaiswal. Deshpande tightened the noose further as a short ball saw Shreyas Gopal being caught behind. Soon Kotian had Kruthik Krishna stumped.

Having lost three quick wickets, Karnataka was in a spot of bother before Smaran and Vidyadhar Patil rebuilt with an unbroken 40-run stand to get it across the line. While Smaran remained solid, Vidyadhar's unbeaten 30-ball-31 run cameo saw the eight-time champion setting up a last-four clash

with Uttarakhand.

**The scores:** Mumbai – 1st innnings: 120.

Karnataka – 1st innings: 173.

Mumbai – 2nd innnings: 377.

Karnataka – 2nd innnings:

Mayank Agarwal c Avasthi b

Shardul 3, K.L. Rahul c Jaiswal b

Deshpande 130, Devdutt Padikkal c Jaiswal b Kotian 39, Karun Nair lbw b Shardul 13, R. Smaran (not out) 83, Shreyas Gopal c Akash b

Deshpande 1, Kruthik Krishna st.

Akash b Kotian 2, Vidhyadhar

Patil (not out) 31; Extras (b-15,

lb-3, nb-4, wd-1): 23; Total (for six

wkts. in 73.4 overs): 325.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-12, 2-96, 3-119,

4-266, 5-268, 6-285.

**Mumbai bowling:** Shardul

10-1-55-2, Avasthi 7-0-36-0,

Mulani 14-4-60-4, Deshpande

18-2-67-2, Kotian 21-2-77-2,

Musheer 3-0-8-0.

## RANJI QUARTERFINAL SCORES - DAY FOUR

**At Mumbai:** Mumbai 120 & 377 lost to Karnataka 173 & 325/6 in 73.4 overs (K.L. Rahul 130, R. Smaran 83 n.o.).

**At Kalyani:** Andhra 295 & 64/3 in 24 overs vs. Bengal 629 in 199.1 overs (Sudip Kumar Gharami 299,

Sumanta Gupta 81, Shakir Habib Gandhi 95, Mohammed Shami 53, Shaik Rasheed 4/63).

**At Indore:** J & K 194 & 248 bt Madhya Pradesh 152 & 234 in 68.3 overs (Saransh Jain 64, Auqib Nabi 5/70).

## Dropping Rahul the turning point: Smaran



**Making it count:** Rahul made the most of a reprieve to register his 24th First Class hundred. EMMANUEL YOGINI

**Shayan Acharya**  
MUMBAI

were looking to play some positive cricket, and that was the talk out there," Smaran said, adding: "That (the dropped catch) did shift the momentum and got us even more boundaries in the next four-five overs..."

Despite a batting collapse in the first innings, Rahul ensured Karnataka chased down a big total. "Smaran was quick to point out that his presence is an immense boost for the team. "I think it's a privilege for all of us that he's come and played the Ranji Trophy games with us."

He's played a lot of Tests and he carries tremendous experience. Out there in the middle, he kept guiding me and kept telling me what shots I should play," Smaran said.

He revealed the strategy was to ensure that the runs kept flowing.

**WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION COMPANY LIMITED**  
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CIN: U40101WB2007SCC113474 + web: www.wbsetcl.in

**E-TENDER FOR THE FOLLOWING WORKS ARE INVITED:**

**MIT No. GE/CTD/WBSETCL/Procurement/** Procurement of DC Regulatory Source along with associated items as per technical specification. Bid documents can be downloaded from 10.02.2026, 06:00 P.M. and bids shall be submitted online up to 05:00 P.M., 19.03.2026.

**MIT No. GE/CTD/WBSETCL/Procurement/** Procurement of Numerical Over Flux Relays along with associated items and work as per technical specification. Bid documents can be downloaded from 10.02.2026, 06:00 P.M. and bids shall be submitted online up to 04:00 P.M., 19.03.2026.

Visit the following websites - [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in), [www.wbsetcl.in](http://www.wbsetcl.in) for details.

IC-A-T3390(3)/2026

**GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN DEPARTMENT OF MINES AND GEOLOGY**  
Email: [biddingcell@rajasthan.gov.in](mailto:biddingcell@rajasthan.gov.in)

Date of NIB: 30-01-2026

**NOTICE INVITING BID (NIB) FOR AUCTION OF BLOCKS WITH PRE-EMBEDDED CLEARANCES**

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 10B of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, its subsequent amendments and in accordance with the Mineral (Auction) Rules, 2015 as amended from time to time notified there under, the Government of Rajasthan has notified the following major mineral block for the purpose of grant of Mining lease & hereby invites bids in digital format only from eligible bidders through electronic auction. These blocks are being proposed for auction with pre-embedded clearances.

The details of blocks for grant of mining lease and last date of submission of bid are summarized below:-

S No	Name of Block	Start Date of Sale of Tender Document on MSTC	Last Date of Sale of Tender Document on MSTC website	Bid Due date and time
1.	JKM-01 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58640) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
2.	JKM-02 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58623, 58641) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
3.	JKM-03 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58624, 58643) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
4.	JKM-04 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58626, 58644) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
5.	JKM-05 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58628, 58645) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
6.	JKM-06 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58631, 58646) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
7.	JKM-07 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58632, 58647) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)
8.	JKM-08 Block n/v Murukasi, Tehsil-Bilara and District Jodhpur (58636, 58648) For Limestone	30-01-2026	16-02-2026 upto 2400 Hrs (IST)	06-03-2026 upto 1300 Hrs (IST)

These blocks are being put up for second attempt of auction. The interested and eligible bidders, upon registration on MSTC website <http://www.mstecommerce.com/auctionhome/mlcn/index.jsp> will obtain login ID and Password. After successful registration, the eligible bidder can purchase the Tender Document online on payment of the tender fee of Rs. 50,000/- (Rupees Fifty Thousand Only) and can participate in the e-auction process.

DIPR/C/2191/2026 RajKaj Ref No.: 20215255 Director

## BUSINESS CONNECT

## GRT Jeweller's Silver Collection



GRT Jewellers is hosting a Silver Collection Exhibition and Sale from January 2



In-form star: India will rely on youngsters like Kujur to continue their good showing. FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

## India will strive for a winning start to a crucial year

Focus will be on the trio of Amandeep, Kujur and Manmeet, which has made the cut on the back of impressive outings in the HIL and Junior WC

### FIH PRO LEAGUE

#### Uthra Ganesan ROURKELA

**S**elections questions and off-field issues have hogged the limelight the last few weeks but coach Craig Fulton and his team would be hoping to leave it all behind when the Indian men's team begins its international calendar in its FIH Pro League opener at the Birsa Munda Stadium on Wednesday.

With a crucial year ahead, the Indian men will have their task cut out when they take on Belgium on Wednesday.

Before that, former

Olympic champions Belgium and Argentina clash in the opening game on Tuesday with all teams in a rebuilding phase, hoping to find the best players for the World Cup in six months' time.

The focus will clearly be on the trio of Amandeep Lakra, Rosan Kujur and Manmeet Singh, making the cut on the back of impressive outings in the Hockey India League and the Junior World Cup.

"We are focused on building depth but at the same time getting closer to performance. You can't get both all the time. Are we playing the strongest group right now? We have to spread a little bit be-

cause we need to give other players opportunities," Fulton admitted on Monday. Belgium captain Arthur van Doren and Argentina coach Lucas Rey echoed Fulton.

"Obviously, everything is built towards the World Cup for all teams at this stage. Everybody is trying to find the perfect balance between building their programme as well as performance," van Doren said.

"We will try a few new players, see how they manage after the Under-21 World Cup and at the same time be ready to compete with them," Rey added.

**Tuesday's match:**  
Belgium vs Argentina (7.30 p.m.).

## No LA Games for us unless we do well in '26: Fulton

#### Uthra Ganesan ROURKELA

The Indian men's hockey team last played Belgium, its Pro League opener opponent, on November 30 in the final of the Azlan Shah Cup, losing 0-1 with an experimental side and most of the main players, including Manpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Harmanpreet Singh and Jarmanpreet Singh missing.

Only one of the four has failed to find a place in the side for the team's season-opening event, with Manpreet's omission being

Fulton said no one was permanently out of the game.  
FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

more talked about than anything else. But even as conflicting versions, both official and unofficial, continue to make rounds, coach Craig Fulton has remained silent.

On Monday, he finally spoke about the seniors in the side and their future, giving away nothing but dropping enough hints that no one was permanently out of the game. "There needs to be alignment within the group first. And seniors bring stability and experience."

"At the same time, our vision and our goal are to do well at the World Cup and qualify for the 2028 Olympics. We have no LA unless we do 2026 well," Fulton said.

"We are using our seniors in that respect to try

and get through two tournaments. But we also have to manage careers, not just matches. There's a balance between who plays where and how. We have a core that is based on experience. We have a balance of youth and experience here, but it's not finalised yet," he explained.

"It's not linear. At the same time, we have a plan, and we're sticking to that plan. If a senior player takes an ACL injury or something, what's the plan? It's not like you have them, and then you don't have them because you don't

want them. It doesn't work like that."

"It's not something that is so easily decided on. We have some younger players. We want healthy competition. I think India-A has proved there are players that can compete and deserve the chance and they're getting their chance. We'll see how we go from there. If anyone's in the squad, they're in the reckoning, 100%," he declared, adding that the list of 33-probables for the Pro League was open for inclusions closer to major events.

### SNAPSHOTS

#### Manu misses gold; Esha wins 25m pistol bronze

NEW DELHI: Manu Bhaker narrowly missed out on a gold as she lost to Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy Trang in the 25m women's pistol, which was decided at the end of two shoot-offs, in the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship on Monday.

Esha Singh won her second individual medal of the championship by bagging a bronze. Naamya Kapoor clinched gold in the junior category. India took its total tally to 60 medals, including 37 gold, 13 silver and 10 bronze.

#### India Open retains its Super 750 status

The India Open retained its Super 750 status despite the organisational issues this year but the Syed Modi International was downgraded from Super 300 to Super 100 as the country saw its share of events reduced from



Young champions: The various prize winners in the Tiruvallur District selection chess tournament. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

four to two in the Badminton World Federation's revamped schedule announced on Monday.

The events axed from the calendar are Super 100 tournaments in Guwahati and Odisha, which were introduced in 2023.

The Syed Modi International has been a World Tour Super 300 event since 2018. Introduced in 2009 as a Grand Prix event, it will be one of the eight Super 100

tournaments on the circuit from next year. From 2027, the World Championships will have a group-stage phase, followed by knockouts to ensure everyone competes in at least two matches.

#### TN beats Andhra

VIZIANAGARAM: Tamil Nadu bowled out Andhra, following on, for 213 and chased down 84 with seven wickets to spare on day two of the fourth-round South Zone

men's under-14 inter-State tournament match on Monday.

**The scores (fourth round, day two):** Tamil Nadu 189 & 86/3 in 20.3 overs (G. Haricharan 37, S. Satwik 3/24) bt Andhra 59 & 21.3 in 65.5 overs (Raj Mohan 30, P.V.S. Revanth Varma 58, Kinnu Krishan 45, Abdul Unais 30, Mohammad Arfaaz 4/17, K.A. Seshank Kumar 3/89).

#### Heartfulness CBSE to meet Chettinad Vidyashram in the final

CHENNAI: Aadil Asrani (59) and K. Danush Karthi (three for 17) and I. Jumail Mutlaq (three for 18) helped Heartfulness CBSE pip Don Bosco (Egmore) by two runs in the Vidyashram-Sportstar-Sannmar under-14 invitational tournament.

**The scores (semifinals):** Chettinad Vidyashram 105/7 in 30 overs bt PSBB, K.K. Nagar 94 in 26.3 overs (G. Lakshith 3/14).

Heartfulness CBSE 116/7 in 30 overs (Aadil Asrani 59) bt Don Bosco, Egmore 114/8 in 30 overs (S. Saif Ali 55, K. Danush Karthi

3/17, I. Jumail Mutlaq 3/18).  
**Sooriya, Tamizhselvan emerge champions**

B.Y. Sooriya and Tamizhselvan Ganesh emerged champions in the open rapid and blitz sections respectively at the 30th Tiruvallur District selection chess tournament the Bharath academy in Thiruninavur. The top two finishers in the boys' and girls' categories, as well as in the open sections, will represent Tiruvallur district at the upcoming State Championship.

**The standings: Under-9: Boys:**

1. L. Vamsi Krishna (6.5/7), 2. Kavin Velavan (6); **girls:** 1. S.P. Pavishna (5/5), 2. H. Thanishta (5). **Open: Rapid:** 1. B.Y. Sooriya (6.5/7), 2. R.S. Injyan (5.5); **blitz:** 1. Tamizhselvan Ganesh (6/7), 2. B.Y. Sooriya (6).

### ENGAGEMENTS

**Cricket:** TNCA league, II, S. Rly Inst. vs Egmore RC (S. Rly), 9 a.m.



# Suryavanshi – the baby-faced basher striking fear in bowlers

The teen titan has made it a point to gobble up big opportunities which come his way; his big break came after Rajasthan Royals acquired him in the IPL 2025 auction

## S. Shrivathsan

All it took was one shot to make a mark. When Vaibhav Suryavanshi launched Shardul Thakur for a maximum off his very first ball in the Indian Premier League, Shane Watson, stationed in the commentary box, could not help but admire the first impression of the one-of-a-kind talent.

"My word! What the hell was that?" was Watson's initial reaction after the 14-year-old deposited the ball into the stand behind the cover region. It was one of many times that jaws dropped, mesmerised by the pocket dynamite's batting pyrotechnics.

Given the rate at which Suryavanshi is delivering one stunning performance after another to make the cricket world go in awe, it should not come as a surprise if oral and maxillofacial surgeons offer thanks to him in the future. It is 'business' for him and them.

On Friday, the thrill-a-minute opener carried on with that business as usual, producing a blistering 175 off just 80 balls to steer India to its sixth under-19 World Cup prize. As the southpaw continued to rise with crunching hits in the final, the English shoulders dropped, its players clueless about what had struck them. It was nothing but the Suryavanshi storm!

The highly-talented teenager led the assault in Harare despite a rare slow start, treating the 'big boys' from England with disdain and unleashing shots from the top drawer. The knock was so well-crafted that it made England captain Thomas Rew admit that he and his teammates could not stop scratching their heads.

"It is always going to be tough when a player like him gets going. We did our research; we wanted to use our change-ups and stick to the top of the stumps. But Vaibhav came off today (Friday), fair play to him. When Vaibhav got going, we struggled to know where to bowl," said Rew after his team finished second-best.

Rew was not alone in being astonished on the day. India's title-winning captain Ayush Mhatre, who enjoyed the best view whenever Suryavanshi went berserk, fell short of words while describing the left-hander's influence on the team.

"We just asked him to keep at it. We have no words for him... for the player he is or the innings he played. We know that he is a fabulous batter, and he showed in this match what he can do," Mhatre said of Suryavanshi.

### Too good for his age

Suryavanshi's insatiable appetite to rack up runs at a lightning pace has led to him being too good for his age. He deservedly scripted history as he became the first player to bag both the Player-of-the-Final and Player-of-the-Tournament awards in an u-19 World Cup. The cherry on top of the cake was his no-brainer selection to the team of the tournament, which also included two other Indians in Kanishk



GETTY IMAGES

Chouhan and Henil Patel. "I cannot express how I am feeling. We have been working together for the last eight-nine months. The preparation for the World Cup began much before the Asia Cup. That (plans) helped us get to where we are now. I have enough confidence in the skillset I have developed, and I know that I can perform under pressure in big games," said Suryavanshi besides dedicating the title triumph to the coaching staff.

Suryavanshi is so young that he will technically be eligible to feature in the next two iterations of the age-group global competition. But the cricket world may have seen the last of him at this level since the BCCI prevents players from appearing in more than one edition.

While some may consider him unlucky for his premature exit from the tournament, bowlers from across the globe would undoubtedly be thanking their stars. Apart from striking fear in the minds of the opposing players, the left-hander possesses the rare quality of making something happen even when there is nothing on offer.

Which is why Michael Hussey feels that Suryavanshi is Adam Gilchrist-esque, high praise considering that the Bihar boy was not even born when the former Australia wicketkeeper-batter ruled international cricket. "There are some of these players who come along... when they are out there in the middle, you do not want to miss a ball," Chennai Super Kings batting coach Hussey said during the 2025 IPL.

"When Gilchrist would walk out to bat, the whole team would come to the viewing area to watch the game. It was so exciting. I felt the same after watching this kid bat; breathtaking batting was on display when he and Yashasvi Jaiswal were together. It was fearless batting, and it was so exciting to watch," Hussey said a day after Suryavanshi became the youngest century-maker in the IPL, at 14 years and 32 days.

### Making it count

The teen titan has made it a point to gobble up big opportunities which come his way. Suryavanshi announced himself on the biggest stage when he shattered records at will on his Youth Test debut against Australia u-19 in September-October 2024.

Just as scribes present at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai began

**Michael Hussey feels Suryavanshi is Adam Gilchrist-esque, high praise considering that the Bihar boy was not even born when the former Australia wicketkeeper-batter ruled international cricket**

preparing drafts of India's bowling show on the opening day, the southpaw indirectly told them: "Hang on." Despite batting for only one session, the then 13-year-old raced to an unbeaten 80-plus first-innings score by the time the curtains were drawn.

Formalities were there to be completed at the start of the second day, and he did it in style to register the second-fastest ton in u-19 Test cricket history (off 58 balls - behind English batter Moeen Ali's feat which was achieved off 56 balls). In the process, he also became the youngest player to reach the three-figure mark.

Suryavanshi's big break came after Rajasthan Royals, under the guidance of Rahul Dravid, took a huge leap of faith and acquired him for Rs 1.1 crore at the 2025 auction.

There were doubts whether he would be up to speed in a demanding league like the IPL, but he put a full-stop to those with his actions on the field. Luck played its part as Suryavanshi was drafted into the playing XII after Sanju Samson was rendered unavailable for some matches because of an injury. The opening batter did not need much time to make people stand up and take notice of him; he smacked the second-fastest IPL century (off 35 balls - behind Chris Gayle's long-standing record of 30 balls) against an experienced Gujarat Titans bowling pack.

He instantly became a vital cog in the RR wheel so much so that Samson, returning after a break, dropped to No. 3 to accommodate Suryavanshi at the top. His high-intent game earned him a place in the India-A squad, for which he dazzled in the Asia Cup Rising Stars. His absence at a crucial juncture was deeply felt; Indian fans vented their anger after Suryavanshi was overlooked for the 'Super Over' in the semifinal loss to Bangladesh-A.

In domestic cricket, which is naturally a step down from the international game,

the youngster has made a mockery of bowling attacks in the Plate division. But with Bihar securing promotion to the elite class, he is set to tackle more rounded units.

### Areas to work on

If one nitpicks flaws in Suryavanshi's evolving play, his game awareness in tough situations and the pressure that he puts on himself to score big are mentioned. He should understand that at times when the opposition has momentum on its side, it is not necessary to take a coat of paint off the ball every delivery he faces.

For instance, in the u-19 Asia Cup final against Pakistan, the 14-year-old continued to go on the offensive even after India lost two quick wickets in a big chase. That move led to his downfall, and India eventually suffered a chastening loss.

But to his credit, he is learning. "A lot of things were running on my mind. But I spoke with VVS Laxman sir (head of BCCI's Centre of Excellence). He asked me not to go after a century; he asked me to follow my processes and back my strengths, and he said that a century would follow," an elated Suryavanshi said after enjoying a dream u-19 World Cup.

### What next?

There are growing calls for Suryavanshi to be integrated into the senior set-up, with former selection committee chairman K. Srikanth saying that age should not be a factor.

"If Sachin Tendulkar can make his international debut at 16, why not Suryavanshi at 14? If I am the chairman now, I would fast-track him to the senior team. I am a huge fan of him... just look at how seamlessly he is attacking international-quality bowlers," Srikanth said on his YouTube channel 'Cheeky Cheeka' during the last IPL season.

Since there is no scarcity of batting riches in India, Suryavanshi will have to deal with plenty of competitors; for context, a quality operator like Jaiswal is struggling to get a look-in after the emergence of fellow southpaw Abhishek Sharma. But given Suryavanshi's rapid rise, one would not put it past him to quickly break into the senior side.

The young boy with big dreams could be an awesome force of nature in the making.

## THE GIST

Suryavanshi deservedly scripted history and became the first player to bag both the Player-of-the-Final and Player-of-the-Tournament awards in an u-19 World Cup

In domestic cricket, which is naturally a step down from the international game, the youngster has made a mockery of bowling attacks in the Plate division

Since there is no scarcity of batting riches in India, Suryavanshi will have to deal with plenty of competitors; for context, a quality operator like Jaiswal is struggling to get a look-in

## SCIENCE

# Remembering Leo D'Souza, who transformed cashew industry

Fr. Leo built one of India's earliest plant tissue culture labs and helped crack cashew micropropagation, including a test-tube cashew tree that made it to the soil; he leaves behind a rare Jesuit legacy that fused rigorous science with public purpose, shaping women scientists and vulnerable lives alike

Nandita Jayaraj

**O**n January 20, Rev. Dr. Leo D'Souza, a Jesuit scientist based in Mangaluru, died aged 93. Dr. D'Souza, fondly known as Fr. Leo, trained in the 1960s at the Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding Research in Cologne, working alongside stalwarts in the field such as Ingo Potrykus, Joseph Straub, and Sudhir Kumar Sopory.

He set up one of India's earliest tissue culture laboratories in 1975, where his women-led team of doctoral students slowly and steadily made a series of breakthroughs – including the world's first ever test-tube cashew tree that was transferred to soil.

"Fr. D'Souza was among the early pioneers of plant tissue culture research in India, making significant contributions at a time when the discipline was still in its formative stage," said Pramod Tandon, a leading plant biotechnologist and Padma Shri awardee.

In 1970, when Leo D'Souza was called back to India after his scientific studies, his PhD advisor Joseph Straub suggested he meet a friend of his to guide him on a suitable research topic. The friend turned out to be M.S. Swaminathan, who was at the time in New Delhi. When Dr. Swaminathan found out that the young priest's hometown was Mangalore, he recommended *Anacardium occidentale*, the cashew plant, as a topic of research.

#### Tissue culture

The cashew tree is not native to India. It was brought into the coastal region by the Portuguese from Brazil in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to keep the lateritic soil found there from being eroded. Once people recognised the commercial value of its nuts and fruits, it emerged as an important cash crop. By the 1980s, cashew was being cultivated on nearly 5 lakh ha of land in the country, although the net production remained far below what was optimal for the processing industry.

An article in the 1982 issue of the journal *Manushi* noted that women accounted for more than 80% of the labourers employed in the cashew industry. They were usually illiterate and routinely underpaid.

Fr. Leo personally visited many cashew processing plants in and around Mangalore, and the situation of the labourers and small farmers of cashew plantations made an impression on him.

He recognised that relying on seed propagation, grafting, and cutting was not sufficient, and that tissue culture – a relatively new technology that he was an expert on – could be the answer. He embarked on a mission to develop high yielding varieties of cashew in order to benefit these sections of society.

At the time, there was already a cashew research station in Ullal, near Mangalore, but Fr. Leo was told that the scientists deputed there were desperate to be transferred because they were unused to the intense rains and severe humidity of the seaside town. Dr. Swaminathan also believed that as a Jesuit priest untethered by aspirations for promotions and transfers, Fr. Leo was uniquely placed to do justice to this overlooked area of research.

Convinced, Fr. Leo established his Laboratory of Applied Biology at the Jesuit-run St. Joseph's College in Bangalore in 1975. This was nearly a decade before the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) came to be.

However, five years later, he was appointed principal at another Jesuit college, St. Aloysius in Mangalore. While Mangalore was his hometown and St. Aloysius was where he had done all of his schooling, he dreaded the thought of sidelining research for administration. Fortunately, there was a room available for him to move his laboratory to.

His laboratory has operated there ever since, and is today headed by his former PhD student Shashikiran Nivas.

#### Top of his mind

Despite being a reluctant principal, Fr. Leo administered the college efficiently. Right from the start, he advocated for the inclusion of women in the college, which had been boys-only since it was founded in 1880. Not only did he have to convince a sceptical management and staff, he also had to ensure that the college infrastructure would adequately serve the needs of this new demographic.

In 1986, the college finally started admitting women; today they constitute more than 50% of the staff and the students there.

Of the many responsibilities he



(Clockwise from the top) Fr. Leo D'Souza; Fr. Leo at the Max Planck Institute in Cologne; A photograph from Fr. Leo's collection showing women working at a cashew processing plant. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

assumed over the course of his career, one was particularly close to his heart: the establishment and running of the Aloysians' Boys' Home, a rehabilitation centre and home for abandoned, traumatised, and orphaned children, many of whose parents were in prison. He was proud of the lives the boys who grew up there built for themselves.

In one of his essays, he wrote about how driving a bus was a dream for many of the boys, and of being heartened that so many of them fulfilled it by becoming bus drivers in Mangalore.

He recalled another example of a former resident of the home named Nelson, who completed a course in vocational training and had secured a job as training officer in air-conditioning and refrigeration at a technical institute.

Even as he navigated administrative challenges and was involved in many other activities, his laboratory was always on top of Fr. Leo's mind. He received approval from Mangalore University to start a PhD programme, which was (and remains) an unconventional and notable achievement for an undergraduate college.

His first PhD student was a young woman from a village in Kundapura in Udupi district, named Icy D'Silva. Together, the duo began attempts to grow tissue culture cashew plants, which would enable large scale rapid multiplication of trees.

#### From lab to soil

Conventional breeding techniques such as seed propagation and cross-breeding can help improve plant varieties and their yield, but they are time consuming and the quality is difficult to maintain.

On the other hand, tissue culture, also known as micropropagation, allows for the development of a whole cashew plant from a small tissue sample. The controlled conditions in a laboratory allow for the technique to be used *en masse*, with the guarantee that the resulting plantlets will be genetically identical to the original plant.

Several scientists in tropical countries, including India, were trying to revolutionise the cashew industry with a reliable tissue culture protocol but this proved exceedingly difficult. Compared to related species such as mango and pistachio trees, cashew is recalcitrant to tissue culture, presumably because it releases phenolic compounds into the culture medium, eventually killing the



Fr. Leo D'Souza was among the early pioneers of plant tissue culture research in India, making significant contributions at a time when the discipline was still in its formative stage

PRAMOD TANDON  
Plant biotechnologist

developing cells. In the few cases that researchers were successful in generating plantlets in the lab, the plantlets would die soon after being transferred into the soil.

It took close to 10 years, but in 1990, D'Silva, under the guidance of Fr. Leo, accomplished her goal. In a paper published in the journal *Plant Cell, Tissue and Organ Culture* in 1992, the pair described how they had generated cashew plantlets, successfully transferred them to soil, and established them in the field.

One of Fr. Leo's regrets was that he couldn't secure the cooperation of scientists at the cashew research station in Ullal in taking the work forward. He believed this came in the way of science fulfilling its potential with respect to improving cashew as well as the livelihoods of people who cultivated and processed it.

#### International quality

Over the years, Fr. Leo's lab also conducted important work with coconuts, ferns, algae, ragi, and ornamental and medicinal plants. Besides cashew, the team managed to micropropagate a range of other trees.

Part of Fr. Leo's legacy is the avenue of tissue cultured trees growing in the St. Aloysius (now a deemed-to-be university) campus today.

Many of his students went on to pursue research in academia as well as in industry, in India and abroad. One is Smitha Hegde, a leading pteridologist (pteridology is the science of ferns) and currently the research director at the Centre for Advanced Learning, Mangaluru. Dr. Hegde pointed out that Fr. Leo made sure to give his students every opportunity to present and share their work in conferences abroad. She herself got the chance to present her work on ferns in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in 1995.

"These experiences helped us realise that our work was of international quality." She fondly remembered their small group of researchers strutting around campus feeling like "little Einsteins".

Dr. Hegde also recalled Fr. Leo being a champion of women's empowerment.

"If he saw only men on stage, even for a simple function, he would ask 'where is the woman representation?' Not only did he want women to get the chance to work, he was also very keen that our work got visibility," she said.

#### Used to explaining himself

Though he taught at St. Joseph's College in Bengaluru for a relatively short period of time, his students still remember him. Notable among them is Jyotsna Dhawan, a leading cell biologist and Emeritus Scientist at the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad.

"What strikes me now is that there was no dichotomy in his teaching of a scientific discipline rooted in the tenets of evolutionary theory and his identity as a man of the cloth," she wrote to this reporter upon hearing of Fr. Leo's death. "Along with Fr. Cecil Saldanha, these Jesuit botanists gave us a firm grounding in plant science for which I am forever grateful."

Reconciling these two identities came effortlessly to Fr. Leo, but he constantly encountered raised eyebrows along the way.

"People stared at me the first time I entered the Max Planck Institute in Cologne," he said in an interview with this reporter a few months before he passed away. "I thought they were staring at my brown skin, but it was my clerical collar."

So Fr. Leo was used to explaining himself.

"A priest is not only to work in the church. His work must have a value for other people, especially poor people," he affirmed in the same interview.

When one of his colleagues in Germany asked him why he didn't stick to the altar and pulpit, Fr. Leo replied: "Had Gregor Mendel [the Austrian monk who is often known as the father of genetics] followed this principle, then the scientific world would have lost an important scientist who discovered the basics of genetics and plant breeding."

(Nandita Jayaraj is an independent science journalist and co-founder of the feminist science media project Labhopping. nandita.jayaraj@gmail.com)



A palaeontologist measures a footprint of a dinosaur at Bolivia on July 21, 2016. REUTERS

## New AI tool helps identify dinosaur footprints

Reuters

**F**ootprints are among the most common kind of dinosaur fossils. Sometimes scientists find a single, lonely footprint. Sometimes they come across a chaotic jumble of tracks resembling a dance floor. But identifying which dinosaur left which track has been notoriously difficult.

Researchers have now developed a method harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in pinpointing the type of dinosaur responsible for the tracks, based on eight traits of a given footprint.

"This is important because it provides an objective way to classify and compare tracks, reducing reliance on subjective human interpretation," physicist Gregor Hartmann of the Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin research centre in Germany, lead author of the research published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* said.

**The algorithm analysed 1,974 footprint silhouettes spanning 150 million years, with the AI discerning eight features that explained variance in the shapes**

Dinosaurs left behind numerous kinds of fossilised remains, including bones, teeth and claws, impressions of their skin, faeces and vomit, undigested remains in their stomach, eggshells and the remnants of nests. But footprints often are more abundant and can tell scientists a lot, including the type of environment a dinosaur inhabited and, when other tracks are present, the types of animals that shared an ecosystem.

The new method was honed with an analysis by the algorithm of 1,974 footprint silhouettes spanning 150 million years of dinosaur history, with the AI discerning eight features that explained variance in the shapes of these tracks.

These features included: overall load and shape, reflecting the foot's ground contact area; the position of loading; the spread of the toes; how the toes attach to the foot; heel position; the load from the heel; the relative emphasis of toes versus heel; and shape discrepancy between left and right sides of the track.

Many of the footprints previously had been identified as a specific kind of dinosaur by experts. After the algorithm identified the differentiation traits, the experts charted how those corresponded to the various kinds of dinosaurs believed to have made the tracks in order to guide identification of future tracks.

"The problem is that identifying who made a fossilised footprint is inherently uncertain," Hartmann said. "The shape of a track depends on many factors beyond the animal itself, including what the dinosaur was doing at the time, the moisture and type of the substrate, how the footprint was buried by sediment, and how it was altered by erosion over millions of years. As a result, the same dinosaur can leave very different-looking tracks," Hartmann added.

One intriguing conclusion made by the algorithm involved images it examined of seven small, three-toed footprints about 210 million years old from South Africa. It validated a prior assessment by scientists that these closely resemble those of birds, even though they are 60 million years older than the earliest-known avian fossils.

"This, of course, doesn't prove they were made by birds," University of Edinburgh palaeontologist and study senior author Steve Brusatte said, which he said perhaps were made by previously unknown dinosaurs ancestral to birds or by dinosaurs that merely had bird-like feet. "So we have to find an explanation for it," he said.

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# Text & Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

**The value of private investments attracted by J&K since FY23**

**14,948** in ₹ crore. Jammu and

Kashmir has drawn private investments worth ₹14,948 crore over the last four financial years, creating 64,515 jobs in the industrial sector, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary stated. PTI

**The amount siphoned off through digital frauds**

**54,000** In crore.

The top Court on Monday termed the siphoning of over ₹54,000 crore through digital frauds as outright "robbery or dacoity." The Supreme Court noted the amount exceeds the budgets of several smaller States. PTI

**Domicile certificate applications in the past one-and-a-half months**

**18,605** The Kolkata Municipal

Corporation has recorded a surge in domicile certificate applications, receiving 18,605 requests over the past one-and-a-half months. Officials linked the spike to the SIR of electoral rolls. PTI

**J&K's projected hydro power capacity for the next five years**

**7,300** in mega watts.

Jammu and Kashmir's hydropower capacity is expected to expand substantially over the next five years, with total installed capacity projected to reach 7,314.85 MW by 2030-31, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said. PTI

**Amount announced by India to Seychelles for development**

**175** In \$ million. India has

announced development assistance of \$175 million to Seychelles following wide-ranging discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Seychelles President Patrick Herminie. PTI

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# What is the new RRTS project in Kerala?

How different is the Regional Rapid Transit System from the earlier SilverLine project? What has technocrat E. Sreedharan claimed? How does the RRTS improve last-mile connectivity? Will it also integrate existing and envisioned metro rail projects? What is its estimated cost?

## EXPLAINER

**Dhinesh Kallungal**

**The story so far:**

Proposals for a high-speed rail system in Kerala have once again snowballed into a controversy in the public sphere, with the Kerala government, in its latest move, approving a Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) for high-speed rail travel within the State, from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod. The Kerala government, which had earlier submitted a semi-high-speed rail project (SilverLine), has now switched to the new RRTS due to the alleged "indifference" of the Centre towards the State's demands. In the meantime, technocrat E. Sreedharan claimed that he had been working on a high-speed rail project for Kerala, a claim that was confirmed by Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, though the latter has not provided the details of this project.

**What is the new RRTS project?**

RRTS is a viable and acceptable high-speed rail system, which has been successfully implemented in the Delhi-Meerut corridor, demonstrating its feasibility in India, including its integration with the Meerut Metro. The main highlight of the RRTS is that it can be integrated with existing and proposed metro rail projects in Kerala to improve last-mile connectivity and reduce reliance on private vehicles, along with linking airports. Specially designed train sets can be operated through the corridor at a speed of 160-180 kmph, with short station intervals.

The new project will also be more environmentally conscious, as most of it will be built on pillars, with embankments and tunnels used only where necessary. In contrast, the SilverLine project was primarily designed as an embankment model (at ground level), which faced significant criticism in densely populated



**Fresh prospects:** Activists of the Kerala Sarvodaya Mandalam staging a protest demanding the State government to give up the SilverLine project in Kozhikode in 2022. K. RAGESH

areas. The viaduct model of the RRTS will significantly reduce land acquisition, prevent the obstruction of natural water flow, and mitigate public opposition witnessed in certain areas.

Moreover, the RRTS is proposed to be integrated with urban metro projects. By enabling integration with the existing Kochi Metro and the envisioned metros in Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode, last-mile connectivity will be improved. Further, the four existing international airports in Kerala will also be linked with the project, creating a unified multi-modal transit system. The project can be extended to Coimbatore via Palakkad, to Kanyakumari from Thiruvananthapuram, and Mangalur

from Kasaragod through inter-State cooperation.

**What is the construction plan?**

Kerala has conceived the project for a total length of 583 km, from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod, in four phases. Phase 1 will see the construction of a 284-km stretch, christened the Travancore Line (Thiruvananthapuram to Thrissur), which will include the Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi Metros, with targeted completion by 2033. This will be followed by Phase 2, the Malabar Line (from Thrissur to Kozhikode, along with the Kozhikode Metro), Phase 3, the Kannur Line (from Kozhikode to Kannur), and Phase 4, the

Kasaragod Line (from Kannur to Kasaragod). Through such parallel phased execution, a complete State-wide RRTS network (including Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode Metros) can be completed within 10 years (by 2036), according to Kerala government sources.

**How will it be funded?**

The project is estimated to cost approximately ₹1,92,780 crore. However, the final cost can only be determined upon completion of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) after finalising alignments, technical models, signalling systems, and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) models. The funding model of the Kerala RRTS would be that of the Delhi RRTS, with a funding pattern of 20% by the State government, 20% by the Central government, and 60% via long-term loans from international financial institutions.

**What are the major differences between the three rail projects?**

Normally, a high-speed rail system is designed for sustained cruise speed with very few intermediate stops, while the RRTS train sets are optimised for fast acceleration and braking with more intermediate stops, and can also tolerate curves to some extent and are suited for urban transportation. In Kerala, both the high-speed rail proposed by Mr. Sreedharan, with 22 intermediate stops, and the SilverLine projects, with 11 stops, were conceived for speeds of up to 200 kmph, while the RRTS is planned to operate at a speed range of 160-180 kmph.

However, the cost of RRTS will be significantly high as it requires more land in urban areas as part of metro integration. On the other hand, the cost of the SilverLine project was estimated at ₹63,941 crore (as per the 2019 estimate) while Mr. Sreedharan's high-speed rail project was estimated at ₹1 lakh crore.

The alignment of the three projects would be the same, except for some changes for the RRTS in urban areas where it has to be designed close to the towns.

## THE GIST

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# What is the current controversy around Form 7?

What has the Congress alleged with respect to Form 7? How many deletions have been reported?

**Sae Pande**

**The story so far:**

In the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), bulk applications are being filed for the deletion of names from the draft electoral rolls. On January 29, the Congress, in a letter to the Election Commission of India (EC), alleged that the form was being misused through "systemic and coordinated efforts" to delete names of eligible voters and embolden BJP's efforts to wrongfully gain electoral advantage. The Hindu's reporting from Rajasthan and Gujarat also found individuals who said they had not submitted the Form 7 applications purportedly signed by them.

**What is Form 7?**

Form 7 is used for objecting to the inclusion of another person's or one's own name on the electoral roll on specific grounds such as death, duplication or

shifting of residence. It can also be used to object to voters who are ineligible due to age, citizenship or misrepresentation. As per Section 13(2) of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, framed under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, "every objection to the inclusion of a name in the roll shall be (a) in Form 7 and (b) preferred only by a person whose name is already included in that roll". Booth Level Agents (BLAs) can also file objections. Earlier, only persons from the same booth/station were allowed to file an objection but in 2022, the EC amended Form 7 to allow any voter in a constituency to object, widening its ambit. However, to prevent misuse, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) is required to mandatorily verify all claims if an individual files more than five objections.

Once a Form 7 application is received, Booth Level Officers (BLO) are required to conduct physical verification of the

voter's address and eligibility. In cases of death, verification involves confirmation signatures by three neighbours and a death certificate. If the voter is found absent, the BLO must make three physical visits to confirm whether the person has shifted. The concerned voter is then issued a notice for a hearing. Appeals against the ERO's decision can be made to the district magistrate within 15 days of publication of the updated list.

**How extensive is the ongoing SIR?**

According to the EC, more than 50.94 crore enumeration forms have been distributed since the launch of Phase II of the SIR, covering 99.94% of the nearly 51 crore voters included in this phase. The SIR is currently underway in Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. The revision follows a tight

schedule, and against this compressed timeline, the scale of objections and deletions sought through Form 7 has raised concerns about procedural fairness and administrative capacity. According to the EC, the names of 6.5 crore electors were removed from the draft rolls of nine States and three Union Territories (UTs) as part of the ongoing SIR. Before the revision, these States and UTs had 51 crore voters; after publication of the draft rolls, the number fell to 44.4 crore. EC officials said those removed were placed in the 'ASD' category - Absent, Shifted and Dead/Duplicate. The highest deletions were reported from Uttar Pradesh (2.89 crore), followed by Tamil Nadu (97 lakh), and Gujarat (74 lakh).

**What is the way ahead?**

At the heart of the controversy is the bulk submission of Form 7 applications by anonymous or fraudulent actors seeking mass deletion of voters from electoral rolls in the ongoing SIR. Filing a false declaration is a punishable offence under Section 32 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, attracting imprisonment of up to one year or a fine or both. Critics argue that 'if remained unchecked this will lead to the disenfranchisement of lakhs of voters, especially those belonging to the backward, marginalised communities'.

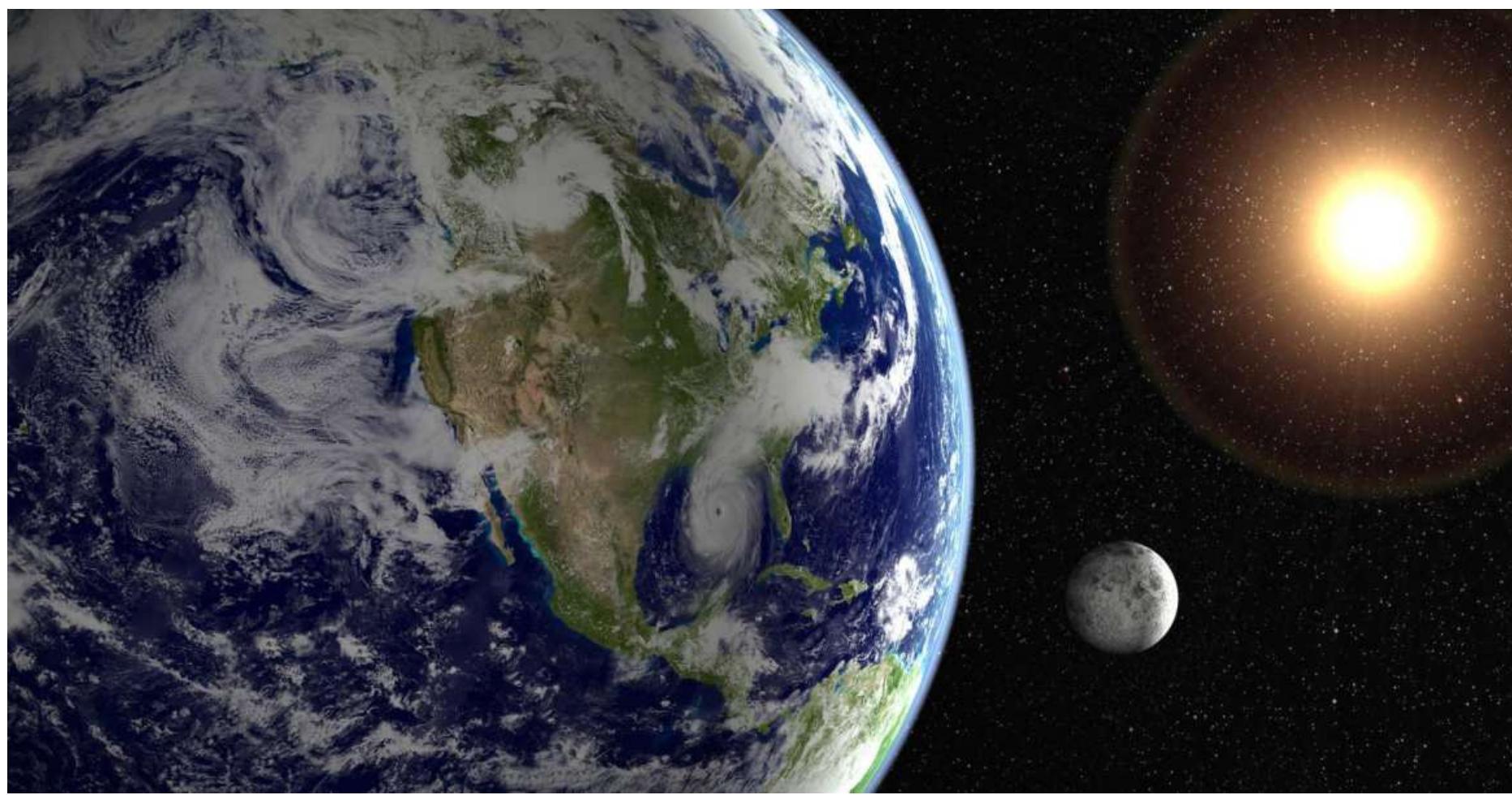
Sae Pande is a freelance writer.

## THE GIST

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**BUILDING BLOCKS**

GETTY IMAGES

# On gravity's role in the earth's journey through space

Revisiting the significance of gravity as it keeps mankind grounded and enables earth's rapid movement through space at 1,07,000 kilometres per hour, emphasising the remarkable journey of life amidst the vast mysteries of the universe

**Adhip Agarwala**

A fresh year has just started, and we are already a month old. Year endings and startings are always occasions to ponder. Here in IIT Kanpur, where some of us teach, the first week of January is always hectic. A new semester just started, students are back after winter breaks, and people are rushing through foggy mornings towards their classes.

As people meet on the way, we invariably greet each other 'Happy new year'. However, if you belong to that category of people, who have felt that last year wasn't really that remarkable, let me try to convince you otherwise. The secret, as always, lies in the physics behind.

#### The discovery of gravity

As the common folklore states, Isaac Newton, about 400 years back, discovered gravity while sitting beneath an apple tree. That things attract each other just because they have some weight is quite extraordinary. And we see this everyday – when we fall, we fall towards the floor and not towards someone else (unless, of course you are falling in love). This is because, on earth, the heaviest thing around us is the earth itself.

In fact all of us, animals, humans, oceans and even our air is essentially stuck to this massive piece of toffee-like liquid filled rock which we call earth. All life, our leaders, their wars, are essentially the result of this cohabitation – the result of gravity.

But then, when two things attract because of gravity, it's not necessary for them to get stuck to each other. A thing attracted to another may decide to just revolve around it. In the language of physics, we say this is when the

gravitational pull acts as the centripetal force. Centripetal force is a force which acts towards a centre.

#### Roller coaster

That pulling something towards you can rotate it is not something unusual. For instance, imagine you are tying a strong rope to the seat of a kid riding a bicycle and try to pull the cycle towards you. As you pull, instead of the cycle coming directly at you, it will make the cycle circle around you. If you continue to do so, the cycle may make a full turn. Here your pull acts like a centripetal force. And this is what the earth does to the moon through gravitational pull. The moon is attracted by the gravitational force of earth, but it makes the moon revolve around us. This very behaviour is repeated by the earth and the sun.

The earth takes one whole year to make a complete revolution around the sun. Can you guess how much distance the earth travels in that one year? It's about 1,000,000,000 kilometres. If one travels from Delhi to Chennai – that's about 2,500 kms. And if one plans to travel via car and drive it at a high speed of 100 km per hour (all the time, with no breaks and no toll booth stops), it will take approximately a day. Now imagine travelling that same distance, 4,00,000 times. How much time would you take? About 1,000 years.

Well, earth covers it in just 365 days, that is one year. The earth moves at an extraordinary speed of 1,07,000 kilometres per hour. No roller coaster can ride you at such high speeds.

But who or what is fuelling the earth to continue on this speed? After all, even to maintain a car at 100kms/hr, one needs to keep supplying it with oil (one of the reasons why many countries are obsessed

with oil).

#### Friction and aether

The reason one needs to supply oil to our car even to maintain it at some speed is because the road has friction. If we just leave the car on its own at some speed, it will eventually come to a stand-still. This friction is caused by the surroundings which pushes back a bit to anything which tries to move due to other forces. For instance, a car may feel it from the road, a bird by the air, a fish by the water it is in.

But then what about earth? Are planets or even the sun moving in some liquid?

This was a question which puzzled scientists for a long time. While we now know that the earth lies in vacuum – which means essentially nothing – at some point people thought that the earth and all celestial objects are in an invisible material called "aether".

Michelson and Morley, two American scientists, did an experiment 140 years back (in 1887) trying to detect aether. The result is considered one of the most famous "failed" experiments: experiments which disprove something it was designed to prove. They showed that aether doesn't exist.

The earth thus continues to move at this extraordinary speed without anything to resist it or slow it down. And as it does, it continues to rotate around the sun.

#### The advent of space study

The study of planets, galaxies and the way they form is called astrophysics. One of the most celebrated Indian physicists working in this area was Prof. Jayant Narlikar who passed away last year. Apart from being a researcher, he wrote many science stories. He also became the founding director of the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics

(IUCAA) in Pune, an institute dedicated to astrophysics research in India and was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2004 by the Government of India.

Apart from being a cosmologist who came up with theories of how the universe came along, he also did experiments to disprove many of our superstitions which arise from celestial events. If you have a free weekend, and want to learn more about astrophysics and our everyday unscientific superstitions, consider watching "Brahmand" a TV series which was written by Prof. Narlikar which ran in Doordarshan between 1994-95. The episodes are now available on the YouTube channel of Doordarshan National.

One may still wonder how did scientists really disprove the existence of aether? You may also wonder if we are able to explain all the things we see in the night sky – the stars, how they form, how they die. Well, it turns out there are many things we still don't understand and if you are interested to learn more, you will need to learn physics, for example in an institute like ours, where there are undergraduate programmes in it.

Next time, on a serene morning, if you are staring at a water pond, as birds chirp next to you, wondering how calm everything around you is, imagine for a second how you are really on a rollercoaster traveling in space at an extraordinary speed.

And when this year ends; even if your regular earthly life has been ordinary, don't forget to congratulate yourself, and your fellow life forms on earth, on the extraordinary space travel you all have together completed.

*Adhip Agarwala is an assistant professor of physics at IIT Kanpur.*

## THE DAILY QUIZ

Celebrated South African writer and Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee was born on February 9, 1940. A quiz on his acclaimed career and literary works

#### Mohammed Hidhayat

##### QUESTION 1

Mr. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) is a metafictional rewriting of which famous 18th century adventure novel?

##### QUESTION 2

In his 1994 work of fiction, *The Master of Petersburg*, the author employs which real-life Russian writer, renowned for his existentialist themes, as the protagonist.

##### QUESTION 3

Mr. Coetzee was the first author to be conferred with the \_\_\_\_\_ twice. (Hint: a prestigious literary award) Fill in the blank.

##### QUESTION 4

Which character created by the author delivers lectures comparing animal

slaughter to the Holocaust? The recurring persona first appeared in his 1994 book *The Lives of Animals* and later became the protagonist of his 2003 novel bearing her name.

##### QUESTION 5

*Summertime* (2009) marks the final instalment in a trilogy of quasi-autobiographical works from the academic. What are the other two books in the series?

##### QUESTION 6

John Maxwell Coetzee received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2003. He became the second South African author, after \_\_\_\_\_, to receive the honour in the field. Fill in the blank.

##### QUESTION 7

What was the title of the acclaimed author's first book?



##### Visual question:

This Coetzee novel was adapted for the screen with Johnny Depp, Mark Rylance and Robert Pattinson in key roles. Name the novel.

**Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. The reason why it is called the Second Red Scare. **Ans:** Because it was the second major wave of anti-communist fear in the U.S.; the first occurred roughly between 1917 and 1920.

2. This U.S. presidential order intensified suspicion of disloyalty among federal employees. **Ans:** Executive Order 9835, establishing the Federal Employees Loyalty Program.

3. Number of dismissals and resignations from loyalty investigations. **Ans:** More than 2,700 dismissals and about 12,000 resignations.

4. This congressional body investigated alleged communist influence in government and society. **Ans:** The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)

5. McCarthy framed the ideological struggle like so in his February 9, 1950, speech. **Ans:** As a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity."

**Visual:** Name this film. **Ans:** good night, and good luck

**Early Birds:** Piyali Tuli | Sudhir Thapa | Prashansa Lohumi | Arun Kumar Singh | Jagrati Shukla



## FROM THE ARCHIVES

# Know your English

**S. Upendran**

"What is the meaning and origin of the idiom "to burn one's boat"? (M. Ratnasabhapathi, Madurai)"

This expression came into popular use in the late 1800s. In the old days, it was common practice among military commanders to burn their boats/ships once they landed on foreign soil. They did this so that the soldiers wouldn't get the idea of running away if things didn't go according to plan. Once their boats were burnt, they had no means of returning to their homeland. The soldiers could not run away from battle either because they had no boats to run back to. The only way to get back home was to defeat the enemy in battle. So, when the officers burnt the boats, they were cutting off all escape routes. And that's what the expression "to burn one's boats" means: to commit oneself to a course of action and in the process block all escape routes.

Raju knew that by picking a fight with the Chairman he was burning his boats. I decided not to resign. But unfortunately, I had burnt my boats by telling my boss that I was leaving. Think before saying no to Bala. You might end up burning your boats.

The idiom "burn one's bridges" means the same as "burn one's boats".

**What is the difference between "advice" and "advise"?** (V. Krishna Kumar, Perambur, Chennai)

"Advice" is the noun and "advise" is the verb. This is a distinction that is maintained in British English. The Americans tend to spell both forms "advice". There are several words in English where the noun and verb forms are spelt differently. Here are a few examples: practice (noun), practise (verb); device (noun), devise (verb).

Devi gave me excellent advice. Kavitha never goes to Mala for advice. The doctor advised me not to eat sweets. Mahidhar was advised to go to Singapore.

The noun and verb forms are pronounced differently. The "ce" in "advice" is pronounced like the 's' in "see", "sit", and "sip". The 'se' in "advise" is like the 'z' in "zip", "zoo", and "zero". You must remember that "advice" is an uncountable noun, so its plural form is "advice". You cannot say "Let me give you an advice" or "He gave me good advices". The correct way of saying the same thing is:

Let me give you a piece of advice. He gave me some good advice.

**What is the difference in meaning between "heartfelt" and "hearty"?** (Dharmeshwaran, Guduvancherry)

Something that is "hearty" is usually loud, cheerful and friendly.

The band played hearty songs last evening. Rahul has a hearty laugh.

A person who is "hearty" is energetic, enthusiastic and cheerful, sometimes in a manner that is annoying to people.

I wanted peace and quiet, unfortunately, I was surrounded by hearty cricket enthusiasts. Ajay is one of those hearty fellows who makes you feel old before your time.

Heartfelt, on the other hand, means sincere. When something is "heartfelt", you feel it deeply and strongly.

Please accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Published in The Hindu on July 13, 1999.

## Word of the day

### Adulation:

servile flattery; exaggerated and hypocritical praise

**Usage:** His skills have brought him adulation and riches.

### Pronunciation:

newsth.live/adulationpro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ædʒʊləfən/, /ædʒvɪləfən/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'