



பள்ளிச் சிறார்களின் பசிபிணி போக்கும்
முதலமைச்சரின் காலை உணவுத் திட்டம்
37,416 அரசு மற்றும் அரசு உதவி பெறும் தொடக்கப் பள்ளிகளில்
நாள்தோறும் 20.59 இலட்சம் மாணவர்கள் பயன்பெறுகிறார்கள்!
தமிழ்நாட்டின் வளர்ச்சிப் யணத்தில் ஒருவரையும் மின்தங்க விடமாட்டோம்!



CHINESE INVESTMENT

Govt. mulling revision of regulations: Thakur

BUSINESS » PAGE 13

SAFEGUARDING AN ECOSYSTEM
Wetlands as a national public good

India needs consistent implementation of laws

EDITORIAL » PAGE 8



ATTACK AFTERMATH

Pakistani forces kill 177 militants in Balochistan

WORLD » PAGE 14

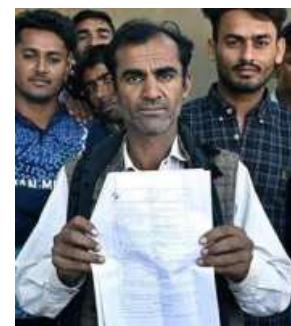
Bulk applications for deleting voter names in Rajasthan's Barmer

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
BARMER

Subhan Khan, a BJP worker at Janpaliya village in Barmer district of Rajasthan, was stunned when his booth-level officer informed him that an application had been filed seeking the deletion of his name from the State's electoral rolls through Form 7.

Hundreds of such forms have surfaced in this and certain other villages of this district. While booth-level agents of the BJP in whose names these forms had been filed denied signing them, many said the forms had created a furore in the villages, and worried voters had sought answers from them.

"How can I file an application for deletion of my own name when I am very much alive and residing in this place?" Mr. Khan asked this reporter, sitting outside his tiny grocery shop



Subhan Khan says he has not filed any forms which feature his name. R.V. MOORTHY

in the village barely 111 km from the India-Pakistan border. As a MLA himself, he has been keeping tabs on duplicate entries and deceased and shifted voters in his booth after the Election Commission's special intensive revision exercise got under way in October.

CONTINUED ON
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OUTRAGE IN GUJARAT
» PAGE 12

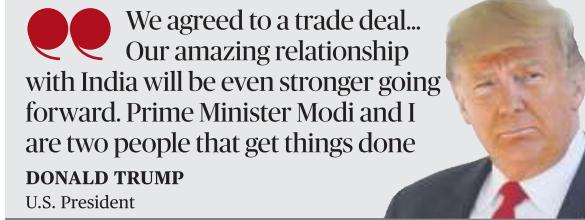
U.S. tariff on India reduced to 18%, say Modi and Trump

After a phone call with Prime Minister, U.S. President says the countries have 'agreed to a trade deal', and India will stop buying oil from Russia

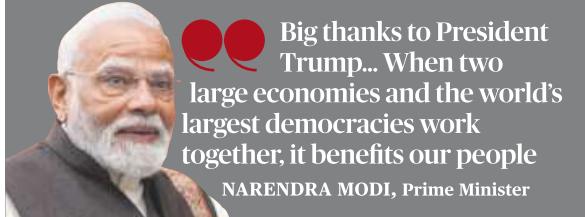
Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Indicating a positive turn in a bilateral relationship that had been under strain because of multiple issues, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that "Made in India" products would "now" attract a "reduced tariff of 18%" in the U.S., after a telephone conversation with President Donald Trump on Monday.

The move is expected to significantly reduce the impact of the 50% penalty tariffs that Mr. Trump had imposed on India in August 2025. Minutes earlier, Mr. Trump had announced on the social media platform Truth Social that In-



DONALD TRUMP
U.S. President



NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

dia and the U.S. had "agreed to a trade deal". He said India had agreed to "stop buying Russian oil" and would reduce "Tariffs and Non Tariff Barriers against the U.S. to zero". The External Affairs Mi-

nistry is yet to respond to some of the questions related to the declaration and the details shared by Mr. Trump.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

NEARBY



Tamil Biennale to be held in Jan. 2027: Stalin

CHENNAI
A "Tamil Biennale" will be held in January 2027 as part of efforts to make the State a destination for art and cultural tourism, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said at the Tamil Nadu Global Tourism Summit 2026 here on Monday. » PAGE 6

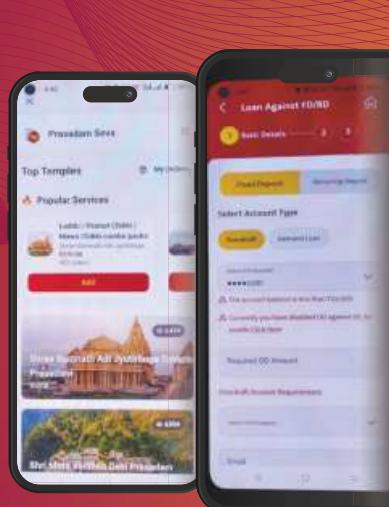
Deepam row: Madurai Collector apologises to HC

MADRAS
Madurai Collector K.J. Praveen Kumar tendered an unconditional apology before the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court in the Thirupparankundram deepam issue. » PAGE 6



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IN BRIEF

Thyagaraja Utsavam
celebrated in PSBB school

The Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan (PSBB) Group of Schools organised a Thyagaraja Utsavam as part of the centenary celebrations of the late educationist Mrs. YGP in the city on Sunday. V.V. Sundaram of the Cleveland Thyagaraja festival, participating as the chief guest, said, the encouragement and values imparted at PSBB has made the students to shine academically as individuals and also as ambassadors of Indian art and culture. The Pancharatna Kritis of Saint Thyagaraja was sung by a group of Carnatic musicians comprising Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Sangita Kalanidhi R.K. Shriramkumar, 'Ghatam' S. Karthick and the fraternity of PSBB students. Mr. Shriramkumar, a distinguished PSBB alumnus, was felicitated at the function.

Two students drown, one missing at Kovalam beach

The body of two students of a private college who had drowned at Kovalam beach on Sunday evening were retrieved by the police. Search operations are continuing to trace the third student who had been missing. According to Kelambakkam police, the deceased were identified as K. Ritheshkumar Prajapathi, 20, from Jharkhand and M. Noyal Jackup Melvin, 23, from Mumbai. The missing student has been identified as M. Mukesh, 19, from Kovilpatti. Police said a group of five students had gone to Kovalam beach on Sunday. Three of them entered the sea despite not knowing how to swim, and were soon caught in strong waves.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on The Hindu paper (epaper, thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (February 3, Tuesday), the following explainers are available:

- Why are tribals protesting in Maharashtra? newsthrive/tribalmarchexp
- Gorillas are what we want to be: conservation leader newsthrive/gorillasave

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GREATER CHENNAI CORPORATION
ZONE-9.

Z.O.IX.C.NO.E2/00686/2026
Two Cover System - Short E-Tender Notice
Short E-Tender are invited by the Assistant Commissioner, Zone-9 for the following works as per details furnished below:
Proposed Construction of Community Hall at Ammaippan Lane, Royapettah in Division 118, Unit-24, Zone-9 (Under Thousand Lights Constituency MLA Fund)
Work Value: 218.47 Lakhs EMD Rs.2,20,000/-
Due Date and Time for Submission of tender : 09.02.2026 upto 3.00 p.m.
Tender Opening date and Time for Submission of Tender : 10.02.2026 @ 3.30 p.m.
For more information see https://tntenders.gov.in
DIPR / 653 / Tender / 2026 Assistant Commissioner - IX

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e-TENDER-INVITATION FOR BIDS No. 33/2025-26, Dated: 30.01.2026
Sl. No. Name of work App. Value Rs. in Lakhs Sale Period Opening
1. Construction of additional classroom (5 Nos) at Ground floor and one auditorium at First floor at MMA Government Higher Secondary School at Pallavaram in Chengalpattu (S.E/C/CD/082/2026)
₹ 154.66+ GST @ 18% 04.02.2026 to 12.02.2026
2. Construction of class room, study cum dining hall, additional toilets for Boys Hostel, bathrooms for Girls Hostel, ramp for classroom at GHSS Model School, Saidapet in Chennai city. (S.E/C/CD/116/2026)
₹ 143.94+ GST @ 18% 10.02.2026 to 12.02.2026
For other details visit https://tntenders.gov.in and TNPHC website www.tnphc.com
Superintendent Engineer / CC
TNPHC Ltd., Chennai.
DIPR/656/Tender/2026
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विष, गोल, दार्तन एवं अन्य विद्युत उपकरणों की विकास एवं उत्पादन के लिए
मुख्य नियंत्रक संस्था द्वारा दिया गया विभिन्न नियंत्रक, टेलिकॉम - 0120-2223441
फैक्टरी अधिकारी: अमरपाल सिंह, फैक्टरी नं. 4, बाला अंडर रोड, लखनऊ, उत्तर प्रदेश - 226001
Ref: 231/BRIDCUL-1030/Elec/26 Dated: 02/02/2026
E-TENDERING

On behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand, E-Tenders are invited by Managing Director BRIDCUL, from the Contractors registered with BRIDCUL only in Category-III (Upto 2 Cr.) for the work given as below:-

S.No.	Ref No.	Name Of Project	Estimated Cost (In lac Including GST)	Earnest Money (In Lac)	Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.)	Time Period
01	BRIDCUL/HQ/HLD/76/20 25-26)	Internal Electrification & Allied works for Examination Hall at Govt. Degree College, Haldighati, Distt. Nainital.	40.91	0.82	5000 + 18% GST	12 Months
02	BRIDCUL/HQ/HLD/80/20 25-26)	Internal Electrification & Allied works for Examination Hall at Govt. Degree College, Tanakpur, Distt. Champawat.	103.16	2.06	5000 + 18% GST	12 Months

For above tenders, document download start date is 03.02.2026 and Bid submission end date is 17.02.2026 at 1500 Hrs. The details of e-tender of above work can be obtained directly from website https://uktenders.gov.in Changes, if any will be intimated only through website https://uktenders.gov.in DGM(HQ)

Ambattur residents renew long-pending demand for better healthcare, education

Residents want a State-run hospital and educational institutions to be built in the area. Ambattur MLA says land has been identified to construct a government college, higher secondary school

CITY MATTERS

K. Lakshmi
CHENNAI

Residents of Ambattur have renewed some of their long-pending demands, including the establishment of a government hospital and government-run educational institutions, to meet the locality's growing healthcare and education needs.

With rapid development in the area, long-standing demands, particularly in healthcare and education, have resurfaced among residents. Members of the Ambattur Makkal Kootamaippu (Ambattur Citizens' Collective) said a government hospital is essential for the fast-developing locality, as people otherwise have to travel to Kilpauk.

Residents recently staged a demonstration highlighting the long-pending demand for a government boys' higher secondary school or government arts college on the recently reclaimed government site spread over nearly 3.12 acre on Ambattur-Red Hills Road in Pudur.

S. Sundaramurthy, convenor, Ambattur Makkal Kootamaippu, said it has



Call for action: An activist says that there is no government college within a radius of 10-12 km. FILE PHOTO

been a demand for nearly three decades. There is no government college within a radius of 10-12 km. With the lack of adequate higher secondary facilities for boys in government schools in Ambattur, students have little choice but to travel to other areas such as Puzhal, Avadi, or Korattur.

He urged the government to establish government boys' higher secondary school or government arts college on the recently reclaimed government site spread over nearly 3.12 acre on Ambattur-Red Hills Road in Pudur.

Residents also pointed out the need for more play-

grounds to encourage sports activities in Ambattur. R. Gopi, CPI (M), Ambattur Area Secretary, said though there are a few open spaces, including in Mangalapuram, it is important to establish Corporation-owned playgrounds with galleries and facilities for various sports.

Though some schools in Kallikuppam, Athipet, and Chozhapuram have been upgraded to high school and higher secondary levels, a dedicated government boys' higher secondary school in Ambattur would spare students the need to travel long distances. Moreover, students seeking admissions to go-

vernment colleges have to travel to Kilpauk or Vyasarapadi, which lack proper direct transport connectivity, Mr. Gopi said.

Responding to residents' demands, Ambattur MLA Joseph Samuel said a five-acre temple land on Vanagaram Main Road, Athipattu has been identified for establishing a government college and government higher secondary school. Further steps would be taken to kick-start the projects. A decision on the infrastructure to be developed on the reclaimed land in Pudur would be taken once the court case is resolved and the land classification is finalised.

Schools upgraded

Various government schools, including in Korattur, Athipattu, and Mogappair, have been upgraded to accommodate higher secondary students. Additional buildings and facilities are coming up at the Athipattu school. A new playground with facilities such as a football ground and an athletics track is being developed at S.V. Nagar in Pudur at a cost of ₹7 crore, Mr. Samuel said.



Mohamed Rela, chairman, Rela Hospital, addressing presspersons the city on Monday. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

Wrist-based surgery for ruptured brain aneurysm performed

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A 60-year-old woman with a rare, wide-neck cerebral aneurysm was treated at Rela Hospital in the city.

Doctors used a Woven EndoBridge (WEB) device, inserted through a wrist artery, to block blood flow to the aneurysm and prevent further bleeding.

The patient was brought to the hospital with a sudden severe headache, loss of consciousness, and high blood pressure of 230/140 mmHg.

Emergency brain imaging, including CT scan and cerebrovascular neurosurgeon and neurointerventionist, with support from senior neurosurgeons Natesan Damodaran and Raman Rajagopal, clinical lead in neuroanaesthesia.

Doctors performed emergency embolisation

using the WEB device, a mesh-like implant placed directly inside the aneurysm to block blood flow, allowing it to clot and become inactive.

Unlike conventional approaches, the technique avoided open surgery, stents, and the need for dual antiplatelet medication.

The procedure was led by Muralidharan Vetivel, cerebrovascular neurosurgeon and neurointerventionist, with support from senior neurosurgeons Natesan Damodaran and Raman Rajagopal, clinical lead in neuroanaesthesia.

The patient is recovering well and has been moved out of the ICU.

Free eye camp to be held for senior citizens on February 5

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

TwinTech Healthcare Services will organise a free eye examination camp exclusively for senior citizens on Thursday. The camp will be held at

Kalpavriksha Seva Centre in West Mambalam from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. As pre-registration is mandatory, those interested should contact 9710485295 or email 7575india@gmail.com before Wednesday to enrol.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, D Gurumurthy, son of Thiru Dharmaraj, born on 25th April 1973 (District of Birth: Chennai), residing at Old No. 9, New No. 5, South Koviloor, Amman Kovil Street, Chintadripet, Chennai-600 002, shall henceforth be known as GURUMOORTHY D.Chennai, 7th October 2025.

I, G Suriyan, son of Thiru Gurumurthy, born on 3rd September 1997 (District of Birth: Chennai), residing at Old No. 9, New No. 5, South Koviloor, Amman Kovil Street, Chintadripet, Chennai-600 002, shall henceforth be known as GOVARDHAN DAVID. Chennai, 17th November 2024.

I, HAMSA Bai Rajendran, W/o Late M.Rengaraju, aged about 54 years, residing at No.12-A, G1, Anusha Gardens, Hemalal, Ngr. Swamys School Rd, Madanapanduram, Mugalavakkam, Ch-125, henceforth to be known as Hamsa Bai Rajendran. Vide affidavit dated 26/1/2024.

As Sri Ramesh Mallugunta (860993, Old Staff No: 77804), Senior Manager (u/s) about initiation of disciplinary action by issuance of Chargesheet bearing reference HRPRW/IRVC/DA-1/CS-52/2025 dated 21.10.2025 and affording opportunity of making his representation.

As Sri Ramesh Mallugunta (860993, Old Staff No: 77804), Senior Manager (u/s), Chennai Mint Branch (16012), Regional Office Chennai North, Circle Office, Chennai did not make any representation, the departmental enquiry in respect of the Chargesheet bearing reference HRPRW/IRVC/DA-1/CS-52/2025 dated 21.10.2025 was concluded ex parte on 09.01.2026 and findings of the Inquiring Authority dated 28.01.2026 were sent to his last known address at Nellore (Andhra Pradesh) vide registered / speed post on 30.01.2026 for his submissions. Doorstep delivery was also done at his Nellore address on 30.01.2026.

Through this publication he is given final opportunity to make his submissions at the below mentioned address within 5 days of this publication failing which it shall be deemed that he has no intention to make any submission and matter will be proceeded further accordingly.

DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY

PUBLIC NOTICE

Attention is invited to the public notice on 29.11.2025 in The Hindu, notifying Sri Ramesh Mallugunta (860993, Old Staff No: 77804), Senior Manager (u/s) about initiation of disciplinary action by issuance of Chargesheet bearing reference HRPRW/IRVC/DA-1/CS-52/2025 dated 21.10.2025 and affording opportunity of making his representation.

As Sri Ramesh Mallugunta (860993, Old Staff No: 77804), Senior Manager (u/s), Chennai Mint Branch (16012), Regional Office Chennai North, Circle Office, Chennai did not make any representation, the departmental enquiry in respect of the Chargesheet bearing reference HRPRW/IRVC/DA-1/CS-52/2025 dated 21.10.2025 was concluded ex parte on 09.01.2026 and findings of the Inquiring Authority dated 28.01.2026 were sent to his last known address at Nellore (Andhra Pradesh) vide registered / speed post on 30.01.2026 for his submissions. Doorstep delivery was also done at his Nellore address on 30.01.2026.

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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 04		
RISE 06:35	SET 18:11	
RISE 20:29	SET 08:15	
THURSDAY, FEB. 05		
RISE 06:35	SET 18:12	
RISE 21:19	SET 08:53	

Chennai Weather	max	min
Tiruvallur	30	19
Chennai Airport	31	22
Chennai City	30	24

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

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
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GCC to set up shelters for homeless persons recovering from illnesses

The civic body will identify land near hospitals to construct the shelters. It is also exploring the feasibility of establishing the facilities in buildings being constructed near tertiary care hospitals. Surveys to assess shelter gaps will begin soon, say officials

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI



Short of space: According to estimates, the city needs at least 30 more shelters for the homeless in various zones. FILE PHOTO

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) will establish recovery shelters to support homeless individuals, who are recovering from illness, by providing structured care, counselling, medical support, and reintegration services.

According to estimates, the city needs at least 30 additional shelters for the homeless in various zones of the GCC. The civic body will conduct a study to finalise the number of recovery shelters among the 30 shelters required in each zone. The civic body is likely to start identifying land near hospitals to construct

them. The civic body has not created any recovery shelter so far in the city. It is also exploring the feasibility of establishing recovery shelters in buildings being developed near major tertiary care hospitals. Additional land parcels are

expected to be identified for the development of recovery shelters near tertiary care and secondary care hospitals.

Mani Kandan, a homeless person in Royapettah, said many homeless residents had been taken di-

rectly from the hospitals to the roadside after they were being discharged. After the launch of recovery shelters, the GCC plans to accommodate those who cannot be sent to other facilities owing to existing medical conditions. GCC officials are expected to coordinate with hospital unknown wards for referrals and continuity of care.

Field analysis planned
Officials will also assess the needs through field analysis and establish new recovery shelters at the right location. The move aims at strengthening the city's shelter system, ensuring inclusive coverage for the homeless and other vulnerable demographics. A

monitoring committee constituted under the new operational framework will play a central role in conducting field surveys, recommending new shelters, and providing policy guidance to strengthen shelter planning and service delivery.

The civic body will ensure that no homeless person in the city is excluded from access to shelter and support services. Officials will study areas such as Koyambedu, Chennai Central, Egmore, and the Marina to assess the situation under the GCC's new operational framework. Surveys and needs assessments to identify shelter gaps will begin soon, officials added.

2 members of gang arrested for dacoity at businessman's house in Puzhal

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

wife Vasantha was about to leave for her morning walk.

The gang held the family at knifepoint, bound them with ropes, assaulted them, and issued death threats to them. The men allegedly drove away in a car with ₹2 lakh cash kept in the house, 13 sovereigns of gold jewellery, and around 250 grams of silver articles.

According to the police, the incident occurred in the early hours of January 30 at the house of Vijayakumar of Mahaveer Garden Main Road in East Kavangarai. Vijayakumar runs a wholesale textile business in Manipur.

The police said six men, wearing masks and armed with knives, entered the house when Vijayakumar's

Jana Nayagan row: our examination process is confidential, says Censor Board Regional Officer



A scene from Jana Nayagan.
FILE PHOTO

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

Even as actor-turned-politician Vijay's fans are more than anxious to know whether his much-awaited last movie *Jana Nayagan* would get released before the upcoming Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry or not, the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has refused to reveal any information. When contacted

to know the authenticity of information floating around in film circles that the production house KVN Productions LLP had agreed for a reference to the review committee, CBFC Chennai Regional Officer D. Balamurali said, the law prohibits sharing of any such information. Public will get to know only when the film is certified. At that time, we will communicate through our portal," the official added.

To read the full copy, visit: newsth.live/JNCBFC

cannot reveal it at this stage. All our examination process is confidential. We cannot reveal anything until a certificate is issued," Mr. Balamurali said.

"The law prohibits sharing of any such information. Public will get to know only when the film is certified. At that time, we will communicate through our portal," the official added.

To read the full copy, visit: newsth.live/JNCBFC

Corpn. to regularise nearly 2 lakh internet service poles, fixes fee for new installations

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

According to the release, the authorised pole count is distributed among three major providers: Jio with 159,326 poles, Airtel with 31,112, and ACT with 80.

Inspections carried out
Field inspections conducted by the GCC's Electrical Department identified that several ISPs had bypassed established guidelines, leading to the proposal of

stringent penalties. Based on the rules in a State Government Order, unauthorised poles can be regularised for a one-time fee of ₹2,000, which includes a ₹1,000 base fee and a 100% penalty.

While companies may relocate poles to alternative sites owing to space or administrative constraints, the total number of poles must not exceed the sanctioned count, the release added.

lights. The responsibility for maintaining the integrity of public infrastructure during installation lies with the respective ISP and telecom service provider (TSP) companies.

For all future installations, the GCC has mandated a ₹1,000 permission fee and a ₹5,000 security deposit per pole to cover potential damage to public property, including street

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IN BRIEF



Stalin inaugurates eco park in SIPCOT Siruseri - Navalur lake

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday inaugurated the eco park around Navalur lake that has undergone rejuvenation, including ecological restoration and landscape development, in the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) Limited estate in Siruseri in Chengalpattu district. The lake is spread over 33.43 acres. Ecological restoration and landscape works were undertaken at a cost of ₹30 crore. Minister T.M. Anbarasan, Chief Secretary N. Muruganandam, and senior officials were present.

Building ban near marshland triggers protest by residents

Residents of Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR), Pallikaranai, and Thoraiyakkam organised a protest recently to condemn the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) banning building permits within a kilometre radius of the Pallikaranai marshland. The CMDA circular, dated October 6, 2025, halted all construction activity in the area pending the definition of a 'zone of influence' by the Tamil Nadu Wetlands Authority. The demonstration was held on January 29 on 200 Feet Road. The Federation of Thoraiyakkam Residents' Welfare Associations organised the event, stating that the ban has curtailed the property rights of citizens holding patta lands and approved house sites in areas including Perungudi, Sholinganallur, and Medavakkam. They demanded that any proposed buffer or influence zone be established within the existing boundaries of the marshland.

Police arrest 11 persons for autorickshaw racing

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Avadi City Police arrested 11 men who were involved in autorickshaw racing on the Puzhal-Tambaran Inner Ring Road.

According to the police, the incident occurred near the Porur Tollgate in the Avadi Police Commissionerate limits, on the Puzhal-Tambaran stretch of the Inner Ring Road at around 3.30 pm on January 15. Autorickshaws were driven at high speed, dangerously overtaking other vehicles, endangering public safety and disrupting traffic.

Police said the racers were followed by their accomplices on two-wheelers, who filmed the stunt using mobile phones and uploaded the videos on social media.

The Traffic Investigation Wing of Avadi City Police registered a case and launched an investigation. The police arrested A. Pugalenth, 34, of Vyasarpadi, G. Gokul, 26, of Nungambakkam, I. Suresh, 26, of Avadi and eight others.

At The Narrative, adults travel back in time with their stories

Sahana Mira S.
CHENNAI

There were notes written by story coach Indu Divya that sat in a basket asking questions such as, "When was the last time you felt seen?" And a group of people aged between 20 to 50 years, complete strangers, picked up these prompts and started narrating their stories at a storytelling event called 'The Narrative' in the city this month.

When we think of storytelling, it is mostly the children's territory where storytellers perform stories with voice modulation and expression to hold their attention. However, what happened here was a reversal of that assumption. It was a storytelling event solely for the adults.

Ms. Divya told a story of her own, of ageing, of acceptance, starting with the silver strands of her hair. "The idea is to move beyond small talk, to connect with people, and to come to know them through their stories because loneliness is getting real," she says.



Engaging session: People aged between 20 to 50 years gathered at a storytelling event called 'The Narrative' in the city this month. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

People picked up prompts and started narrating their stories at the event in the city

"I did not come in with anything fully prepared, but the theme for today 'Break the Mold' caught my attention. I am also here to listen and see what stories others arrive with," said a participant Srikanth Gopalakrishnan. A long-time storyteller Kadambari who was fascinated about stories since childhood, narrated a personal anecdote which was tied to perseverance. She says storytelling is where she goes to meet her emotions. "I have always been asked to keep my words short everywhere else, but here I could slow down and take the audience inside a moment. Storytelling for adults doesn't always impact you on the spot, it sits with you and hits you later. You may forget their names but their stories stick with you," added she.

When people step into a space like this, they might instinctively feel intimidated, wondering whether they will be judged for

dote which was tied to perseverance. She says storytelling is where she goes to meet her emotions. "I have always been asked to keep my words short everywhere else, but here I could slow down and take the audience inside a moment. Storytelling for adults doesn't always impact you on the spot, it sits with you and hits you later. You may forget their names but their stories stick with you," added she.

When people step into a space like this, they might instinctively feel intimidated, wondering whether they will be judged for

their stories or their ability to tell them, says Ms. Divya, touching on the inherent vulnerability of personal storytelling. "But the truth is all of us are storytellers, and some of us have a stronger command over articulation," she says. "What goes unspoken is our struggle to make new friendships as adults. Our social circle is limited to friends from school, college, workplaces, gym, or familiar community spaces. But a storytelling event cuts through that, where you'll be able to identify potential friendships," says she.

State gets over ₹7500 crore in Railway Budget

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The State has been allotted ₹7,611 crore in the Railway Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday. At a virtual meeting, Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed that this allotment was nine times higher compared to the amount of ₹879 crore allotted from 2009-14. The Railway Ministry had allotted ₹6,626 crore in the last financial year of 2025-26. A press note from Southern Railway said works costing



Major facelift: Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, renovation at 18 railway stations, including St. Thomas Mount, have been completed. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

₹35,701 crore were under progress, comprising track construction, station redevelopment, and safety enhancements. Also,

Southern Railway has achieved 97% track electrification, with 2,386 kilometres of rail lines electrified and more than 1,350

kms of new tracks commissioned.

A total of 769 flyovers and underpasses have been constructed since 2014. The Railway Board had sanctioned redevelopment of 77 railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) at an outlay of ₹3,147 crore, with work at 18 railway stations, covering St. Thomas Mount, Tiruvannamalai, Chidambaram, Mannargudi, and Srirangam, completed. The State has been allotted nine pairs of Vande Bharat Express trains along with nine pairs of Amrit Bharat Express.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

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12TH ANNIVERSARY



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Work to rejuvenate Tiruneermalai tank has begun, HC told

**The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI**



Senior counsel A.K. Sriram said

rejuvenation had commenced

on January 7. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

ganatha Perumal Temple atop the hillock was one of the 108 Divyadesams worshipped by the Vaishnavites and the tank on the ground held significance.

Appearing before the first Division Bench of Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G. Arul Murugan, senior counsel A.K. Sriram, representing the executive officer of the temple, said the works had commenced on January 7. He said the approximate cost of rejuvenating the temple tank was estimated to be somewhere between ₹63 lakh and ₹65 lakh, and Ashokan, a devotee, had come forward to donate the entire amount. He said the works were expected to be completed within a reasonable time.

The submissions were made during the hearing of a PIL petition, filed by P. Bhaskar of Chengalpattu, seeking a direction to the temple management to rejuvenate the tank. The judges directed the management to file a status report within two weeks.

The petitioner's counsel B. Jagannath said the Ran-

ganatha Perumal Temple

atop the hillock was one of

the 108 Divyadesams wor-

shipped by the Vaishna-

vites and the tank on the

ground held significance.

Stating there was a tem-

ple for Neervana Perumal

at the foothill, the counsel

said, the temple adminis-

tration as well as the Hindu

Religious and Charitable

Endowments (HR and CE)

Department had failed

miserably to maintain the

temple tank properly des-

pite the receipt of very

high revenue.

He said, *The Hindu* had

carried a news article on

November 28, 2025, titled

'Devotees demand urgent

restoration of neglected

Thiruneermalai temple

tank', and insisted upon is-

suing a direction to the HR

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Executive Officer, and the

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Bangalore - 560012

IISc/CCMD/Tenders/2025-26 Date: 30.01.2026

**Tender Notification- IISc/
Tender-CIV-21/2025-26**

Indian Institute of Science invites bids in two cover system through e-procurement platform <https://eprocure.gov.in>. Any specialized firms company registered under KPWD / CPWD/ railways/ MES/ central PSUs/ or any Government department of Class I/Class A Civil Contractors are eligible to apply for the work of "Renovation of CHEP rooms (C005, C006, C101) in old IPC building in IISc Bangalore." Estimated Cost of Project is Rs. 32,13,637.00 Last date of receipt of application is 19th February 2026 at 15:30 Hrs. Any other details can be obtained from the office of the Centre for Campus Management & Development, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on all working days or e-mail: office.ccmd@iisc.ac.in

Sd/-, Registrar

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE
Bangalore - 560012

IISc/CCMD/Tenders/2025-26 Date: 30.01.2026

**Tender Notification- IISc/
Tender-ELE-04/2025-26**

Indian Institute of Science invites bids in two cover system through e-procurement platform <https://eprocure.gov.in>. Any specialised firms company registered under KPWD / CPWD/ railways/ MES/ central PSUs/ or any Government department of Class I/Class A Electrical Contractors are eligible to apply for the work of "Providing 120KVA UPS and Replacement of Main LT Panels for Main Building at IISc Bangalore." Estimated Cost of Project is Rs. 98,30,769.00. Last date of receipt of application is 19th February 2026 at 15:30 Hrs. Any other details can be obtained from the office of the Centre for Campus Management & Development, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on all working days or e-mail: office.ccmd@iisc.ac.in

Sd/-, Registrar

**GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
BUILDINGS AND ROADS (NORTH) DIVISION
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

No.978/PW/BRN/DBA/JET/tender/2025-26 Puducherry, the 02-02-2026

PRESS NOTICE FOR e-TENDER

e-Tender No. 83 to 84 /PW/EE/BRN/2025-26

On behalf of the President of India, tenders are invited through e-Tendering by the Executive Engineer, Buildings and Roads (North) Division, Public Works Department, Puducherry for 2 works consists of "Construction of 75 Nos of Type-I & 25 nos of Type-II Modernized Bus Shelters at various locations in Puducherry and Improvements to the drainage system at Alankuppam main road from Alankuppam state border to Sanjeevi Nagar, Puducherry" in Tender No. 83 to 84 /PW/EE/BRN/25-26 for total estimated cost of ₹.10,01,65,390/- (Approximately) Inclusive of GST @ 18%. For further details please refer to the website <https://putduntenders.gov.in>.

Pre-bid Meeting | 11.02.2026-10.30 A.M conference hall, Central office, PWD, Puducherry

Availability of NIT from | 10.00 AM on 04.02.2026 to 04.00 P.M. on 16.02.2026

Closing time for submission of e-tender at 4.00 PM on the same day of last date of availability of NIT.

Date and time of opening of bid | 17.02.2026 at 10.00 A.M (Next Working Day)

No.780/DIP/AD(Press)/2025-2026

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

JOIN INDIAN ARMY
JAG ENTRY SCHEME 124TH COURSE (OCT 2026) :
**SHORT SERVICE COMMISSION (NT) COURSE FOR LAW
GRADUATES (MEN & WOMEN)**

HIGHLIGHTS

(Information given below is for general awareness only)
(Course Notification published on - www.joinindianarmy.nic.in – should be referred for detailed information about the entry)

Category	Description	Notification Paragraph No
Type of Entry	Short Service Entry (JAG) -124 Course	Para 1
Age	21 to 27 Years as on 01 Jul 2026	Para 2(b)
Open for	Unmarried Male & Unmarried Female (Law Graduates)	Para 1
Education Qualification	Minimum 55% aggregate marks in their LLB Degree. Should have appeared for CLAT PG Exam - 2025	Para 2(c)
Vacancies	08	Para 3
Selection Process	Application > Shortlisting > SSB > Medical > Merit List > Joining Letter	Para 10
Date for shortlisting for SSB (based on CLAT PG score)	Second week of Mar	-
Likely Duration and dates for SSB	Upto five days SSB in May/June 2026 (Choice for SSB Centre and dates open for Two weeks in May)	Para 10(c)
Medical Standards	As given on www.joinindianarmy.nic.in	Para 11
Pre Commission Training Academy	Officer Training Academy, Chennai	Para 5(a)
Duration of Training	49 weeks from Oct 2026	Para 5
Stipend during Training	Rs. 56,100 Per month	Para 7(d)
Rank after Training	Lieutenant	Para 7(a)
Salary on Commissioning	CTC approx. 17-18 Lac per annum	Para 7(d)
Type of Commission	Short Service Commission	Para 4(a)
Option for Release	First - After 05 Years. Second - After 10 Years Third - After 14 Years	Para 4(a)
Option for Permanent Commission	After 10 Years	Para 4(a)
Primary Arms / Service for Commission	JAG Branch	-
Release Benefits	Depending on service on release	-

ONLINE APPLICATION WILL OPEN ON 27 JAN 2026 AT 1500 HRS AND CLOSE ON 27 FEB 2026 AT 1500 HRS.

CBC 10601/11/0069/2526



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BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through e-Procurement Portal)

No. KPCL/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT3892; Dtd. 28.01.2026. RPCL is invited tender from eligible contractors through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> for the work of Construction of Bituminous service road for the use of adjacent land owners of YTPS site. Approx. value of work (Exclusive of GST): Rs.464.50 Lakhs. EMD: Rs.6,96,750/-. For any details and clarifications contact Executive Engineer (Civil), YTPS, Chicksugur-584 134 (Dist: Raichur) Mobile-9480682523.



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Bulk Sale of inventory through e-Auction



Aspire Leisure Valley



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Inventory-3BHK & 4BHK spacious apartments with modern amenities.

Near D-Mart and Anand Vihar ISBT & Railway Station - 35 min.



Aspire Centurian Park

Techzone-IV, Greater Noida (W), UP
Inventory-3BHK & 4BHK spacious apartments with modern amenities.

Near D-Mart and Anand Vihar ISBT & Railway Station - 30 min.



Aspire Leisure Park

Techzone-IV, Greater Noida (W), UP
Inventory-3BHK & 4BHK spacious apartments with modern amenities.

Near D-Mart and Anand Vihar ISBT & Railway Station - 30 min.

Last date of submission of EMD: 10.02.2026

E-auction will be held on: 11.02.2026

EMD Rs.9.70 Cr. to Rs. 20.90 Cr.

6 Packages Ranging from Rs. 485 Cr. to Rs. 1,045 Cr.

Pre-Bid Meeting will be held on 03-02-2026

For more details, please visit our website:
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Please scan this QR for e-auction document

BUSINESS CONNECT

GRT Supports Anandam Trust



GRT Jewellers has extended its support to Anandam Trust, Ambattur, Chennai, with a contribution of Rs.77.50 lakhs towards the construction of a Palliative Care Centre. The proposed Palliative Care Centre will focus on pain management, emotional support, and improving the quality of life for patients and their families' dignity and comfort. Speaking about the initiative, Mr G.R. 'Anand' Ananthapadmanabhan, Managing Director, GRT Jewellers, said, "Being there for people when they need support the most truly matters to us." Mr G.R. Radhakrishnan, Managing Director, GRT Jewellers, added, "The trust our customers place in us inspires every social initiative we undertake." GRT Jewellers remains deeply committed to social initiatives that nurture health, hope, and humanity.

Indian Oil Hosts Republic Day



Indian Oil Bhavan, Chennai, marked the 77th Republic Day with the unfurling of the National Tricolour by Shri M. Anna Durai, Executive Director & State Head Tamil Nadu, in the presence of Shri M. Suliskar, Executive Director (Regional Services), Southern Region, and senior officials, and he addressed the gathering. Adding ceremonial grandeur to the event, members of the Territorial Army and Indian Oil's security

scan participated in a disciplined march-past. Long Service Awards were given to the employees who completed 25 and 10 years of service in the corporation, and the children of employees were given incentive awards for securing higher qualifications. The programme concluded with cultural performances by Indian Oil staff.

Republic Day Celebrated at CPCL



The 77th Republic Day was observed at CPCL at its Manali Refinery. Team CPCL assembled as the National Flag was unfurled by Managing Director Shri H. Shankar, followed by the CISF parade. During his speech, he said, "Today, as we stand on the cusp of achieving Navratna status, these accomplishments are a testament to our collective effort, resilience, and vision." Long-service awards were presented to employees. Heroic demonstrations by the CISF contingent and cultural performances by children added colour and warmth to the celebrations. Mr Rohit Kumar Agrawala, Director (Finance), Mr P. Kannan, Director (Operations), Mr S. G. Venkatesh, Director (Technical), and Mr Dev Raj, Deputy Commandant, CISF, along with senior executives, employees of CPCL, and CISF jawans with their families, were present.

IT Department Hosts Republic Day



Dr. D. Sudhakara Rao, IRS, Principal Commissioner of Income Tax (OSD), Chennai, unfurled the National Flag at Income Tax Office Campus on the 77th Republic Day and addressed the gathering. The retired senior officers, officers and officials of the Income Tax Department with their families graced the occasion. A cultural programme was organised by the O/o Pr. CCIT, Tamil Nadu & Puducherry. Super Singer fame, Mani & Band and team, fascinated the audience with their performance, followed by a cultural program by the Income Tax Employees. Dr Rao felicitated the Officials with the 'CBDT Certificate of Exceptional Service 2025, Pr. CCIT Certificate of Meritorious Service 2025 and Pr. CCIT Certificate of Excellence 2025 for their outstanding contribution in the field of Direct Tax Administration. Certificates and Trophies were distributed by Dr Rao to the Children of the Income Tax Department Employees who won competitions in Essay Writing, Speech, Drawing, Painting and Quiz organised on the themes of 'Republic Day' and 'Patriotism'.

Joyalukkas' Nationwide Campaign



Joyalukkas launched its nationwide campaign titled 'The Biggest Jewellery Sale of the Year'. Valid from January 23rd to February 22nd, 2026, the festival reinforces Joyalukkas' commitment to offering an unmatched choice, quality, and service through its extensive retail network. During the campaign period, customers will get to enjoy a flat 40 percent off on Wastage/making charges across the brands extensive range of jewellery categories, including Gold, cut and uncut Diamonds, Precious Stones, Platinum and Silver jewellery. Announcing the campaign, Dr Joy Alukkas, Chairman of the Joyalukkas Group, said, "Through the Biggest Jewellery Festival of the Year, we are delighted to offer our patrons exceptional value along with the finest and widest selection of jewellery." Joyalukkas continues to deliver an enhanced retail experience through its state-of-the-art showrooms. In addition to the festival discounts, every purchase at Joyalukkas is supported by a suite of customer-centric benefits, including free lifelong maintenance, one-year free insurance and assured buyback, reinforcing the brand's promise of trust and long-term value.

IN BRIEF



CPI veteran R. Nallakannu hospitalised in Chennai

Communist Party of India veteran R. Nallakannu has been admitted to Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital in Chennai. His condition is said to be stable. Mr. Nallakannu, who turned 101 in December 2025, was admitted to the hospital on Sunday evening after experiencing bouts of vomiting. He is undergoing an evaluation of his cardiac, nephrological, and respiratory systems, and is doing fine at present, a senior official of the hospital said.

Modi knows how to earn a name for himself: Vaiko

MDMK general secretary Vaiko on Monday said though Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not enjoy a good reputation among the people, he knew how to earn a name for himself. Speaking to the media in Coimbatore, Mr. Vaiko said the people of Tamil Nadu were disappointed with the Union Budget as they had expected it to allocate funds to States where the Assembly elections were due. He said that while it was a matter of joy that a Tamil had presented the Union Budget for the ninth time and claimed it contained schemes to make India a developed country, the benefits of growth had not reached all sections of society. Asked whether his party would get a two-digit number of seats in the DMK alliance for the upcoming polls, he said he had no idea about it.

Tamil Biennale will be held in January 2027, Stalin says at Global Tourism Summit

State govt. signs 127 MoUs worth ₹22,794 crore, which are likely to create 65,937 jobs. Tourism infrastructure such as theme parks and camping sites will be set up at 31 locations, says CM

The Hindu Bureau

CHENNAI

To put Tamil Nadu on the map as the destination for art and cultural tourism, a "Tamil Biennale" will be organised in January 2027, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said at the Tamil Nadu Global Tourism Summit 2026 here on Monday.

At the summit, the State government signed 127 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) worth ₹22,794 crore, which will likely create 65,937 jobs. With lakhs of tourists visiting Mamallapuram, a 'Special Area Development Authority' will be set up to create world-class, modern tourism infrastructure, at an estimated cost of ₹100 crore, he added.

Under the Tamil Nadu Tourism Policy 2023, SIPCOT will identify tourist locations and establish tourism facilities, he said. In a step towards that direction, four special tourist destinations have been identified in the districts of



Fillip to tourism: Chief minister M.K. Stalin inaugurating the T.N. Global Tourism Summit in Mamallapuram on Monday. M. SRINATH

Kanniyakumari, Kallakurichi, Erode, and Thoothukudi, and expressions of interest have been invited to attract investments, he added.

Mr. Stalin said 31 locations had been selected across the State, and a host of tourism infrastructure, including accommodation facilities, theme parks, camping sites, and nature-based resorts, would be created.

Some of the major MoUs are on setting up a multi-purpose sports stadium and a high-performance facility centre, heritage theme park at Chengalpet-

tu, ropeway in Salem, and amusement parks, a sports and recreation centre, and luxury hotels in the State.

Pham Sanh Chau, Managing Director and CEO of VinGroup Asia Operations, signed an MoU with the government to set up world-class amusement parks, hotels and EV mobility solutions in Tamil Nadu.

In the last five years, the State government allocated ₹612.18 crore for the development of the sector and, as a result, 128.97 crore domestic tourists and 45 lakh foreign tourists visited Tamil Nadu during this period, he added.

He inaugurated projects including the glow garden at Mamallapuram and Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation hotel at Chidambaram, and laid the foundation stone for projects such as tourism facilities at Tharangambadi.

Industries Minister T.R.B. Rajaa said Tamil Nadu was the most urbanised State in India that balanced primary sectors, manufacturing and services output.

"At the heart of all this is inclusivity, population scale and regionally engineered distributed growth."

Tourism Minister R. Rajendran, K. Manivasan, additional chief secretary of Tourism, and Ravichandran Ashwin, former Indian cricket team's spinner, spoke at the event.

MSME Minister T.M. Anbarasan, Chief Secretary N. Muruganandan, Tourism Commissioner J. Innocent Divya, Managing Director and CEO, Guidance Tamil Nadu, Darez Ahamed, and Industries Secretary V. Arun Roy were among those present at the event.

During the last hearing on January 27, the court framed charges against the three accused and read out the same to them. The accused pleaded not guilty of the charges against them.

They have been arraigned for offences under Sections 127(2), 64(2)(m), 111(2)(b), 111(4), 324(4), 140 (3), 309(6), 311, 701, 140 (4), 115(2), 74 and 76 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita.

As per the prosecution case, the three men gang-raped the college student in a deserted area near Brindavan Nagar, close to the Coimbatore airport, on the intervening night of November 2 and 3, 2025.

The three accused had approached the survivor and her male friend, when they were engaged in a conversation inside a car on the vacant plot of land around 10.50 p.m. on November 2.

They abducted the woman after assaulting the man, and took her to a deserted area behind a college campus, where they raped her.

The police arrested the trio, after shooting them in their legs, on the night of November 3.

Trial commences in Coimbatore rape case, counsel for accused appointed

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

The trial for the gang-rape of a 20-year-old college student by three persons near Coimbatore airport in November last year commenced at the Mahila Court here on Monday.

The three accused in the case – T. Karuppasamy, alias Sathesh, 30; his brother T. Kaleeswaran, alias Karthik, 21; and their distant relative M. Guna, alias Thavasi, 20, all from Madurai – were produced before trial court judge V. Sundararaj. B. Jisha is the Special Public Prosecutor for the case.

Two lawyers have been provided to the three accused through the District Legal Services Authority as they did not have counsel.

Court sources said the survivor's male friend, who is the complainant, a victim of assault by the accused and also a witness in the case, was examined first by the prosecution and defence counsel.

The survivor was examined after him and the first day's proceedings went on for several hours till evening.

I legally represent PMK, Ramadoss' group is a breakaway faction, Anbumani tells HC

Mohamed Imrullah S.
CHENNAI

Anbumani Ramadoss, the estranged son of Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadoss, on Monday claimed before the Madras High Court that only he represents the political party legally and the group rallying behind his father is only a breakaway faction, which could not be considered the party.

Appearing before the First Division Bench of Chief Justice Maninдра Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G. Arul Murugan, senior counsel N.L. Rajah, representing Dr. Anbumani, said his father was trying to "snatch an order from the court behind his (Dr. Anbumani's) back" without making his client a party to the case. The submissions were made during the hearing of a writ petition filed by the party founder



Anbumani Ramadoss

seeking a direction to the Election Commission (EC) and the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) in Tamil Nadu to communicate the allotment of the 'mango' symbol to the party for this year's Assembly election to his official address in Chennai.

Since the founder had made only the EC and the CEO as respondents to the writ petition, the Chief Justice's Bench refused to hear the submissions

made by senior counsel representing Dr. Anbumani. "Mr. Rajah, how can we give you audience when you are not a party here," the Chief Justice asked.

"Exactly that is what I am saying MiLord, that an order is being attempted to be snatched behind my back. I am the party, they are a breakaway faction. What I am saying is that this writ petition [filed in the name of the PMK, represented by its founder] is

not maintainable at all without my presence," senior counsel replied.

However, the Chief Justice said, "We do not know. You are alien to these proceedings. We can't hear you now. If you want to become a party to these proceedings, move an application." After Mr. Rajah agreed to file an application, the judges ordered notices, returnable within three weeks, to the EC and CEO in the writ petition.

What the case is about
The writ petition had been filed in the name of the PMK, represented by its founder Dr. Ramadoss, who also claimed to be its incumbent president and accused his son of having submitted forged documents before the EC to claim that he continued to be the party president.

Read the full story on newsth.live/PMKfeud

made by senior counsel representing Dr. Anbumani. "Mr. Rajah, how can we give you audience when you are not a party here," the Chief Justice asked.

"Exactly that is what I am saying MiLord, that an order is being attempted to be snatched behind my back. I am the party, they are a breakaway faction. What I am saying is that this writ petition [filed in the name of the PMK, represented by its founder] is

Lok Bhavan disapproves of T.N. setting up panels to appoint Vice-Chancellors

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Lok Bhavan on Monday said the Tamil Nadu government constituting search committees for appointment of Vice-Chancellors to the State universities and extending their tenure went against judicial orders.

Referring to pending proceedings, it said that the government orders were issued on December 22 last year to extend the tenure of the panels and granted them more time till March 21 this year to recommend names. Further, the panels, "unlawfully constituted" for Periyar University and Bharathidasan University, interacted with the short-listed candidates on January 24 and 27, 2026 respectively.

The Lok Bhavan said, "The executive actions taken during the pendency

of matters before courts, particularly when interim orders are in force, attract the doctrine of *lis pendens*.

The action of the State government in extending the term of the search committees when the *lis* is pending and the functioning of the search committees, like interaction with the short-listed candidates, transgress the orders of the courts and go against the spirit of such orders."

In these circumstances, the continuation of the selection process by the search committees was "not legally sustainable and is contrary to the spirit of the binding judicial pronouncements," it said.

The Governor-Chancellor has requested the government to issue immediate orders to include the nominee of the UGC Chairman in the search committees, as originally recommended by the

Governor-Chancellor, or place the functioning of such search committees and all ongoing proceedings for the appointment of Vice-Chancellors in abeyance forthwith, until the matter is decided by the Supreme Court, it said.

The Lok Bhavan said it sought to "place on record the factual and legal position relating to the constitution of search committees" for recommending names for appointment to the post of Vice-Chancellors of Bharathiar University, Bharathidasan University, and Periyar University, and the extension of the tenure of these committees.

The UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2018, which have

statutory force, mandated that search-cum-selection committees include a nominee of the UGC Chairman, it added.

"The binding nature of these regulations and their supremacy over conflicting State enactments have been conclusively affirmed by the Supreme Court of India in the case of Professor (Dr.) Serenity P.S. vs Dr. Rajasree & Ors, and consistently followed in its latest decision on January 30, 2026, in the case of Dr. S. Mohan vs the Secretary to the Chancellor, Puducherry Technological University, Puducherry. The Hon'ble Court has declared that any appointment of Vice-Chancellor made on the recommendation of a search committee constituted contrary to the UGC Regulations would be void *ab initio*," it said.

Read the full story on newsth.live/LokBhavanVC

Vijay likens criticism directed at him to attacks faced by MGR

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

TVK founder and actor Vijay on Monday mocked the DMK and other parties for repeating the criticism – that he is a political novice and a "cardboard knife" (*atta kathi* in Tamil) – that was levelled against former Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran when he launched the AIADMK.

Speaking at the second anniversary celebrations of the party at the TVK headquarters at Panaiyur near Chennai, he recalled a radio interview given by MGR in 1977. In it, he had said the AIADMK was founded to wipe away the tears that came to his eyes when he thought about how "certain people" had taken over the place of C.N. Annadurai, DMK founder and former Chief Minister. "Similarly, after 2017 and 2021, the Tamil



TVK president Vijay speaks at an event to mark the party's second anniversary celebrations in Panaiyur near Chennai on Monday. PTI

people wept thinking about those who are occupying positions once held by Kamarajar, Arignar Anna, and MGR. The TVK is a party that was started to wipe those tears," he said.

Mr. Vijay said the AIADMK was ridiculed even after it won in the 1977 election. "Now, those who say that MGR had a lot of political experience are the same people who once

Our party's strength being underestimated, Congress tells DMK

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Congress high command is believed to have communicated to the DMK that its strength was being underestimated by the senior ally in Tamil Nadu – while it was allotted 41 Assembly seats in 2016, this figure was reduced to 25 in the last election.

Congress sources in New Delhi and Chennai claimed that party leader Rahul Gandhi had expressed his displeasure to DMK Parliamentary Party leader Kanimozi Karunamidhi when she met him in New Delhi recently.

"Rahul said the Congress' strength was being underestimated by the DMK. He has demanded 41 seats... similar to what was allotted to the party in 2016," a source said.

Girish Chodankar, head of the Tamil Nadu Congress' seat negotiation committee, is reportedly driving a hard bargain, according to State sources, and would lead the negotiations with the DMK, which is expected to constitute a committee to discuss seat-sharing with the allies.

"The demand for a share in power is definitely on the table... the Congress leadership in New Delhi feels that when a supposedly undemocratic [Prime Minister] Modi can include his allies in the government, why can't the DMK do the same? Ms. Kanimozi

has apparently explained it wouldn't work in Tamil Nadu and it would weaken the alliance, and that these discussions could be had after the elections," sources said.

Deepam row: Collector tenders unconditional apology to HC

The Hindu Bureau
MADRAS

In connection with the row over the lighting of Karthigai Deepam at a pillar on the Thirupparankundram hills last December, Madurai Collector K.J. Praveen Kumar, Commissioner of Madurai City Police J. Loganathan and others have tendered an unconditional apology following initiation of contempt of judiciary proceedings.

The Collector, in an affidavit, informed the Madras Bench of the Madras High Court that he had passed the prohibitory orders on December 3, 2025, taking into account the ground situation in Thirupparankundram and to maintain law and order.

The other contemnors: Executive Officer of Subramanya Swamy Temple, Thirupparankundram, Yagna Narayanan; and De-

puty Commissioner of Police (Madurai South) A.G. Indigo Divyan, filed similar affidavits, tendering an unconditional apology before the court.

Representing the officials, senior counsel V. Giri said the Collector had passed the prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the BNS, 2023, taking into account the ground situation.

People from Hindu outfits had started pouring in.

To keep the situation under control, the prohibitory orders had been passed after receiving inputs. There was no intention to disobey the court orders, it was submitted.

Justice G.R. Swaminathan, who is hearing the contempt petitions related to the Thirupparankundram issue, said he had read a report in a magazine that cited a police officer saying they were ready to face the consequences. The State submitted no officer would make such a statement, and that it may not have been intentional.

Justice Swaminathan questioned how the Collector had passed the prohibitory orders to frustrate the court order. The judge granted the Collector time to file an additional affidavit and posted the matter to March 2. The court split the contempt proceedings against the Collector.

A CH-CHE

CM YK

Pennaiyar river dispute:
SC directs Centre to form tribunal

Krishnadas Rajagopal
DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre to constitute a tribunal to adjudicate the dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over the sharing of Pennaiyar river water.

A Bench, headed by Justice Vikram Nath, directed the Centre to issue a notification to constitute the inter-State water disputes tribunal within a month. "The Centre may place the complaint filed by Tamil Nadu before the tribunal upon its constitution," the Bench said. This direction of the court comes under Section 5 of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act of 1956.

In 2018, Tamil Nadu moved the Supreme Court against Karnataka over its work on dams and diversions structures on the river. Karnataka had no right to utilise the waters of Pennaiyar to the detriment of the people of Tamil Nadu, the State had told the court. Tamil Nadu argued that the flowing of water of an inter-State river was a national asset and no single State could claim exclusive ownership of its water. An 1892 agreement over the river water was "valid and binding" on the party States, it had contended.

Tamil Nadu had wanted a prohibition on Karnataka from initiating any new schemes in the Pennaiyar basin until a tribunal was constituted by the Centre.

Rise in southern States' share of funds gives no relief to T.N.

The share of Tamil Nadu, which was 4.079% in the 15th Finance Commission, rose to 4.097% in 16th panel, with a rate of increase of only 0.44%; weights assigned to per-capita GSDP came down too

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

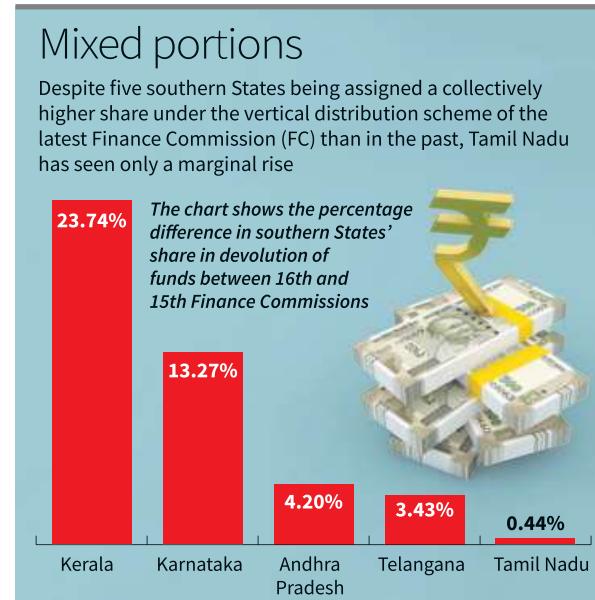
Despite five southern States being assigned a collectively higher share under the vertical distribution scheme of the 16th Finance Commission (FC) than in the past, Tamil Nadu's share has seen only a marginal rise.

The share of Tamil Nadu, which was 4.079% in the 15th FC, rose to 4.097% now, accounting for a rate of increase of 0.44%. This was followed by Telangana with a rise of 3.43% and Andhra Pradesh with 4.2%. Only Karnataka and Kerala have witnessed a double-digit rate of increase – 13.27% and 23.74%, respectively.

At the all-India level, Kerala's degree of rise is only next to Haryana's 24.52%, while the third slot goes to Karnataka.

'Virtually nothing'
Veteran experts in public finances say Tamil Nadu has got virtually nothing extra. "Yet again, unfair treatment," is the refrain of the experts.

One of the experts contends that this time, the 16th FC included contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as one of the criteria for horizontal devolution. But for this element, the share of Tamil Nadu may have gone down. The criterion of tax and fiscal efforts has been



removed, while the weights assigned to the criterion of area, demographic performance and per-capita GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) have reduced. Only the criterion of population has seen an increase of weight from 15% to 17.5%, which, however, does not benefit the southern States including Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

K.R. Shanmugam, former Director of the Madras School of Economics, says the increase in the vertical devolution for the south seems to have been achieved by decreasing the share of six northern States such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, besides West Bengal. The combined share of the seven States, which stood at 51.2%, has been brought

down to 49.93%.

Pointing out only relief and temporary restoration works are covered under disaster response fund schemes, a veteran policy maker suggests that the Union government follows the example of the Tamil Nadu government, which had created, in the light of the December 2015 floods in Chennai and surrounding areas, a project preparation fund of ₹100 crore for the formulation of projects to be posed to funding agencies.

Subsidy levels

The 16th FC has dealt elaborately with the subject of subsidies, an area where the south has been a trend-setter. "At ₹78,453 crore, Tamil Nadu had the highest absolute level of subsi-

dy in 2023-24, followed by Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana at ₹70,149 crore, ₹63,951 crore and ₹62,847 crore respectively," the panel records.

Pointing out that the absolute subsidy levels are "somewhat misleading" given the State's size, the Commission names Telangana as one of the States wherein subsidy levels, as a proportion of respective GSDP, exceeded 5% during 2024-26, and Andhra Pradesh having the subsidy level standing between 3% and 5%.

As for channelising subsidies to the eligible beneficiaries, the latest FC report refers to measures taken by Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu governments. It acknowledges that by employing information technology (IT) enabled data analysis on integrated databases, such States have been able to de-duplicate and streamline beneficiary listing, leading to substantial savings.

Though the southern States had taken a similar stand on many issues, they differed among themselves over revenue deficit grants meant for bridging the revenue gap. While Karnataka expressed scepticism, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu stood for the continuation of such grants. However, the 16th FC's recommendation was against the grants.

Mr. Raju had approached the court seeking to set aside the magistrate court's judgment, arguing that the court had delivered the verdict without fully considering his arguments.

Kerala court suspends sentence of ex-Minister Antony Raju

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Thiruvananthapuram District and Sessions Court on Monday suspended the sentence of former Thiruvananthapuram MLA Antony Raju in an evidence tampering case.

Mr. Raju had challenged the verdict of the Nedumangad Judicial First Class Magistrate-I which had sentenced him to three years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹10,000. The verdict had subsequently led to his disqualification as an MLA.

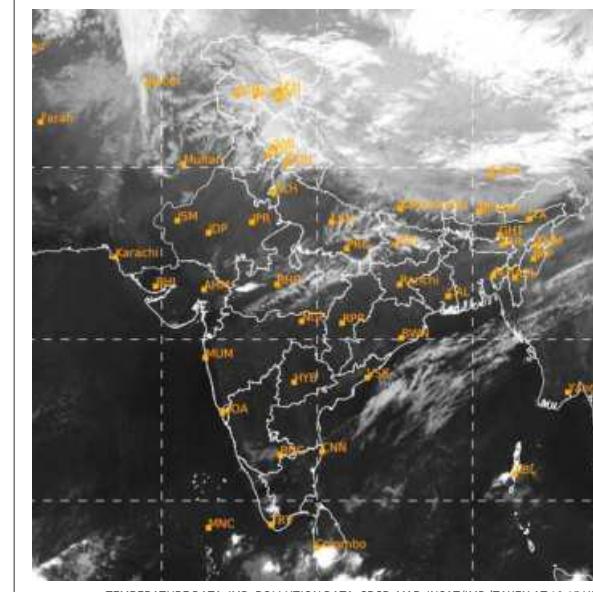
The former legislator and K.S. Jose, a court clerk, were both found guilty of causing the disappearance of evidence, forgery and fabricating false evidence that had resulted in the acquittal of an Australian national who was arrested from Thiruvananthapuram International Airport in 1990 with possession of ganja.

While staying the execution of the sentence until the final disposal of the appeal, the District and Sessions Court clarified that the finding of guilt against Mr. Raju as well as his disqualification will continue to stand during this period. The next hearing will be on February 6.

Mr. Raju had approached the court seeking to set aside the magistrate court's judgment, arguing that the court had delivered the verdict without fully considering his arguments.

WEATHER WATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Dense/dense fog likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	28.6	12.2	12.2	Kozhikode	32.2	24.9	24.9
Ahmedabad	30.1	19.5	19.5	Kurnool	31.3	19.2	19.2
Aizawl	29.5	9.4	9.4	Lucknow	26.3	13.0	13.0
Allahabad	24.4	11.5	11.5	Madurai	29.5	23.6	23.6
Bengaluru	29.8	17.4	17.4	Mangalore	33.6	21.4	21.4
Bhopal	28.0	13.8	13.8	Mumbai	33.0	20.4	20.4
Bhubaneswar	30.8	15.8	15.8	Mysuru	32.0	16.0	16.0
Chandigarh	21.9	9.8	9.8	New Delhi	17.3	10.4	10.4
Chennai	29.4	23.3	23.3	Patna	23.3	12.3	12.3
Coimbatore	32.4	21.0	21.0	Port Blair	31.3	25.4	25.4
Dehradoon	5	24.0	24.0	Puducherry	28.7	20.9	20.9
Gangtok	18.0	8.3	8.3	Pune	31.2	18.4	18.4
Goa	34.2	21.2	21.2	Raipur	30.9	16.3	16.3
Guwahati	26.8	13.9	13.9	Ranchi	26.4	12.0	12.0
Hubbballi	32.0	15.0	15.0	Shillong	18.0	7.4	7.4
Hyderabad	29.0	17.5	17.5	Shimla	21.7	6.2	6.2
Imphal	24.6	10.6	10.6	Srinagar	2.9	2.6	2.6
Jaipur	25.9	11.7	11.7	Thiruvananthapuram	35.6	24.8	24.8
Kochi	31.8	25.4	25.4	Tiruchi	31.7	21.6	21.6
Kohima	18.6	8.2	8.2	Vijayawada	29.8	20.8	20.8
Kolkata	27.5	15.0	15.0	Visakhapatnam	29.3	22.3	22.3

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	.74	.84	44	113	148	Good
Bengaluru	8	8	53	203	136	Mod.
Chennai	8	8	53	203	136	Mod.
Delhi	11	22	65	292	262	Bad
Hyderabad	6	10	79	123	134	Bad
Kolkata	6	98	50	208	124	Bad
Lucknow	.11	.65	57	265	292	Bad
Mumbai	.21	1	—	218	151	Bad
Pune	.33	32	274	200	149	Bad
Visakhapatnam	.9	.30	24	231	149	Bad

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

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

KTR slams Congress govt. for indulging in 'diversion politics'

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

K.T. Rama Rao, working president of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), criticised the Congress government in Telangana, saying it has delivered nothing substantial to the people and is instead indulging in "diversion politics" through false propaganda and politically motivated investigations since coming to power.

In an informal chat with presspersons on Monday, he said making former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao sit for hours in the name of inquiry amounted to an attack on democratic values and was done merely to satisfy the government's political vendetta.

Mr. Rama Rao alleged



that the Congress and BJP had failed to secure adequate funds for Telangana, and demanded that the claims about investments announced at Davos be taken up for discussion in the next Assembly session.

He thanked BRS supporters for the massive protests held across Telangana in over 12,000 gram panchayats.

Those indulging in wrongdoing are bound to face inquiries: Revanth

The Hindu Bureau



In a strong counter to those raising objections against notices served on former Telangana Chief Minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president K. Chandrashekhar Rao, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy asserted that those indulging in wrongdoings are bound to face inquiries in line with the law.

The Chief Minister took a dig at the BRS leaders for calling Mr. Chandrashekhar Rao "Telangana's fatherly figure" and questioning the rationale behind serving notices on him. "Father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi sacrificed his life for the country. What is the contribution of this self-proclaimed 'fatherly figure,'" he asked.

The Chief Minister was speaking after presenting

the Raavi Narayana Reddy national award to Justice B. Sudharshan Reddy (retd) here on Monday.

He recalled how Telangana ideologue and professor M. Kodandaram was arrested after police gatecrashed into his house during the BRS regime.

"Was Mr. Kodandaram not instrumental in bringing together the agitators for a

separate State? Why did not the then government remember his contribution to the statehood movement," he asked.

In sharp contrast, the Special Investigation Team served notices on Mr. Chandrasekhar Rao to attend questioning and did not barge into his house. "Leaders like Raavi Narayana Reddy sacrificed eve-

rything for the sake of Telangana. How can people who



A cautious nudge

Only structural change can restore the balance in fiscal federalism

In its much-awaited recommendations, which were also tabled on Sunday, the Sixteenth Finance Commission (FC-16), as anticipated, has recommended that the vertical devolution ratio – the States' share in the divisible pool of Central taxes – be retained at 41% for the period 2026-31. States want this to be 50%. This is despite the Commission acknowledging the tightening fiscal space States face under the GST framework, and that the growing mismatch between expenditure responsibilities and assured revenues has increasingly left them with "recourse to market borrowings" as the principal adjustment mechanism. Predictably, several States have criticised the projected devolutions for the coming fiscal but have also cautiously welcomed a tweak in the horizontal devolution formula. The FC-16 has reworked the earlier "tax effort" criterion into a broader "contribution to GDP" measure and raised its weight sharply – from 2.5% under the FC-15 to 10%. This change is intended to reward productive and efficient States and represents a modest but meaningful attempt to link governance outcomes with fiscal transfers.

However, the resulting gains are deliberately restrained. The FC-16 makes it clear that any restructuring of horizontal devolution must be undertaken "gradually", to avoid abrupt redistributive shocks to States that are more dependent on transfers. Accordingly, the weight accorded to demographic performance has been reduced, reflecting the view that penalising population growth is no longer appropriate at a time when India is close to the peak of its demographic dividend. Conversely, the weight for population size has been modestly increased. The net effect is that industrialised States such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra see only incremental improvements in their inter-State shares. This caution is understandable but also underscores the limits of the Commission's ambition. A stronger signal could have been sent through a staggered increase in vertical devolution, for instance by committing to raise the States' share to 45% by 2031, expanding discretionary fiscal space while preserving stability. The FC-16 flags the shrinking of the effective divisible pool due to cesses and surcharges but stops short of correcting this by recommending their inclusion in the pool. To be sure, total transfers to States are budgeted to rise by 12.2% between 2025-26 (RE) and 2026-27 (BE). But ₹1.2 lakh crore – or about 42% of this increase – is from revenue transfers under Centrally Sponsored Schemes, reinforcing a governance model in which States act as implementers of priorities set in New Delhi. The FC-16's recommendations recognise the stresses in State finances but do not push for the structural change needed to restore the balance in fiscal federalism.

A full stop

Making access to menstrual hygiene for girls a fundamental right is a big step

The perspicacious judgment of the Supreme Court last week encapsulating the right to menstrual health and hygiene in to the fundamental right to life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution is precisely the kind of intervention needed, with all the power of Thor's hammer. A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwalla and R. Mahadevan wrote in their sterling judgment that takes a rare, rights-based, 360 degree view of the problem: "Autonomy can be meaningfully exercised only when girl children have access to functional toilets, adequate menstrual products, availability of water, and hygienic mechanisms for disposal." Shifting the onus, the judges called upon the state to make menstrual health accessible to all girls and remove the triptych of stigma, stereotyping and humiliation that girls who do not have access to these facilities are regularly subject to. The judges noted that this violates the bodily autonomy of menstruating girl children. Terming it as 'menstrual poverty', the Bench said that it hinders menstruating girls from exercising their right to education with dignity equal to their male counterparts, or students who can afford sanitary products. The Court ordered States and Union Territories to ensure that every school has functional, gender-segregated toilets, and wrote in punitive action for non-compliance. The state will be held accountable if government-run schools did not comply, and private schools can be deregistered.

The lack of access to health-care products during menstruation, even clean water and toilets, arises from a clear, gendered lack of equity. While the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 data claim that the percentage of women aged 15-24 years using hygienic methods during their menstrual cycles has risen to 73.3% in NFHS-5 from 57.6% in NFHS-4, it still leaves about a fourth of all women of eligible age in the country adrift, without support. While the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has said that it has developed guidelines on menstrual hygiene management for creating awareness in rural areas, implementation has always been patchy and the energy is project-based, not sustained. Fragmented, though well-meaning, efforts by non-governmental organisations have formed the bulk of interventions for years now, but the ability to erase the stigma requires a larger force to act. With the judgment there is finally a chance of that happening. Commitment from a policy and financial perspective alone can ensure menstrual hygiene for all young girls and women and enable them to achieve their full potential. As the judges said, inspired by the motto of The Pad Project: "A period should end a sentence, not a girl's education."

In February 2, 2026, the world marked World Wetlands Day 2026 under the theme, 'Wetlands and traditional knowledge: Celebrating cultural heritage'. In India, this theme feels especially apt. There is a rich history of communities sustaining themselves through wetlands following practices that inherently safeguarded ecosystems.

Traditional practices in Tamil Nadu's wetlands revolve around ancient water management and community livelihoods, human-made tanks or *kulams*, forming cascading irrigation networks for paddy and other crops. In Wayanad, Kerala, shallow wells called *kenis*, crafted over 200 years ago, support drinking water, rituals, and festivals, while wetlands in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, sustain traditional fishing practices. Such stories can be told from any part of India, where communities have thrived for generations around wetlands that are both ecology and economy, habitat and heritage, essential to social wellbeing.

But we must be honest. Although the benefits and services of wetlands abound, wetlands remain among the most threatened ecosystems because they sit at the intersection of land, water, and development.

Policy background, challenges at home
Policy and regulatory frameworks are often blamed, but India does not lack laws. It lacks consistent, high-quality implementation. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 provide a framework for identifying, notifying, and managing wetlands through authorities to restrict damaging activities. However, nearly 40% of India's wetlands have vanished over the last three decades, and around 50% of what remains show signs of ecological degradation.

Updated guidelines under the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA) push for structured planning, monitoring and outcome-oriented management. The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework aims to maintain the ecological integrity of coastal wetlands, while Ramsar site designation offers global recognition and responsibility. The 98 Ramsar sites in India are not just badges but commitments that encourage action.

These instruments span freshwater, coastal, urban, natural, riparian and high-altitude wetland but must be coordinated into a single operational rhythm that starts with mapping, leads to notification and enhanced protection, enables restoration where needed, and continues monitoring through adaptive management.

Through site-based wetland conservation and restoration initiatives, organisations such as the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation have worked with State governments, local communities and stakeholders to support wetland mapping, participatory management



Dr. Soumya Swaminathan

is Chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)



Rupesh K. Bhomia

is Director – Wetlands, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)

There is a need to shift the focus from 'projects' to programmes and 'beautification' to ecological functionality, and ensure watershed-scale governance

planning, and livelihood-linked conservation.

Wetlands are "multiple-use" systems, which make them valuable and vulnerable. In a highly populated country, encroachment and land conversion have already erased around 40% of natural wetlands, replacing them with infrastructure, real estate and road networks.

Even where wetlands persist, their catchments

are often irreversibly altered, and old cadastral maps rarely match current ground realities.

Wetlands rely on timing and flow of water.

Dams, embankments, channelisation, sand mining and groundwater over-extraction disrupt these flows, eroding their natural characteristics. Riparian wetlands and floodplains are especially vulnerable because they are treated as spare land rather than active river space. Urban wetlands are expected to store floodwater, receive storm runoff, absorb sewage, and remain clean and biodiverse, often without legal buffers.

Growing pollution results in the eutrophication of water bodies when untreated sewage, industrial effluents, agricultural runoff, and solid waste are pushed into wetlands. When a wetland becomes a dumping ground, its biodiversity collapses, along with its ability to buffer floods and purify water. In coastal areas, sea-level rise, cyclones and shoreline change collide with ports, tourism, aquaculture and settlement growth. Mangroves and lagoons face a double bind: development pressure on landward sides and rising seas on seaward sides, leaving them little room to migrate.

Lastly, a major challenge is capacity constraints. State wetland authorities are often understaffed, underfunded, and stretched across competing mandates. Training gaps in hydrology, ecology, GIS, legal enforcement, and community engagement often translate into weak management plans, weaker implementation and continued degradation of valuable wetlands.

Pragmatic and contextual approaches

There is an urgent need to shift from "projects" to programmes, from "beautification" to ecological functionality, and from "departmental silos" to watershed-scale governance. Through coordinated, efficiently monitored approaches, we can begin to address this complex problem.

Here are some ideas to start with.

First, notification and safety of wetland boundaries. The 2017 Rules are only as strong as notification and demarcation, which should be paired with publicly accessible maps, grievance redress and participatory ground-truthing with communities where disputes are likely.

Second, treat wastewater before it meets wetlands. For urban and peri-urban wetlands, a key action is ensuring treated inflows. Wetlands cannot substitute for sewage treatment plants. Where feasible, constructed wetlands can complement but not replace primary treatment.

Third, protect the wetland's catchment and hydrological connectivity. Wetlands must be managed as part of a basin or catchment system – restore feeder channels, prevent blockages by roads and embankments, stop solid waste dumping, and regulate extraction that alters water regimes.

Fourth, make coastal and riparian wetlands central to disaster risk reduction. Mangroves, mudflats, floodplains, and urban wetlands are nature-based infrastructure. Planning authorities should treat them as risk buffers, worthy of investment comparable to "gray" infrastructure. CRZ enforcement should be paired with livelihood-sensitive approaches that support coastal communities while defending ecological no-go areas.

Fifth, build skills and institutions. A national capacity mission for wetland managers with accredited training in hydrology, restoration ecology, GIS/remote sensing, environmental law and community-led governance. NPCA investments can be more transformative if paired with systematic capacity building and measurable performance indicators, including direct livelihood benefits to local communities.

There are already strides in this direction, with enhanced attention being given to wetlands by various state and non-state actors, and it deserves amplification. Better mapping and monitoring are now possible through satellite remote sensing, drones, and time-series analytics to track encroachment, inundation, and vegetation change.

Updated NPCA guidelines enable science-based, monitorable management plans for outcome-oriented design, while Ramsar's focus on clear boundaries and wise use aligns with India's needs – especially through community stewardship.

The 2026 World Wetlands Day theme highlights traditional knowledge that can strengthen restoration and compliance when treated as evidence.

Align science and policy

World Wetlands Day 2026 may have passed but let us make a societal pact. Governments must notify, enforce, fund, and coordinate; cities must stop treating wetlands as wastelands; industry must prevent pollution at source; research and education institutions must train the next cadre of wetland managers; and citizens must defend local lakes, ponds, floodplains, mangroves, and springs as shared heritage.

If we align science with policy, and policy with people drawing strength from both modern tools and traditional wisdom, we can restore wetlands not as museum pieces, but as thriving, working ecosystems. The future of India's water – and a significant part of India's resilience – depends on it.

A hat tip to Tamil Nadu's industrial strength, reforms

The Economic Survey of India (2025-26), while underscoring India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals and its resilience amid geopolitical fragmentation and global economic turbulence, accords significant recognition to Tamil Nadu's performance across a range of development indicators.

As India emerges as the fastest-growing large economy, Tamil Nadu stands out as the fastest-growing State economy, registering 11.19% real growth in 2024-25. As India's second-largest State economy, Tamil Nadu is also a major contributor to national growth. This performance is driven primarily by the secondary sector, which grew by 13.43%. Within this, manufacturing has emerged as a key growth engine, recording 14.74% real growth – more than three times the all-India average of 4.5%. Tamil Nadu also leads every State in four-year average real manufacturing growth (2021-22 to 2024-25) at 9.38%, while its overall GSDP grew by 8.63%. Headline CPI inflation declined to 2.45% in 2025-26 (till December). The State's merchandise exports have nearly doubled from \$26.15 billion in 2020-21 to \$52.07 billion in 2024-25, reflecting rising global competitiveness and industrial diversification.

The Survey makes multiple references that reinforce Tamil Nadu's position as an investment-ready, industry-first State, highlighting its strength in manufacturing employment, ecosystem-led cluster development, and also its enablement of reforms that support faster project execution and sustainable industrial growth. It also highlights achievements in urban development, skill development, higher education, agriculture and services output.

Industrial diversity

Building on its legacy in textiles and leather, Tamil Nadu has developed a diversified industrial ecosystem. The Survey cites the automobiles and auto components cluster and the electronics manufacturing ecosystem at Sripuram as exemplary cases of effective industrial policy intervention. Tamil Nadu is among the few States where 85% of the cement industry is concentrated. It is also one of three States to receive final approval for financial assistance of ₹100 crore to establish a Medical Devices Park



K.R. Shanmugam

is Economic Consultant to the Government of Tamil Nadu

The Economic Survey of India (2025-26) reinforces Tamil Nadu's position as an investment-ready, industry-first State

under the Scheme for Promotion of Medical Devices Parks.

According to the Survey, Tamil Nadu contributes 15% of India's manufacturing employment – the highest among all States – surpassing Gujarat (13%), Maharashtra (13%), and Uttar Pradesh (8%). This leadership is attributed to the State's higher concentration of large-scale manufacturing units with superior productivity, supported by infrastructure development, availability of skilled manpower and investor-friendly policies.

Under the Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) 2024, Tamil Nadu has enhanced ease of doing business through single-window clearances, digitised approvals and land reforms, while promoting solar parks, district-level decarbonisation plans and energy-efficiency programmes. These initiatives accelerate industrial projects while strengthening environmental compliance.

On pollution control, climate action

The Survey specifically highlights the role of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board in actively monitoring industrial effluent treatment systems and supporting the establishment of common effluent treatment plants, particularly for tanneries and textile clusters. Tamil Nadu has secured a pivotal role in India's green hydrogen economy with the designation of the V.O. Chidambaram Port as one of only three green hydrogen hubs under the National Green Hydrogen Mission. This positions the State at the forefront of India's target to produce five million metric tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030. The Chennai-Vellore-Villupuram-Chengalpattu corridor has also been identified as a potential Regional Rapid Transit System route.

The Survey takes note of the Tamil Nadu Sustainably Harnessing Ocean Resources and Blue Economy Project addressing climate vulnerabilities along the State's 1,076-kilometre coastline across 14 coastal districts. The initiative adopts a multi-pronged approach encompassing coastal biodiversity enhancement, protection infrastructure, livelihood support, marine pollution mitigation and strengthened project management. The Climate Resilient Villages

initiative is recognised as a model for institutionalising climate resilience at the grass-roots level.

It further notes that Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana together account for nearly 40% of India's services output, driven by high-productivity sectors such as IT, finance and professional services, with a strong concentration in southern urbanised States.

Tamil Nadu is also identified among high-performing States in groundnut productivity, alongside Gujarat and Karnataka, due to improved varieties, multiple crop cycles and sustained policy focus on oilseeds. Its achievements in banana cultivation are similarly recognised as region-specific success stories in horticulture.

Urban development and education

On urban development, the Survey highlights Chennai to be one of the world's largest urban agglomerations and an example of orderly boarding and disciplined civic conduct. Chennai's Metropolitan Area Parking Policy 2025 is cited as a national best practice, and Tamil Nadu ranks first in Civic Behaviour in the *India Today* Gross Domestic Behaviour Survey. The State is also among those which have liberalised building by-laws and simplified development norms.

In higher education, 17 institutions from Tamil Nadu feature in the NIRF 2025 Top 100 Overall Rankings – the highest among all States. The Tamil Nadu Working Women's Hostels Corporation (*Thozhi Hostels*) is recognised as a national blueprint for enhancing women's workforce participation. The Skill Voucher Scheme launched in 2024 by the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department is also acknowledged for supporting students from disadvantaged communities.

Overall, the Economic Survey affirms Tamil Nadu's development strategy to be anchored in the integration of economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. Industrial expansion has strengthened production, employment, technology and trade, while the State's leadership in education, renewable energy, urban governance and social welfare positions it as a key contributor to India's Vision 2047.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Budget and the farmer

Having seen sluggish growth, falling crop yields, and mounting pressures for years, farmers believed that their plight would be

addressed in the Union Budget. But, from their perspective, what they got was a failure of empathy and a missed historical opportunity. That cashew

and sandalwood were chosen over concrete action for wheat, rice and pulses was strange. The Budget has only sown the seeds of discontent and

not prosperity.
R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

The Australian Open
Carlos Alcaraz torched

the older Novak Djokovic. The four-setter had disciplined rallies and big serves by both, but Alcaraz outsmarted Djokovic in all departments. Alcaraz gave

us power tennis.
S. Viswanathan,
Srirangam, Tamil Nadu

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

Visible progress, invisible exclusion

Budget 2026-27 signals a transition away from pandemic-era crisis management to what is now a borrowing-heavy doctrine for financing growth and capital expenditure (capex) spending.

By guiding fiscal deficit to 4.3% of GDP and scaling public capital expenditure to ₹12.2 lakh crore, the government aims to project a broader infra-capex enabled vision of a 'Vikas Bharat' while giving a necessary push to MSMEs in manufacturing this time. That public infrastructure and MSME growth are no longer framed as areas of temporary stimulus, but part of the structural backbone of the economy is reassuring.

And yet, beneath the veneer of macro-economic stability, the fiscal math, as projected by the Finance Minister, masks a more precarious reality. As manufacturing scales in strategic frontiers like MSMEs, semiconductors, and biopharma, the mechanism connecting this massive capital expansion to actual employment outcomes has become increasingly tenuous. While capital formation successfully drives headline GDP, absorption of labour is stalled. This suggests that India is perfecting a growth model designed to function with clinical efficiency, while quietly leaving its vast labour force behind.

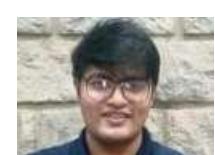
Towards a growth doctrine
For much of India's fiscal history, capex played a secondary role. It expanded when revenues permitted and was restrained when deficits widened. That changed after the pandemic. From 2020-21 onwards, capex expenditure ceased to function as a counter-cyclical instrument and instead became the organising principle of fiscal policy.

The data capture this shift. Capex expenditure as a share of total expenditure rose from roughly 12% in 2020-21 to over 22% in recent estimates. The underlying logic is well established. Public infrastructure



Deepanshu Mohan

Professor and Dean,
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spending is expected to crowd in private investment, raise productivity, and generate employment. Yet, the labour indicators running alongside this expansion reveal a disconnect. The youth NEET rate (share of people who are not in education, employment, or training) for ages 15-29 remains in the 23%-25% range, materially higher than several peer economies. Nearly one in four young Indians is structurally outside employment, education, or training even as public investment accelerates.

Structural U-turn

Construction reflects the sector most directly fuelled by public investment in the post-2015 infrastructure push. Agriculture reflects the sector a developing economy typically sheds labour from as productivity rises elsewhere. The trajectories of the two have moved in directions opposite to what development theory would anticipate across periods.

Construction's employment elasticity declined from 0.59 in the pre-COVID period of 2011-12 to 2019-20 to 0.42 in the post-COVID years of 2021-22 to 2023-24. This occurred when infrastructure spending was at record levels. The implication is stark: each additional unit of capex is now associated with fewer construction jobs than before.

Agriculture is the more troubling story. Employment elasticity rose sharply from 0.04 during 2011-12 to 2019-20 to 1.51 during 2021-22 to 2023-24. Rather than releasing labour, the sector has been reabsorbing it. This reflects distress-driven fallback into low-productivity activity. Taken together, the pattern resembles a structural U-turn. India is modernising its physical asset base while its workforce is being pulled back towards subsistence.

The weak employment is rooted in the kind of production structure the capex turn reinforces. Public investment, as

currently configured, systematically favours capital intensity. This is visible in the widening gap between productivity and wages. Net value added per worker has risen sharply, while average emoluments remain far lower. The divergence suggests that efficiency gains enabled by infrastructure are being captured largely as profits rather than transmitted as labour income.

The industrial structure compounds this bias. The Annual Survey of Industries shows that a large majority of factories remain small, employing fewer than 100 workers, yet contribute modestly to output. Large firms, capable of integrating into new logistics and infrastructure networks, dominate value creation while remaining relatively labour light. Labour-intensive MSMEs struggle to scale, automate, or compete.

The result is a dual economy: a capital-intensive upper layer drives headline GDP growth with limited employment generation, while a vast lower layer absorbs labour through informality and self-employment with low productivity and weak income growth.

New economic citizen?

Read together, fiscal strategy and labour outcomes point to an implicit reordering of priorities. Employment no longer appears as a variable that must be directly engineered and the state is quite incapacitated in doing that at this point. It is treated as an eventual by-product of growth rather than a co-equal objective.

Official projections reinforce this orientation. Formal skills, urban location, and compatibility with automation determine inclusion. Those outside this profile adjust downward, into informal work, own-account activity, or agriculture. Even within the organised sector, wage growth remains subdued.

The economy does not stall. It simply advances without requiring broad-based labour absorption.

For Punjab, taking a leaf out of Haryana

The BJP is reaching out to SCs and OBCs, hoping to repeat its success in Haryana

STATE OF PLAY

Vikas Vasudeva

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Punjab

As political momentum builds across Punjab in the run-up to the 2027 Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appears to be crafting a new strategy of social engineering to get a foothold in the border State, where it has historically struggled to make inroads.

The party is attempting to strengthen its electoral hold on two crucial voting blocs – the Scheduled Castes (Dalits), who comprise 31.91% of the population in Punjab (2011 Census); and the Other Backward Classes (OBC), who account for about 25.30% (academic estimates).

On February 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Dera Sachkhand Ballan in Jalandhar, on the occasion of the 649th birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas. His visit signals the party's effort to appeal to Dalit voters, as the revered saint and social reformer belonged to the Dalit community.

As the Prime Minister met the Dera head, Sant Nirjan Dass, who was recently conferred the Padma Shri, he struck a chord with the gathering by highlighting his connection to the birthplace of Guru Ravidas in Uttar Pradesh's Kashi. Mr. Modi was elected to the Lok Sabha from Varanasi, which is also known as Kashi.

The SCs of Punjab are not a homogeneous category. They are divided into some three dozen castes and are further fragmented into various blended faiths, many of which have evolved into Deras (sects). In Punjab, there are around half a dozen key Deras, including Radha Soami, Namdhari, Dera Sacha Sauda,

Nurmahal, Nirankari and Dera Sach Khand Balan. These have an influence in at least 56 Assembly constituencies of the IIT in the State. Traditionally, in Punjab, SCs have not consolidated behind just one party; instead, their support has been spread across different parties, reflecting cultural and regional differences within the community. This is why consolidating SC votes has remained a formidable challenge for all the political parties in the State.

In neighbouring Haryana, the BJP appeared to focus its electoral strategy in the 2024 Assembly polls on consolidating support among OBCs and SCs. This proved to be effective: the BJP improved its tally in the 17 SC-reserved seats from five in 2019 to eight in 2024, and won the election. While Punjab is a distinct political landscape, caste-based coalitions remain central to its electoral arithmetic.

Of late, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, an OBC leader, has been frequently visiting Punjab. This is a clear sign of the BJP's outreach towards the community. In a well-thought-out strategy, Mr. Saini, invariably donning a turban, visits social and religious functions, besides party events. The party is also showcasing Haryana's development and governance model in Punjab. Mr. Saini has criticised the ruling Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab for failing to deliver on

its pre-poll promises, including the provision of a monthly assistance of ₹1,100 to women. He has pointed out that in contrast, Haryana has already implemented its promised ₹2,100 monthly assistance scheme for women.

After parting ways with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in 2020, the BJP has been focusing on expanding its footprint in Punjab. It has inducted several Sikh leaders into the party, including Amarinder Singh, former Congress leader and Chief Minister; and Ravneet Singh Bittu, who is now a minister in the Union Cabinet. It has also inducted many Hindu leaders, such as Sunil Jakhar, who was earlier with the Congress. The BJP has also tried to project a pro-Sikh image by highlighting steps taken by the Union government in the interest of Sikhs since 2014. These include the formation of a Special Investigation Team to probe the 1984 anti-Sikh riots cases; the initiative to start the Kartarpur Corridor, which connects the Dera Baba Nanak in India to the Darbar Sahib Gurdwara in Pakistan; and the waiving of GST from 'langar' (community kitchens). Despite all this, however, the BJP only won two seats in the 2022 Assembly polls. In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the party contested all the 13 constituencies but failed to win a single seat. However, its vote share went up from 9.63% in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls to 18.56% in 2024.

Whether the party's multi-pronged social engineering strategy, backed by visible gestures such as Mr. Modi's visit to Dera Sachkhand Ballan and the deployment of Haryana's OBC Chief Minister as a bridge to backward classes, can finally help it crack Punjab's complex electoral code remains to be seen.

Finance Commission triples grants to urban local governments

A record allocation of ₹3.5 lakh crore and a higher share of local grants signal a policy shift towards India's rapidly urbanising towns and cities

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

In February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the 16th Finance Commission report in the Lok Sabha, setting the framework for tax devolution between the Centre and the States. The Commission also recommended an allocation of ₹3.5 lakh crore to urban local governments (ULGs) for the next five years. Generally, funds are devolved to ULGs through transfer by the Central and State governments in the form of grants. According to an analysis by Janaagraha, a non-profit organisation, the Commission's allocation for the coming five years matches the spending of centrally sponsored schemes through the Centre's share over the last 13 years combined (Chart 1). The report expands on how this could improve first-mile infrastructure and services for smaller towns and cities. It also notes the allocation of ₹10,000 crore to the urbanisation premium grant, which could incentivise the process of rural-urban transition.

The Commission has also allocated 45% of local government grants to ULGs, which is a noted increase from its previous share of 36% (Chart 2).

The 15th Finance Commission allocated ₹1.5 lakh crore to ULGs for the years 2021-26. The 16th Finance Commission recommended increasing the allocation by 230% (Chart 3). Among the major States, Kerala received the highest increase in allocation of more than 400%, while Himachal Pradesh saw a near 50% decline in such funds (Table 4).

More than 60% of the grants to ULGs were basic grants, of which "tied" grants can be used for basic services such as sanitation and water supply, while "untied" grants can be used for location-specific felt needs, excluding salary and establishment expenses.

Urban windfall

The data for the charts were sourced from Janaagraha's report titled 'The XVI Finance Commission's Recommendations for Urban India: Analysis and Implications (2026-31)'.

CHART 1: Allocations to local governments across various Finance Commissions (₹)

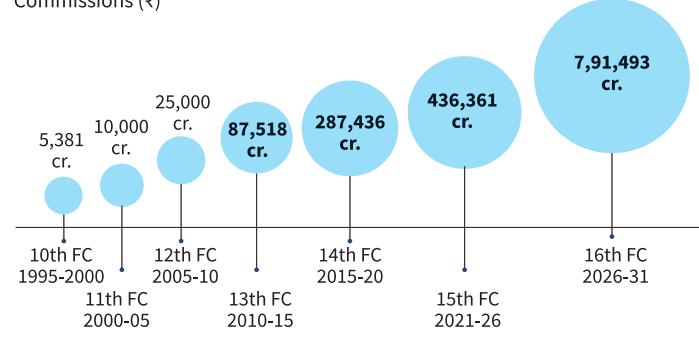


CHART 2: Allocations to Rural and Urban Local Governments in % across various Finance Commissions

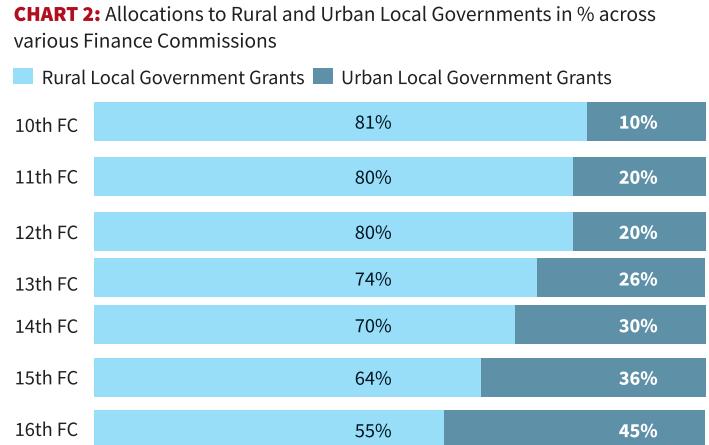


CHART 3: Allocations to Urban Local Governments across Finance Commissions (₹)

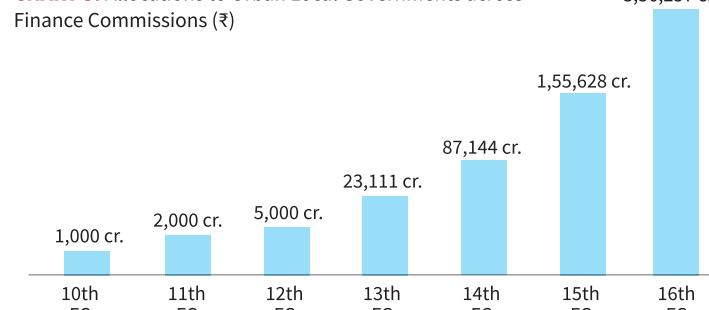


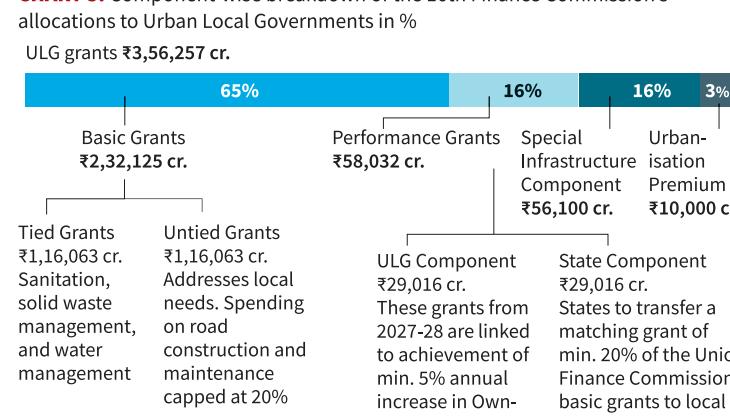
TABLE 4:

State-wise allocations to Urban Local Governments across Finance Commissions. ULG allocations under 16th Finance Commission increased to ₹3.56 lakh crore from ₹1.55 lakh crore. Data for select States.

State **15th FC (₹cr.)** **16th FC (₹cr.)** **Change**

State	15th FC (₹cr.)	16th FC (₹cr.)	Change
Kerala	3,242	16,683	415%
Goa	149	726	387%
Maharashtra	11,611	46,803	303%
Gujarat	6,367	23,764	273%
Tamil Nadu	7,187	25,069	249%
Telangana	3,682	11,548	214%
Haryana	2,520	7,834	211%
Karnataka	6,409	18,483	188%
Punjab	2,764	7,834	183%
Nagaland	249	667	168%
Manipur	353	609	73%
Uttar Pradesh	19,432	33,543	73%
Chhattisgarh	2,900	4,990	72%
Rajasthan	7,696	12,680	65%
Odisha	4,498	5,078	13%
Meghalaya	363	377	4%
Assam	3,197	3,249	2%
Bihar	9,999	9,169	-8%
Arunachal Pradesh	459	233	-49%
Himachal Pradesh	855	435	-49%

CHART 5: Component-wise breakdown of the 16th Finance Commission's allocations to Urban Local Governments in %



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 3, 1976

Petroleum

LS adjourned as Rahul insists on citing unpublished book

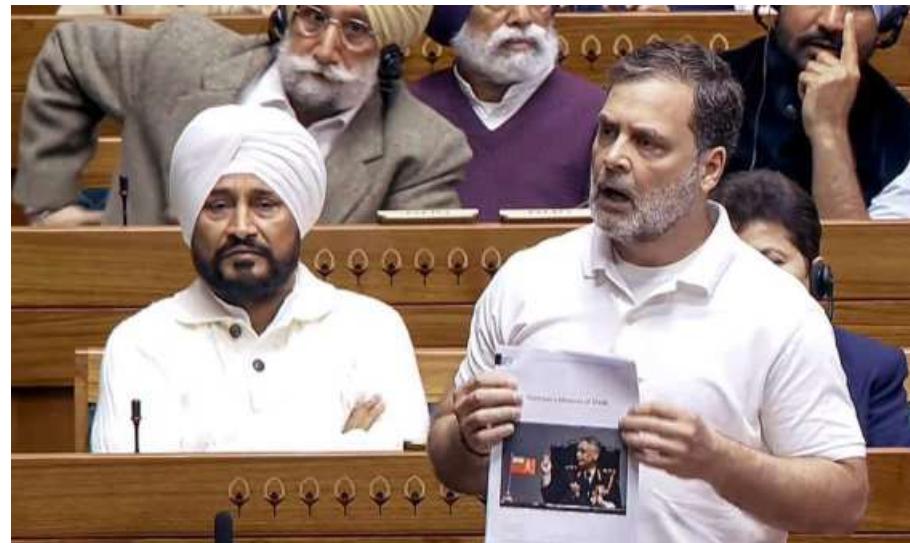
Leader says the reference from Gen. Naravane's unpublished memoir is needed to respond to allegations in LS questioning the Congress's patriotism; Speaker blocks reading, invoking Rule 349(i), which bars quoting books or articles in the House

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi's insistence on quoting a part about 2020 border tensions with China from former Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Naravane's unpublished book, excerpts of which were carried by a magazine, paralysed the functioning of the Lok Sabha on Monday as it took up for discussion the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address to Parliament.

Mr. Gandhi said he was referring to incidents during the border tensions with China in 2020, mentioned in the excerpts, in response to BJP MP Tejasvi Surya's allegations made in the House earlier that the Congress was indifferent to national security.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju repeatedly asked Speaker Om Birla not to let him mention the book as it was not published. Mr. Birla gave a ruling, invoking Rule 349(i) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha, that no book or article can be quoted except in connection



Raising a point: Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session on Monday. ANI

with business in the House.

However, Mr. Gandhi insisted on taking it up each time he rose to speak. As the stalemate between the Congress and the Treasury benches, as well as the chair, continued, the House saw repeated disruptions and was finally adjourned for the day at 4 p.m.

The publication of the memoir, *Four Stars of Destiny*, has been put on hold, with the Defence Ministry saying that it will review it and the former Army chief saying that the issue is now between the publisher and the government.

Mr. Gandhi, who was the first speaker from his party in the House on the day, said he had no intention of bringing the subject up, but "a young colleague made an allegation against Congress". "He has raised the issue about our patriotism and understanding of Indian culture," Mr. Gandhi said, adding that hence he needed to take it up.

"I am not able to understand. They say they are fighting terrorism, and they are scared to hear one quotation. What is written in it that they are so scared that I am not allowed to read it? If they are not

scared, they should allow me to read it," he said.

'Trying to hide'
He maintained that he was speaking on national security, which was central to the President's Address.

"Everyone in the Army knows what happened... you are trying to hide it from the people here. That reality every soldier of this country knows..." he added.

Mr. Shah said that nowhere had Mr. Surya questioned the patriotism of the Opposition and had just referred to the President's speeches from the

UPA era that made no mention of "Viksit Bharat".

The Defence Minister said the book Mr. Gandhi was referring to had not been published. If the book was not allowed to be published as alleged, then why did not Mr. Naravane go to court against it, he asked.

Mr. Rijiju said if the Leader of the Opposition repeatedly ignored the Speaker's ruling and flouted rules, the House would have to discuss what action should be taken against such a member. He was setting a wrong example for young MPs by not following the rules of the House.

Congress MP K.C. Venugopal and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav urged the Speaker to allow Mr. Gandhi to speak.

Speaking to presspersons outside the House, Mr. Gandhi said he was not allowed to quote from Mr. Naravane's unpublished book because it indicted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Defence Minister for "letting down" the Army during the 2020 conflict with China.

"... They are scared because if it comes out, the reality of Narendra Modiji and Rajnath Singhji will be revealed," he said.

Rahul hurting Army morale with same 'imaginary claims' on Doklam issue, says BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Anil Baluni

published yet, how on earth did Rahul Gandhi find out what is written in it? Moreover, despite the arrangements made by the Chair, repeatedly reiterating the same imaginary claim in the House is not only an insult to the country and the Army."

'No evidence'
The BJP leader said it was "extremely unfortunate" that, despite repeated interventions by the Speaker, Mr. Gandhi was "misleading the nation from the floor of the House without any evidence, even as General Shri Manoj Naravane has himself stated on multiple platforms how our daring soldiers gave a befitting reply to China in Doklam and forced them to retreat."

"Rahul Gandhi is not only wounding the dignity of Parliament through continuous false accusations and statements that spread confusion, but he is also hurting the morale of our valiant soldiers," he said.

Mr. Baluni said, "If the book has not even been

Congress accuses Modi govt. of silencing debate on 2020 India-China border clash

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



K.C. Venugopal

the Home Minister, and the Defence Minister don't want you to read this," Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

Speaking to presspersons, Mr. Gandhi said, "The leader of the country is supposed to give directions. The leader is not supposed to run away from decisions and leave them on other people's shoulders. That is what the Prime Minister has done."

Mr. Venugopal alleged that the government was "blatantly misinterpreting the rules of procedure" so that the House and the people of the country are deprived of knowing "their Himalayan blunders" during the face-off with China.

Referring to Rule 349(i) of the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure, Mr. Venugopal argued that the rule does not allow a member to read any book, newspaper, or letter except in connection with the business of the House. "National security was very much part of the Hon'ble President of India's address. Rahul ji was well within the rules to quote a published magazine report on India's security situation vis-a-vis China. How is it a violation of rules?" he told *The Hindu*.

Cong. should introspect, move away from persistent criticism: Sonowal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Sarbananda Sonowal says the country has been witnessing 'corruption-free governance' under Narendra Modi since 2014. PTI

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, accusing its past governments of corruption and misgovernance, and urged the Opposition party to cooperate with the ruling alliance in working towards the goal of a developed India by 2047.

Initiating the Motion of Thanks in the Lok Sabha to President Droupadi Murmu for her address to the joint sitting of Parliament, Mr. Sonowal said the Congress should introspect and move away from what he described as persistent criticism of the Narendra Modi government.

The Dibrugarh MP

claimed that the Congress had been "rejected" by the people of the Northeast because of its alleged failure to address the region's aspirations during its years in power.

Referring to earlier Congress-led governments, Mr. Sonowal alleged that they

had been marked by major scams and policy paralysis. He cited cases such as the 2G spectrum, coal block allocation and Commonwealth Games scams.

In contrast, he said, the country had witnessed "transparent and corruption-free governance"

since 2014 under Mr. Modi.

"The President's Address has done what the Congress never could – it spoke honestly about the past, decisively about the present, and confidently about the future. It marks India's final departure from decades of misrule, corruption and calculated neglect," the Union Minister said.

Describing Ms. Murmu's address to Parliament as "remarkable", the Minister highlighted her historic position.

"The Honourable President's Address, delivered by India's first Adivasi President, is not a coincidence but a conscious reflection of a great nation in motion," Mr. Sonowal said, underlining his own tribal identity.

In RS, Opposition flags farm distress, surge in migration, rising human-wildlife conflict

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



During Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Opposition MPs raised a series of issues, including agrarian distress and rising human-wildlife conflict, and the growing exodus of Indians seeking opportunities abroad.

Speaking for the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), Sasmit Patra said paddy procurement had collapsed in Odisha, with dysfunctional mandis and delayed lifting pushing farmers into distress sales far below the minimum support price (MSP). He flagged the continued malpractice of *katti-chatni* – arbitrary deductions at procurement centres – as well as artifi-

"unilateral attack" on human beings. Wild boars, he noted, were responsible for significant loss of life and crop destruction, yet the Centre had rejected Kerala's request to classify them as vermin.

NCP(SP) MP Fauzia Khan drew attention to India's rising outward migration, calling the trend "alarming". Citing official data, she said more than two lakh Indians had renounced their citizenship each year between 2022 and 2024, while nearly 25 lakh citizens left the country annually for education and employment.

India, she noted, had become the largest source of international migrants, with nearly 18 million Indians living overseas.

She alleged that 58 lakh

CEC insulted and humiliated us during meeting: Mamata Banerjee

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Mamata Banerjee, along with families affected by the SIR exercise, outside the EC office in Delhi on Monday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

voters in her State had been removed from the rolls without being given a chance to defend themselves. She questioned why the SIR exercise was not being conducted in BJP-ruled States and was limited to Opposition-ruled West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. She said her

party did not oppose SIR in principle, but it should not have been carried out in a "hurried manner".

Accusing the EC of attempting to "choose the government before the election", Ms. Banerjee said she had "never seen an Election Commissioner so arrogant and such a

liar" in her political career.

While asserting that she respected the Election Commission as an institution, Ms. Banerjee said the present panel, especially Mr. Kumar, was working under the BJP's direction. She accused the EC of paralysing her government.

CM confronts police
Meanwhile, Ms. Banerjee confronted police personnel deployed outside the State guest house, Banga Bhavan, in Chanakyapuri here, alleging that they harassed the SIR-affected families from West Bengal brought to the national capital to meet Election Commission officials. However, the Delhi Police said they had deployed the security personnel for VIP security and in view of the Union Budget session.

IN BRIEF



14 Jharkhand workers in Dubai seek State's help

Fourteen migrant workers from Giridih, Hazaribagh and Bokaro districts of Jharkhand, allegedly facing unpaid wages in Dubai, have sought the State government's help for their safe return. In a video released on Monday and shared by Giridih-based social activist Sikandar Ali, the workers described their plight and appealed for assistance. Speaking to *The Hindu* from Dubai, Ajay Kumar Mahato, 27, said their passports had been seized by the employer, preventing them from returning home. All 14 people are working for EMC Electromechanical Co. LLC in Dubai and are engaged in transmission line work.

Top court grants bail to three accused in Pune Porsche case

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed bail to three accused in the 2024 Pune Porsche accident while highlighting that loss of parental control over children may lead to fatal consequences involving the loss of innocent lives. On May 19, 2024, a Porsche allegedly driven by a 17-year-old boy under the influence of alcohol, fatally knocked down two IT professionals in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area. On January 23, the top court sought a response from the Maharashtra government on a plea filed by accused Amar Satish Gaikwad seeking bail in the case. Mr. Gaikwad was alleged to be a middleman, who gave ₹3 lakh to the assistant of the doctor to switch the blood sample of the juvenile.

AI grounds Boeing 787-8 plane after pilot reports fuel switch malfunction

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI



The pilot says the crew reported abnormal behaviour of the LEFT fuel switch. REUTERS

An Air India pilot reported an instance of a fuel switch malfunction on a Boeing 787-8 flight from London to Bengaluru after it landed on Monday, following which the airline says it has grounded the aircraft and is examining the matter.

The switches that supply fuel to the two engines were at the heart of the preliminary report into the Air India AI171 crash in Ahmedabad last June. The report into the crash, which also involved a Boeing 787 aircraft, said that the two switches that supply fuel to each of the two engines shifted or "transitioned" to the CUTOFF position one after another and there was a loss of engine thrust and both engines shut

function with one of the two fuel switches. On X, he wrote that the crew "reported abnormal behaviour of the LEFT engine fuel control switch".

He said that "during engine start, the switch failed to remain locked in the RUN position on two attempts, moving towards CUTOFF," a malfunction that has the potential to cut off fuel supply to the engine and force engine shutdown in certain scenarios.

The latest incident was brought to public attention by Captain Amit Singh, Founder of NGO Safety Matters, who has petitioned the Supreme Court for an independent probe into the Ahmedabad crash. He claimed the crew of the London to Bengaluru flight reported a similar mal-

AYUSH Ministry to invite proposals for Ayurveda institutes

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

The Union Minister of State for AYUSH, Prataprao Jadhav, said on Monday that the Ministry would soon seek proposals from States to set up the three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda (AIAs) announced in the Union Budget 2026-27.

"This will be a massive exercise as all States are keen to have an AIA which would bring in enhanced healthcare, more skilled manpower and focused research," said the Minister, speaking exclusively to *The Hindu*.

The AIAs will help expand high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate education, advanced research, and tertiary care services, he added.

The Budget allocation for AYUSH, which saw a



Jacob Koshv
NEW DELHI

The investigation into the causes behind the consecutive failures of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is ongoing, and an external team is also involved in the probe. But none of the companies that had satellites onboard the doomed rockets have expressed reservations over its reliability.

New launch date
The ISRO is considering a fresh launch date in June, the Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, and Space, Jitendra Singh, said at a press briefing on Monday.

On January 12, the PSLV C-62 failed in its mission to

ing the deletion of Padma Shri awardee and Gujarati folk artist Mir Haji Kasam Rathod's name from the voters' list, triggering outrage and allegations of irregularities. He later claimed that the objection was due to a discrepancy in the surname.

Devayat Rajshibhai Karmur, a farmer from Sanakhalia in Devbhoomi Dwarika, also said he had neither authorised anyone nor submitted any forms and was unaware of any such process. "I am a farmer in a remote village and do not go to Bhanvad, the taluka headquarters, even once in two months. Why are you enquiring about this?" he said. An application in his name had been submitted to the BLO seeking the deletion of Ibrahim Sanghar of Nana Mandha in Khamphalia Taluka, said Rambhai Jogani, a local AAP leader from Khamphalia.

The Hindu found that in Gomtipur area of Ahmedabad, some residents were asked to sign between 300 and 1,200 Form 7 applications at the residence of a local leader. They were told the forms were meant for the inclusion of names. After discovering that the applications were actually for deletion, they submitted affidavits to the EC on

January 25, requesting that the forms they had signed not be considered.

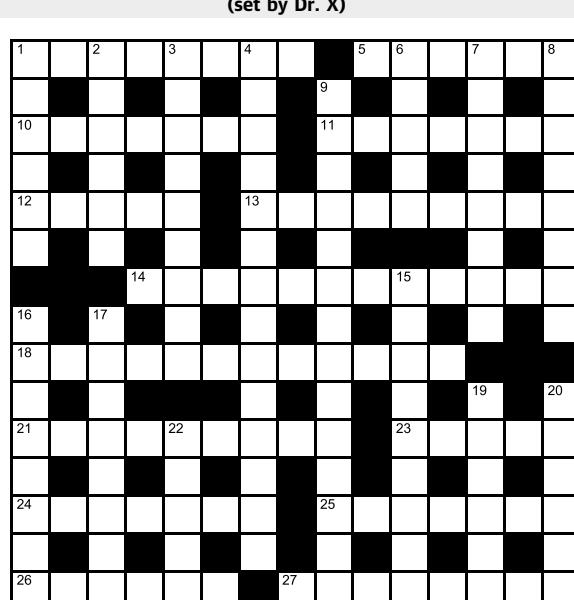
Alleged coercion

"On January 11, we were taken to the office-cum-residence of a local BJP leader, where he asked me to sign 700 forms, saying they were for inclusion of voters from our ward, not deletion.

Later, a BLO informed me that the forms I had signed were for deletion, after which I objected and filed an affidavit. The leader had promised to appoint us as BLA-2 and ensure that our municipal work faced no hurdles if we signed the forms," said Patan resident Arbaz Khan, 29, a steam press worker.

As the western State moves towards finalising its electoral rolls, election officials said on January 29 that the SIR exercise had so far recorded 6,88 lakh applications for the addition of names and 9,88,621 Form 7 applications for deletion.

However, contradicting this statement, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer issued another release two days later, on January 31, stating that January 30 was the last day to submit claims and objections, with a total of just 1,83,235 Form 7 submissions.

TH CROSSWORD + 14707
(set by Dr. K)

- Across**
- Crude barbarian penning naughty poems (8)
 - Censured batter in ground (6)
 - Fine expert cracking case is humourless (2-5)
 - Crushes married priest breaking commandments (7)
 - Recollected Oman's girl's name (5)
 - Finally, nuclear radiation is lessening (9)

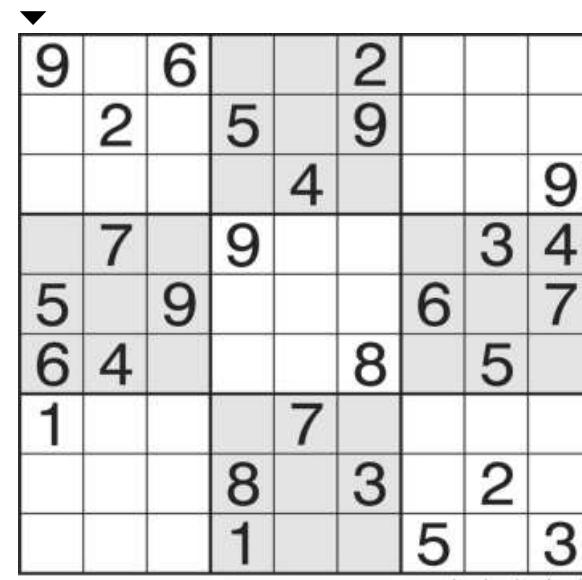
CM YK

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



- Down**
- Promoting extremely hearty girl captivating press (6)
 - Difficult to catch ultimately slippery fellow? Nonsense! (2,4)
 - Separate at once! Lady is promiscuous (9)
 - See 23 Across
 - Enthralled by liqueurs on vacation, rogue totters (5)
 - Lifted rubbish outside bar in Asian country (8)
 - Separate from husband going astray inside hut (8)
 - On the contrary, tiff in bedroom fast turned into an even more unpleasant situation (4,3,2,5)
 - Model excited about extremely remarkable stole (9)
 - Ungainly techies consuming cocaine to become cooler (3,5)
 - Essentially, mumps and rubella shot provides protection (8)
 - Mature maiden for fine chap (6)
 - Devious snoop enters nimbly (6)
 - Chose piano having a reddish-brown colour (5)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to previous puzzle

S	T	R	A	I	G	H	O	F	F	O	N	E	D		
T	A	S	U	C	R	B	C								
R	I	V	E	T	S	E	A	S							
I	L	A	S	R	M	K	G								
L	I	N	G	E	N	G	A								
N	S	E	N	G	A	E									
E	H	D	R	O	H	D									
H	D	I	S	C	F	E									
I	S	C	U	E	R	T									
C	U	E	R	T	S	E									
R	E	T	S	E	N	G									
E	N	G	A	E	N	G									
N	G	A	E	N	G	A									
G	A	E	N	G	A	E									
A	E	N	G	A	E	N									

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Efficacy of Thai Poosam

Many people wonder why there is so much of importance accorded to Thai Poosam, when Poosam is a star that falls every month. That may be a fact, but Poosam, being the brightest star, holds a special significance when it falls in the month of Thai.

On this day, the Sun is in Capricorn and the Moon is in Cancer (its own house). In other words, the two meet in a straight line on this day, said P. Swaminathan. The Sun is the repository of spiritual strength while the Moon is the lord of mental strength. The Sun is full of Siva's aspects, while the Moon is an aspect of Sakti. When both come together, the day is a significant day, spiritually.

Our spiritual texts say that God danced alone on Tiruvadhirai falling in the month of Margazhi and with Parvati on the day of Thai Poosam. It is a day of positive vibrations and although one can pray to all gods, it is very efficacious to appeal to Siva, Parvati and Murugan, which explains the rationale behind the enduring appeal of Thai Poosam over centuries. Devotees begin to celebrate and pray a day in advance and continue the festive fervour for a few days more, due to everyone seeking spiritual strength as well as mental fortitude.

With exponential growth in the number of visitors to temples on this auspicious day, devotees plan temple visits meticulously a year in advance, if not months. The Palani Thai Poosam *Pada Yatra* is another way of observing this auspicious day.

While many modes of transport are available to reach various temples, walking (*pada yatra*) is the best form of worship.

CM YK

MOSCOW

Kremlin confirms new three-way peace talks this week in Abu Dhabi



Russia has confirmed that a new round of talks with Ukraine and the U.S. in Abu Dhabi on ending the four-year war will start on Wednesday. "They were originally planned for this past Sunday. But additional coordination of the schedules of the three parties was needed," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. AFP

DHAKA

Bangladesh ex-PM Hasina, niece handed jail sentences in absentia



A Bangladesh court on Monday sentenced deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to 10 years in jail and her niece Tulip Siddiq, a British lawmaker, to four years in prison in two corruption cases related to alleged irregularities in land allocation for a government housing project. The jail terms were handed down after trial in absentia. PTI

177 Baloch militants killed in two days, say Pakistan forces

Security operation in response to coordinated militant attacks that struck 12 towns; the attacks tied to the Balochistan Liberation Army left at least 50 dead, mostly civilians, Pak. authorities claim

Press Trust of India

KARACHI/ISLAMABAD

Security forces overnight killed 22 militants, raising the death toll of militants to 177 in the last two days in Balochistan after coordinated attacks at multiple places in the restive southwestern Pakistan province left at least 50 dead, mostly civilians, security officials said on Monday.

The operation was launched after militants, including two female suicide bombers, belonging to ethnic Baloch groups carried out attacks across 12 towns in the province on Saturday targeting civilians in Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar and Pasni.

The death toll of militants in operations in the last two days has increased to 177, according to security officials.

"Since Sunday night, se-



Cost of conflict: Local residents stand near a damaged bank on the outskirts of Quetta after an attack by Baloch separatists. AFP

curity forces have killed 22 more terrorists," Shahid Rind, a spokesperson for the provincial government, said on Monday. He said that 167 bodies have been sent to hospitals so far for future processing and identification.

Mr. Rind said most of the militants killed belonged to the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and had support from other insurgent groups.

On Sunday, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said

that the security forces were prepared and timely retaliated to push back the attackers, killing 150 militants.

The military and the state have designated these militants belonging to insurgent groups or the Tehreek-e-Taliban as "Fitna-al-Hindustan", a term the government uses claiming that the militants allegedly receive support from Indian intelligence agencies.

The militants targeted multiple security and go-

vernment installations in their attacks on Saturday. So far, authorities have confirmed the death of at least 17 personnel of the police, frontier corps and security forces.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said that the attacks were carried out by the outlawed BLA, which also killed at least 31 civilians. In Islamabad, the Senate unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the spate of militant attacks in Balochistan.

Insurgency-hit region

Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several attacks targeting the \$60 billion CPEC projects. In 2025, the BLA claimed responsibility for the March hijacking of the Jaffar Express train, killing 31 people and holding hostage over 300 passengers.

Iran said earlier on Monday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days.

WASHINGTON

Kennedy Center will close for two years for renovation, says Trump



U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday he is closing Kennedy Center for two years starting in July for construction. Mr. Trump's announcement follows a wave of cancellations by leading performers, musicians and groups since the President ousted the previous leadership and added his name to the building. AP

LOS ANGELES

Bad Bunny wins big at Grammys, Dalai Lama gets one for storytelling



Bad Bunny made history at the Grammys, winning Album of the Year for his *Debi Tirar Mas Fotos*, the first Spanish-language work to take the top honour. Kendrick Lamar won Record of the Year award, while Billie Eilish took the Song of the Year prize. The Dalai Lama won his first Grammy for audio book and storytelling recording. AP

China's probe to strengthen military, says state media

Agence France-Presse

BEIJING

China's anti-corruption probe into General Zhang Youxia and other senior officials will "remove road-blocks" and strengthen the country's military, state media said on Monday.

The Defence Ministry said last month it was investigating General Zhang, the vice-chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), as well as General Liu Zhenli, chief of staff of the CMC's joint staff department, which oversees combat planning.

Latest target

The pair are the latest to fall under a sweeping drive to root out graft at all levels of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and state since President Xi Jinping came to power more than a decade ago. The Ministry did not say why the probe had been opened.

However, the Chinese military's mouthpiece PLA Daily said they were "corrupt elements" in a front-page editorial published on Monday. The "resolute investigation and punishment" of Generals Zhang and Liu "removes road-blocks" and "squeezes out the water diluting combat effectiveness", it said.

Proponents say China's corruption purge promotes clean governance, but others say it also serves as a tool for Mr. Xi to oust political rivals.

	GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA	email: servewbd2003@yahoo.com
Letter No : 479 /	2 nd Corrigendum	Date: 27/01/2026
In continuation to this office Bid Identification No.CCERWCSBD-Online-32/2025-26 invited vide this office Notice No.6245 Dtd.28.11.2025, partial modification of NCB has been made as follows:		
1. Availability of Tender online for bidding Extended up to Dtd.25.02.2026 at 5.00 PM		
2. Last Date and Time of seeking tender clarification Dtd.24.02.2026 up to 2.00 PM		
3. Date & Time of opening of tender (Technical Bid) on Dtd.26.02.2026 at 11.00 AM.		
4. Date & Time of opening of tender (Price Bid) Will be intimated later		
All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.		
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda.		
OIPR-25001/25182/1/25-26/0014		

	GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA	email: servewbd2003@yahoo.com
Letter No : 497 /	2 nd Corrigendum	Date: 27/01/2026
In continuation to this office Bid Identification No.CCERWCSBD-Online-34/2025-26 invited vide this office Notice No.6339 Dtd.28.11.2025, partial modification of NCB has been made as follows:		
1. Availability of Tender online for bidding Extended up to Dtd.25.02.2026 at 5.00 PM		
2. Last Date and Time of seeking tender clarification Dtd.24.02.2026 up to 2.00 PM		
3. Date & Time of opening of tender (Technical Bid) on Dtd.26.02.2026 at 11.00 AM.		
4. Date & Time of opening of tender (Price Bid) Will be intimated later		
All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.		
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda.		
OIPR-25001/25182/1/25-26/0016		

	PUBLIC (ELECTIONS-II) DEPARTMENT SECRETARIAT, CHENNAI-600 009.
Tender No.1/2026/7824	TENDER NOTIFICATION
e-Tenders are invited from reputed Companies / Agencies for Printing and Supply of Election related materials used during the Conduct of Elections, EVNM/VPAT Related Printing during the General Elections to Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, 2026 and Systematic Voter Education & Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Related Printing in Tamil Nadu for a period of three (3) years as per the guidelines/ instructions of the Election Commission of India. The details can be seen in the tender document which can be downloaded free of cost from the websites https://tnitenders.gov.in and https://tnitenders.gov.in .	
1. Queries from the Companies/Agencies shall be raised in the website https://tnitenders.gov.in by 05:00 P.M. on 06.02.2026. The reply to the queries of the Companies/Agencies shall be uploaded by this Department by 05:00 P.M. on 06.02.2026. The reply to the queries of the Companies/Agencies shall be uploaded by this Department by 05:00 P.M. on 06.02.2026. The reply to the queries of the Companies/Agencies shall be uploaded by this Department by 05:00 P.M. on 06.02.2026. The reply to the queries of the Companies/Agencies shall be uploaded by this Department by 05:00 P.M. on 06.02.2026.	
2. The last date for submission of tender document by e-Procurement module – 3.00 PM. on 17.02.2026.	
3. Technical Bids Opening to ascertain Number of bids received – 03:30 P.M. on 17.02.2026.	
4. Detailed Technical Evaluation by the Tender Evaluation Committee – Will be decided later	
5. Financial Bid Opening - Those bidders who have Technically qualified will be informed.	
6. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)- Rs.5,00,000/- per Region by online module.	
For contact: 044 - 25665327 DIPR/655/Tender/2026	

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Advertisement for Recruitment of Non-Faculty Group "A"	
Post position of Deputation Basis at AIIMS, Mangalagiri	
AIIMS Mangalagiri invites Online applications from eligible candidates for One (01) Senior Accounts Officer (Non-Faculty Group A) post on Deputation Basis. The closing date of applications will be 30 days from the date of publication of advertisement in Employment News. For more details, please visit website www.aiimsmangalagiri.edu.in .	
Sd/- Executive Director AIIMS, Mangalagiri	

Office of the Project Director PMU(RWSRPD) & Chief Engineer Water Resources (North) Hanumangarh	
Notice Inviting Bid (NIB Code:WRN2526A0133)	
Bid for 02 Nos. of works related to Strengthening / Up-gradation of Infrastructure estimated cost of work from ₹ 0.95 Crore to 3.28 Crore is invited from prospective bidders up to 11.02.2026 Time 06.00 PM. Other particulars of the bids may be visited on the procurement portal http://www.wproc.rajasthan.gov.in , http://sppr.rajasthan.gov.in , of the state and www.wproc.rajasthan.gov.in, departmental website.	
UBN No.- WRN2526W5OB00425, WRN2526W5OB00426	
(Pradeep Rustagi) Project Director PMU (RWSRPD) & Chief Engineer water resources(North) Hanumangarh	
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WASHINGTON

Kennedy Center will close for two years for renovation, says Trump



U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday he is closing Kennedy Center for two years starting in July for construction. Mr. Trump's announcement follows a wave of cancellations by leading performers, musicians and groups since the President ousted the previous leadership and added his name to the building. AP

Iranian media says President has ordered talks with U.S.

Agence France-Presse

PARIS

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has ordered the start of nuclear talks with the United States, local media said on Monday, after U.S. President Donald Trump said he was hopeful of a deal to avert military action against the Islamic republic.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said that the attacks were carried out by the outlawed BLA, which also killed at least 31 civilians. In Islamabad, the Senate unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the spate of militant attacks in Balochistan.

Insurgency-hit region

Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a long-running violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups have previously carried out several attacks targeting the \$60 billion CPEC projects. In 2025, the BLA claimed responsibility for the March hijacking of the Jaffar Express train, killing 31 people and holding hostage over 300 passengers.

Iran said earlier on Monday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days.

Gaza's crucial Rafah crossing to Egypt reopens with limits

Associated Press

CAIRO

Gaza's Rafah border crossing with Egypt reopened on Monday for limited traffic, a key step in the Israel-Hamas ceasefire but a mostly symbolic one as few people will be allowed to travel in either direction and no goods will pass through.

An Egyptian official said 50 Palestinians were expected to cross in each direction on the first day of Rafah's operation. Within the first few hours of the opening, no one was seen crossing in or out of Gaza.

Following the Iranian authorities' deadly response to anti-government protests that peaked last month, Mr. Trump has threatened military action and ordered the dispatch of an aircraft carrier group to West Asia.

"President Pezeshkian has ordered the opening of talks with the United States," the news agency Fars reported on Monday. "Iran and the United States will hold talks on the nuclear file," Fars said, without specifying a date.

Iran said earlier on Monday it was working on a method and framework for negotiations that would be ready in the coming days.

Thousands of other Palestinians outside the territory hope to enter and return home. Egyptian state media and an Israeli security official also confirmed the reopening.

Violence still continued across the coastal territory on Monday, and Gaza hospital officials said an Israeli Navy ship had fired on a tent camp, killing a 3-year-old Palestinian boy. Israel's military said it was looking into the incident.

Medical exit

About 150 hospitals across

Egypt are ready to receive Palestinian patients evacuated from Gaza through Rafah, authorities said. Also, the Egyptian Red Crescent said it has readied "safe spaces" on the Egyptian side of the crossing to support those evacuated from the Gaza Strip.

Israel has banned sending patients to hospitals in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem

since the war began – a move that cut off what was previously the main outlet for Palestinians needing medical treatment unavailable in Gaza.

Israel has said it and Egypt will open for exit and entry through the Rafah crossing, which will be supervised by European Union border patrol agents with a small Palestinian presence.

Fearing that Israel could use the crossing to push Palestinians out of the enclave, Egypt has repeatedly said it must be open for them to enter and exit Gaza. Historically, Israel and Egypt have vetted Palestinians applying to cross.

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Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website and NIC Portal only. For further details, please visit websites : www.tnpl.com / <https://tnltenders.gov.in/nicapp/app>

Sport**TOEING THE LINE**

We will follow the decision taken by government and Board: Agha



FILE PHOTO
We are players contracted to the Board [PCB], and whatever decision our government and Board have taken, all the players are on board with it — Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha on the team boycotting the T20 WC match against India on February 15. Agha & Co. have departed for Sri Lanka after the T20Is against Australia.

WARM-UP FIXTURE

Jagadeesan slams a century to set up India-A's victory over USA



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

N. Jagadeesan (104, 55b) scored a century to power India-A to a 38-run win over USA in their ICC T20 World Cup warm-up match at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Monday. **The scores:** India-A 238/3 in 20 overs (Jagadeesan 104, Badoni 60 n.o.) bt USA 200 in 19.4 overs (Gous 44, Sanjay 41, Bishnoi 3/37).

GETTING THE AXE

Sri Lanka drops Dhananjaya from its T20 World Cup squad

**NO GUARANTEE**

Djokovic hints at retirement as clock ticks on history bid



Novak Djokovic left the Australian Open still stuck on 24 Majors and with fresh doubts about how many more titles he will have at winning a 25th. But after losing to Carlos Alcaraz in the final, the Serb suggested he may not be back in Melbourne. "God knows what happens tomorrow, let alone in six or 12 months," he said.



Game-changers: Gardner has been a consistent performer for GG while Jemimah has shone in key moments in her maiden season as DC skipper. FILE PHOTOS

Humdinger in store as Giants, Capitals clash in Eliminator

The winner will earn the right to meet the high-flying Royal Challengers for a shot at a maiden crown in the summit clash on Thursday

WPL-4**Vivek Krishnan**
VADODARA

Delhi Capitals and Gujarat Giants have already provided two humdingers of high quality in this year's Women's Premier League. At the D.Y. Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on January 11, Giants raked up 209 and restricted Capitals to 205 for five to claim a four-run win. Last week, at the Kotambi Stadium, Giants again held their nerve at the close, pipping Jemimah Rodrigues and Co. by three runs.

When the two teams engage in the Eliminator on Tuesday, the stakes will be higher. The triumphant lot will advance to Thursday's final against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, while the loser will be condemned to

Today's match**ELIMINATOR**

Vadodara, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 8

GG 4 | DC 4

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

the heartbreak of being so near and yet so far.

Evidently, there isn't much to separate these teams. Having had a few stumbles in the first two weeks of the tournament, both camps have hit a sweet spot at the business end. Ashleigh Gardner's side has won its last three matches. DC has prevailed in three of its last four outings.

In a contest of this magnitude, the experienced players are likely to hold the key. For Giants, Sophie Devine has been irrepressible. The 36-year-old New Zealander has contributed 237 runs in eight innings at a strike rate of 152.9. Even more significant has been her output as a medium-pacer — she is the tournament's leading wicket-taker with 17 scalps.

In Capitals' case, contributions have been perhaps more evenly spread. While Chinelle Henry and Marizanne Kapp have set the tone with the new ball, Nandani Sharma has risen to prominence with her verve and variation at the death.

A bulk of the runs have been compiled by Lizelle Lee and Laura Wolvaardt.

In her first season as captain, Jemimah has also shone at key moments.

If both these outfits play at the level that has brought them this far, another humdinger may well be in store.

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IN BRIEF



Anahat stuns Georgina to win Squash on Fire Open

Seventh seed Anahat Singh defeated top seed and World No. 10 Georgina Kennedy of England 12-10, 11-5, 11-7 in the Squash on Fire Open final in Washington for her maiden PSA Bronze-level crown. It is the biggest title of the young Anahat's career, and the 15th overall on the PSA Tour for the Indian in 26 tournaments. She jumped 12 places to achieve a career-best world ranking of 19. The 17-year-old has become the youngest Asian to break into the world's top-20. "I wanted to do well in these events, get my ranking up, and I'm glad I was able to do it," she said.

LIVE TELECAST

Men's U-19 WC: SS Select 2 & JioHotstar, 1 p.m.
WPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: DAZN, 1.15 a.m. (Wednesday)

SNAPSHOTS



Topping the charts: Velammal International School (Ponneri) and Velammal Vidyalaya (Paruthipattu) clinched the boys' and girls' titles in the ACG Junior NBA 3v3 tournament in Chennai. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Abdusattorov wins; Gukesh joint eighth
WIJK AAN ZEE: Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan clinched the Tata Steel Masters title with a black-piece victory over Arjun Erigaisi while D. Gukesh emerged as the best Indian with a joint eighth finish on Monday. **The results (final round):** R. Praggnanandhaa (5.5) drew with Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 7.5); Arjun Erigaisi (4.5) lost to Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 9); Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 6.5) beat Aravindh Chithambaram (4.5); Thai Dai Van Nguyen (Cze, 3) lost to Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 8.5); D. Gukesh (6.5) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 7.5); Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 7) drew with Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 7); Anish Giri (Ned, 6.5) drew with Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 7.5).

Inter extends its lead over Milan
MILAN: Inter Milan extended its lead at the top of Serie A to eight points with Sunday's 2-0 win at Cremonese, a match which was marred by away fans nearly hitting the host goalkeeper Emil Audero with a firecracker. Lautaro Martinez and Piotr Zielinski's first-half strikes were enough for Inter to extend its unbeaten league run to 11 matches and pile pressure on nearest challengers AC Milan.

The results:
LaLiga: Real Betis 2 (Avila 23-pen, Fornals 88) bt Valencia 1 (Roja 20); Getafe 0 drew with Celta Vigo 0; Athletic Bilbao 1 (Ruiz de Galarraga 88) drew with Real Sociedad 1 (Guedes 3).
Serie A: Cremonese 0 lost to Inter Milan 2 (Martinez 16, Zielinski 31); Parma 1 (Cambiaso 51-og) lost to Juventus 4 (Bremer 15, 54, McKennie 37, David 64); Torino 1 (Adams 29) bt Lecce 0.

Bundesliga: Borussia Dortmund 3 (Anton 44, Guirassy 68-pen, 69) bt Heidenheim 2 (Niehues 45+, 48); Stuttgart 1 (Demirovic 90) bt Freiburg 0.

WTT Star Contender: Anusha, Priyanuj lead India's wild card list

Anusha Kutumbale and Priyanuj Bhattacharya lead India's wild card entrant list as the host will field a record 23 players (out of 33 Indian entries



Best of the lot: The winners of the Chennai district selection chess tournament. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

across all categories) in the main draw of the WTT Star Contender Chennai to be held at TNPESS here from February 10 to 15. Ryu Hanna of Korea and Japan's Kotomi Omoda are the two foreign players to get a women's singles wild card via WTT Nomination. Korea's Kang Dongsoo and France's Esteban Dorr received WTT nomination in men's singles.

Wild card entries:
Host: Men's singles: Anirban Ghosh, Priyanuj Bhattacharya, Divyansh Srivastava, Remi Betelu (Fra); **women's singles:** Anusha Kutumbale, Sayali Wanii, Kavya Bhatt, Taniesha Kotecha.

Men's doubles: Mudit Dani & Anirban Ghosh; Kristian Karlsson & Elias Ranefur (Swe); **women's doubles:** Swastika Ghosh (Ind) & Sarah De Nutte (Lux); **mixed doubles:** Syndrela Das & Payas Jain.

WTT Nominations: Men's singles: Kang Dongsoo (Kor), Esteban Dorr (Fra); **women's singles:** Kotomi Omoda (Jpn), Ryu Hanna (Kor).
WTT Youth Nominations: **Men's singles:** P. B. Abhinandhan; **women's singles:** Divyanshi Bhowmick.

AIFF selects FanCode as the ISL media partner

CHENNAI: The AIFF, on Monday, selected FanCode as the official media partner for the ISL 2025-26 season. Kaleidoscope Production and Services (KPS) was awarded the production rights. The next season of the ISL is set to begin on February 14.

Harish shines for Veltech MultiTech
B. Harish's 81 enabled Veltech MultiTech beat

JHA Agarsen by 50 runs in the second round of the CSK-Tiruvallur DCA inter-collegiate T20 tournament held here. **The scores (second round):** Veltech MultiTech 135/6 in 20 overs (B. Harish 81) bt JHA Agarsen 85 in 17.5 overs. Veltech HighTech. 139/5 in 20 overs (E. Dinesh 53, S. Bharanidharan 44 n.o.) bt Jaya Engg. 96 in 18.1 overs (V. Santhosh Kumar 26, A. Raja Santhosh 4/4).

Annai Violet Arts 68 in 15.2 overs (K. Hari Charan 4/15) lost to Veltech Ranga Sanku Arts 69/6 in 10.3 overs (R. Ranjith Kumar 3/36, U. Yeshwanth 3/16).

First round: Apollo Arts College 79 in 17 overs (K. John Kumar 27, S. Vasanth 3/9) lost to GRT IET 82/7 in 15.2 overs.

Velammal IS, Velammal Vidyalaya triumph

Velammal International School (Ponneri) and Velammal Vidyalaya (Paruthipattu) clinched the boys' and girls' titles, respectively, in the Chennai leg of the ACG Junior NBA 3v3 National basketball tournament held here.

Final placings:

Boys: u-14: 1. Velammal International School (Ponneri) (Rohan Nithish, Srikanth, Arwaz Khan, Manikandan); 2. Crescent MHSS (N. Yogesh, A. Mohammed Adhil, M. Saravanan, P. Jones Cameron).

All-Star Team Chennai: A. Santhosh, A. Joel Antony, M. Srinivasan (all from American College, Y. Vithan Kaushik (Velammal Vidyalaya, Alapakkam).

Girls: u-14: 1. Velammal Vidyalaya, Paruthipattu (Navya, Kiriyaa, Darshini, Ashika); 2. St. Thomas MHSS (M. N. Afreen Ruhi, G. Joshua, A. Gayathri, V. Anshika).

All-Star Team Chennai: R. Reona, S. Lakshanabi (both from

Tamil Nadu reached 293 for three stumps, after skittling out Pondicherry for 42, on the first day of the South Zone under-14 inter-State tournament (third round) at Vizianagaram on Monday. For Tamil Nadu, B.L. Sanjay Balaji (102, 142b, 12x4) and J. Kabilan (122, 135b, 14x4, 1x6) added 218 for the opening wicket.

The scores: Pondicherry 42 in 37.3 overs (S. Pavin 3/2, D. Niranjan Veer 3/19, K. A. Seshank Kumar 3/14) vs. TN 293/3 in 52 overs (B.L. Sanjay Balaji 102, J. Kabilan 122).

Problems aplenty in a disappointing and frustrating season for Tamil Nadu

The team failed to qualify for the knockouts in Ranji as well as the white-ball competitions; the decision to have a split-coaching set-up didn't work

CRICKET

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu cricket is at a crossroads. In the 2025-26 domestic season, the team hit rock bottom, failing to qualify for the knockouts in all three competitions (Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy). While these are worrying signs, the bigger concern is that the side was never truly in contention at any stage of the season.

That TN's Ranji Trophy hopes were dashed after just four games underlined how poor the campaign was.

The key to success in the



A campaign to forget: Tamil Nadu hardly tasted success in any format. FILE PHOTO: BISWARANJAN ROUT

prestigious red-ball tournament is having a good pool of fast bowlers capable of helping the side take 20 wickets consistently. Unfortunately for TN, the pace attack failed to deliver. Only left-arm pacer

Gurjapneet Singh showed promise in the three games he played, but he lacked adequate support. Even the spinners – traditionally TN's strength – were unable to make an overall impact.

On the batting front, the recurring struggles against disciplined medium-pacers proved costly. One reason behind the below-par show is that batters have grown up on an unhealthy diet of spin in the first-divi-

sion league and appear technically inadequate against the moving ball. While this is a structural issue that the State association must address through better pitches at the grassroots level, the batters should also take responsibility and improve.

While TN has regularly underachieved in the Ranji Trophy, the side was once a force in limited-overs cricket. However, the team has been left behind in those formats in recent years and needs to embrace a fearless approach rather than persisting with outdated methods.

Selection of players was another issue that plagued the team, especially in the white-ball leg. For instance, during the T20 competition, two players

who were initially selected were sent back without playing, reflecting confused decision-making.

When it comes to coaching appointments, the TNCA needs a long-term vision. Strong domestic sides like Mumbai, Vidarbha, and Madhya Pradesh have offered their coaches longer tenures and benefited from stability.

But in TN's case, M. Senthilnathan was the fourth different coach in as many years. The management even tried a split-coaching set-up by drafting in M. Venkataraman for the limited-overs leg, with little success. The need of the hour is a thorough review of what went wrong and a clear roadmap for sustained success and not short-term fixes.

Ankita crashes out in opening round

MUMBAI OPEN

Tarun Shastry
MUMBAI

What appeared to be a blessing in disguise turned into a harsh lesson as India's Ankita Raina crashed out in the opening round of the L&T Mumbai Open 125K Series at the Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) centre court here on Monday.

Ankita, who benefited from the withdrawal of top seed Lulu Sun of New Zealand due to illness, failed to capitalise on the opportunity as Japan's Misaki Matsuda outplayed her 6-4, 6-0 on the opening day of the main draw.

Matsuda set the tone early with her aggressive intent, combining depth



Strong start: Matsuda defeated Ankita in straight sets.

from the baseline with frequent forays to the net.

The Japanese player consistently put Ankita on the back foot, using crisp volleys to deny the Indian any rhythm in extended rallies.

From the baseline, Matsuda's forehand proved decisive.

She dictated play with clean winners down the line, often opening up the court before finishing points with ease. While Ankita attempted to counter-punch in phases, Matsuda showcased her finesse with well-timed drop shots whenever the Indian retreated deep behind the baseline,

keeping her under constant pressure. Matsuda's superior play eventually earned her the first set.

In the second set, Matsuda strung together games swiftly and tightened her grip on the contest. Ankita offered brief resistance, but it was not enough to stem the momentum, as the Matsuda closed out the match with authority. In another contest, last year's runner-up, Thailand's Mananchaya Saengwankaew, cruised into the round-of-16 after thrashing Slovakia's Viktoria Moravayova 6-2, 6-1.

Vaidehi Chaudhari was overpowered 2-6, 0-6 by France's Leolia Jeanjean in a match that lasted just over an hour.

Other results: Mai Hontama (Jpn) bt Alevtina Ibragimova 6-1, 6-4; Mei Yamaguchi (Jpn) bt Polina Latcenko 5-7, 6-3, 6-3.

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GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA.
email : servsbd2003@yahoo.com
Letter No : 488 / **2nd Corrigendum** Date: 27/01/2026
In continuation to this office Bid Identification No.CCERWCSBD-Online-33/2025-26 invited vide this office Notice No.6329 Dtd.28.11.2025, partial modification of NCB has been made as follows:
1. Availability of Tender online for bidding Extended up to Dtd.25.02.2026 at 5.00 PM
2. Last Date and Time of seeking tender clarification Dtd.24.02.2026 up to 2.00 PM
3. Date & Time of opening of tender (Technical Bid) on Dtd.26.02.2026 at 11.00 AM.
4. Date & Time of opening of tender (Price Bid) Will be intimated later
All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda, OIPR-25001/25182/1/25-26/0014

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA.
email : servsbd2003@yahoo.com
Letter No : 435 / **2nd Corrigendum** Date: 27/01/2026
In continuation to this office Bid Identification No.CCERWCSBD-Online-35/2025-26 invited vide this office Notice No.6363 Dtd.28.11.2025, partial modification of NCB has been made as follows:
1. Availability of Tender online for bidding Extended up to Dtd.20.02.2026 at 5.00 PM
2. Last Date and Time of seeking tender clarification Dtd.19.02.2026 up to 2.00 PM
3. Date & Time of opening of tender (Technical Bid) on Dtd.21.02.2026 at 11.00 AM.
4. Date & Time of opening of tender (Price Bid) Will be intimated later
All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda, OIPR-25001/25182/1/25-26/0016

GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB
Municipal Corporation Amritsar
Tender Reference No. E-Tender Notice No. 148 Date 30.01.2026
The Department of : Municipal Corporation, Amritsar Invites Bid for Various Works.
Closing Date and Time : 16.02.2026 upto 03:00 PM
Opening of Technical Bid : 16.02.2026 upto 03:30 PM
EMD : 2% of Estimate Amount
For Detail log onto Note : <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
Any Corrigendum(s) to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.
Superintending Engineer(c), Municipal Corporation, Amritsar
1596/12/2025-26/7744

PUNJAB STATE WAREHOUSING CORPORATION
SCO 74-75, BANK SQUARE, SECTOR-17B CHANDIGARH
PBX: 0172-5197847, 5197846
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
PSWC invites online tenders through GeM Portal for creation of 2.00 LMT godown capacities at 03 locations in the State of Punjab for guaranteed lease of 10 years on Build, Own and Operate/Lease basis for storage requirements of FCI under two bid system 'Technical Bid' and 'Financial Bid'.
NIT (alongwith GeM Bid IDs) is available on Department's website i.e. <https://pswc.in>
PSWC reserves the right to scrap the tender at any stage without assigning any reason and PSWC will not be liable for any costs and consequences incurred by the intending bidders.
Note: Any corrigendum(s)/Notification(s) to this Notice Inviting E-Tender shall be published Department's website & GeM Portal.
1004/12/2025-26/7778 Managing Director, PSWC

GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB
Tender Reference No. E-Tender Notice No.II/145 date 27/1/26
The Department of : Municipal Corporation, Amritsar Invites Bids for various works
Sr. No **Name of Work** **Last date of Submission** **Opening of Technical Bid**
1. REFURBISHMENT OF EXISTING SUBHASH BRIDGE AND



Sindhu's fight is back, but finish remains a concern

The two-time Olympic medallist's 2025 season was defined by late-game collapses, with repeated losses coming after she held leads or reached parity in crucial phases

K.V.S. GIRI

Devanshi Bihani

For elite athletes returning from injury, the first real marker of readiness is rarely a result. It is movement without restraint, and the body responding before the mind has time to doubt. P.V. Sindhu described that feeling after the Malaysia Open.

"Coming back after injury, you wait for that one feeling... the body moving freely, the legs responding, the game flowing again. This week, I felt it again," Sindhu wrote in an Instagram post.

Sindhu, who was forced to take a break after suffering a foot injury in October, returned to action at the Malaysia Open – the first tournament (Super 1000) of the season. Her run ended with a semifinal defeat but mattered for reasons more fundamental than the scoreline. "A tough semi-final loss... but moving without hesitation. Trusting myself again. Feeling the fight return point after point," she added.

That readiness was tested immediately by Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun, an opponent she had drawn at the season opener for the second year in a row. Sindhu took time to find her range, trailing 1-7 and then 4-8, but there were early signs that her movement and timing were falling back into place. A run of forehand winners and decisive counter-attacks brought her a 11-9 lead at the interval. The turnaround was capped by a disguised backhand drive to close out the opening game. Sindhu eventually came through 21-13, 22-20 in a 51-minute win.

Her most authoritative display came in the round-of-16 clash against Tomoka Miyazaki. The two-time Olympic medallist looked sharp and assured, sweeping aside the Japanese teenager 21-8, 21-13. The match stood out for the clarity of her attacking intent. She backed her power game consistently, with diagonal drops and flat smashes, and once she seized control, the contest never became complicated. Not once did Miyazaki take the lead, as the Indian dictated both pace and space throughout.

In the quarterfinals, Sindhu faced reigning world champion Akane Yamaguchi, who entered the match wearing a knee brace. Sindhu took charge early, racing through the opening game 21-11 in just over 10 minutes with sharp, short-back-swing winners and relentless pressure from the back court. Yamaguchi, visibly hampered, retired after the first game, sending the veteran into her first Super 1000 semifinal in three years.

The last-four battle against China's Wang Zhiyi offered the clearest picture of where Sindhu, a former world No. 2, currently stands. The final scoreline of 21-16, 21-15 did not fully reflect the pressure Wang was put under, as Sindhu led in the opening phases of both games and repeatedly forced her to defend in a demanding 52-minute contest. For Wang, who had seen her World Championships campaign in Paris cut short by the Indian last year, playing well with her ability to tighten rallies and absorb pace proved decisive.

The two tournaments that followed showed how fragile Sindhu's return still was. At the India Open, she suffered a first-round loss to Vietnam's Thuy Linh Nguyen, going down 22-20, 12-21, 15-21. At the Indonesia Masters a week later, she rebuilt momentum with wins over Manami Suizu and Line Kjaersfeldt, the latter turning out to be her 500th career victory and making her the first Indian

shuttle to reach the landmark in women's singles. Then she faced Chen Yufei in the quarterfinals. The Chinese top seed, whom Sindhu has now lost to five times in a row, ruled the game with her classic half-smashes. Chen started with a five-point lead in the opening game before Sindhu earned her break with a net kill. The Indian produced a few winners but struggled to move ahead, eventually dropping the first game 13-21.

Sindhu began the second game with renewed intent, moving into a 4-2 lead and staying marginally ahead until the mid-game interval. The turning point came soon after. With the score reading 11-12, she lost her second challenge on a close front-court line call. The following rally brought another marginal decision against her, and frustration began to creep in.

Her protests to the umpire were not well received, and she was shown a yellow card for misconduct. A rattled Sindhu soon slipped to 12-16. Moments later, she was penalised for delaying play just as Chen was preparing to serve, resulting in a red card and a point default. Even Chen appeared startled by the call. Despite the disruption, she fought back to reduce the deficit to a single point, but Chen eventually closed out the game 21-17.

"A tough loss when decisions shape the match. Progress is showing. Time to keep building," Sindhu wrote on X. This quarterfinal captured a recurring theme of her 2025 season, with Sindhu losing from winning or level positions in short, match-defining point sequences.

The 2025 journey

When 2025 began, Sindhu was no longer operating with the cushion of a top seeding or ranking. The women's singles circuit had compressed sharply, with younger players competing with greater belief that they could win and increasingly, they did.

The Indian's season began at the India Open with a clear sense of transition. It was her first tournament under Indonesian coach Irwansyah, the former men's singles coach credited with shaping Jonatan Christie and Anthony Ginting. She described the phase as a new beginning, acknowledging that it would take time to build rhythm and understanding with a coach whose emphasis lay on reading opponents and sharpening tactical choices. On court, the signs were mixed. She reached the quarterfinals, beating Sung and Suizu before losing a three-game contest to Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung.

The stretch following the India Open was marked by a string of first-round exits that stalled any chance of momentum. At the Indonesia Masters, she went out in the round of 32, losing in straight games to Nguyen. The All England Open, however, saw the most crushing of her three defeats. Sindhu appeared firmly in command against Korea's Kim Ga-eun, leading 20-12 in the opening game, before a sudden loss of momentum saw her rival claw back with seven straight points.

While she closed out the first game 21-19, there was more relief than celebration, a reflection of how clearly the tide began to turn. Kim's defensive resilience and repeated use of cross-court, round-the-head shots into Sindhu's backhand began to turn rallies. Once the Korean took control, the Indian was unable to arrest the slide, losing 21-19, 13-21, 13-21 in 61 minutes. The Swiss Open a week later followed a similar script; she exited again in the opening round, losing

17-21, 19-21 to Denmark's Julie Jakobsen to mark her third consecutive first-round loss of the season.

The middle stretch of 2025 offered little respite. At the Badminton Asia Championships, Sindhu reached the round of 16 before losing a three-game contest to Yamaguchi. It was a match that displayed both her ability to stay competitive against elite opposition and the difficulty of sustaining control through decisive phases.

Uneven returns continued in the Super 500 and Super 750 events. She fell in the opening round of the Malaysia Masters, losing in three games to Nguyen for her fourth first-round defeat in five tournaments. In Singapore, she reached the second round but went down in three games to Olympic champion Chen after pushing the Chinese for over an hour. The Indonesia Open provided a rare release as Sindhu edged past long-time rival Nozomi Okuhara in a three-game battle, only to fall in the round of 16.

The East Asian leg proved similarly taxing. Sindhu suffered another early exit at the Japan Open, losing in straight games to Sim Yu Jin, a defeat that left her with five first-round and three second-round exits in the season by mid-July. At the China Open, however, she produced her most significant win of the year, defeating world No. 7 Miyazaki in three games. This was her first victory over a top-10 player since late 2024 but she bowed out in the pre-quarterfinals. The loss came against 18-year-old Unnati Hooda in the round of 16 as the teenager became the only Indian woman in the last five years to beat India's most decorated women's singles player.

That momentum briefly carried into the World Championships in Paris, where Sindhu delivered her strongest performance of the year. She dismantled Zhiyi in the round of 16 and came within touching distance of a sixth Worlds medal, losing narrowly in the quarterfinals to Putri Kusuma Wardani after being in contention deep into the deciding game. Yet consistency again proved elusive. She exited in the opening round of the Hong Kong Open, losing for the first time to Line Christophersen, before closing the season at the China Masters with a quarterfinal finish, her third last-eight appearance of the year. That run ended with Sindhu again falling to An Se-young, against whom she remains 0-8 in their career head-to-head.

In 2024, the 29-year-old still collected titles and podium finishes. In 2025, there were no trophies, multiple first-round exits, and quarterfinals became the outer limit of her progress.

Slipping away

Taken together, Sindhu's 2025 results point not to a player in decline, but to one repeatedly undone at the business end of matches. Scores from the past year show the pattern.

Nine of her 14 losses in 2025 followed a familiar pattern: matches in which she either held clear leads or clawed her way back to parity late in games, only to lose clusters of points that turned the match

decisively against her.

These were not contests where she was comprehensively outplayed from start to finish, but ones lost in short, four or five points at a time when execution and clarity mattered most.

The All England Open loss to Kim, where she led 18-9 before surrendering control, the Indonesia Masters' defeat to Nguyen after holding six game points, and the India Open quarterfinal against Tunjung, where she stayed level deep into the decider before fading, all followed similar arcs.

The Sudirman Cup loss to Kjaersfeldt, where she conceded long point runs from commanding positions in both games, and the Swiss Open defeat to Jakobsen further reinforced the pattern.

There were also defeats that reflected the current and in some cases upcoming hierarchy of the sport rather than missed opportunities. Against Se-young at the China Masters, Wardani at the World Championships, Yu Jin at the Japan Open, Hooda at the China Open, and Thuy Linh at the Malaysia Masters, Sindhu was largely chasing the match throughout.

The Olympian's own emphasis on movement without hesitation speaks to the foundation required to address that finishing problem. The fight, as she put it, has returned. The next challenge is ensuring it lasts until the last point.

THE GIST

After reaching her first Super 1000 semifinal in three years at the Malaysia Open, Sindhu exited early at the India Open and reached the Indonesia Masters quarterfinals, exposing how fragile that return still was

Nine of her 14 losses last season saw her lead or level late, before conceding point runs that swung matches

Quarterfinal finishes became Sindhu's ceiling in 2025, reflecting competitiveness without the sustained control needed to push into semifinals and finals



Coming back after injury, you wait for that one feeling... the body moving freely, the legs responding, the game flowing again



Progress is showing. Time to keep building
SINDHU

SCIENCE

Gorillas are what we want to be, says Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

The fate of Uganda's mountain gorillas, much like India's tigers and elephants, has been shaped by governance, public health, and community relations as much as ecology. The work of Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka, Uganda's first wildlife veterinarian, needs to be understood within this intersection

M. Nobinraja

Uganda's history with mountain gorillas is inseparable from its political turmoil. Mountain gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei*) are restricted to Central Africa and number around a thousand individuals. They inhabit dense volcanic, bamboo, and montane forests at elevations of 2,200-4,300 m.

Yet from Uganda's independence in 1962 through Milton Obote's centralisation, Idi Amin's brutal dictatorship, and Yoweri Museveni's lengthy rule, poaching and habitat loss have pushed gorillas confined to the Bwindi and the Virunga parks to the brink. And in Uganda's collective efforts to restore both the species and a sense of national identity, Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka stands out as a defining figure.

Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka, Uganda's first wildlife veterinarian and one of Africa's most respected conservationists, has spent more than three decades working during one of the most difficult periods of Ugandan history. She is a globally recognised conservationist and the founder of Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH), where her One Health model has significantly contributed to mountain gorilla conservation. For this work, she received the Whitley and Rolex Awards and the UN Environment Programme's Champion of the Earth Award.

Like India, Uganda is a postcolonial democracy where wildlife conservation has unfolded alongside political instability and debates about who should bear the cost of protecting nature. The fate of Uganda's mountain gorillas, much like India's tigers or elephants, has been shaped by governance, public health, and community relations as well as ecology. And Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka's work must be understood within this intersection.

First wildlife veterinarian

Being born and raised in Amin's time on Ugandan soil and in a politically influential family was not easy.

"When I was just two years old in the 1970s, my father was abducted and murdered by Idi Amin's men," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka said. Much like the rest of Uganda, her life was severely affected by the regime, which destroyed institutions, communities, and wildlife.

"I wanted to continue my father's dream of a prosperous Uganda, and conservation felt like a way of putting things right."

Her career began at a time when conservation in the country had been fractured by years of political violence. The wildlife suffered catastrophic losses in the 1970s and 1980s. Elephants were slaughtered for ivory and protected areas were encroached. Conservation infrastructure nearly collapsed. Evidence from April 1980 suggests Uganda's elephant population may have collapsed to as few as 1,200 animals. Fuelled by rising ivory prices, from \$6 per kg in 1963 to about \$50 in 1977, poaching operated openly across large areas. Soldiers sometimes hunted elephants with automatic weapons.

The mountain gorillas were already restricted to a handful of forest fragments. Hunting alone caused the Virunga gorilla population to drop from 400-500 individuals in 1960 to 260-290 during Amin's regime.

When Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka returned to Uganda after studying in the UK and the US, gorilla conservation was neither glamorous nor well-funded. "I had to teach myself a lot," she recalled.

She was the country's first wildlife veterinarian, and faced scepticism as a woman in a male-dominated field and as someone insisting that veterinary care mattered to conservation outcomes.

One of her earliest cases involved an ageing silverback gorilla named Mugurusi, meaning "old man" in a Bantu language spoken in southwestern Uganda. The gorilla was lagging behind his group, moving slowly, visibly unwell. Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka examined him but he died shortly afterwards.

A postmortem revealed chronic heart and kidney failure. When the findings were published in Ugandan newspapers, the public reaction was unexpected.

"People were amazed that gorillas die of the same things as humans," she said. "It created excitement and empathy."

That moment was a turning point in Uganda's broader conservation narrative.

Gorillas and nation-building

As the political situation in Uganda started to stabilise, gorillas played a central role in its economic recovery.



A female mountain gorilla with cub in a rainforest in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, in 2016. Oksana Vashchuk (CC BY-SA)

Gorilla tourism helped rebuild conservation institutions and provided livelihoods for communities living around protected areas.

"Gorillas helped bring tourism back to Uganda," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka said, "just like tigers did in India."

Yet tourism alone couldn't protect the great apes. Increasing human-gorilla contact in Bwindi raised the risk of respiratory infections. Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka responded by co-founding CTPH.

Many villagers near gorilla habitats once depended on small-scale farming, bushmeat, firewood, poaching, and cattle grazing that brought them into frequent contact with wildlife while increasing their disease risk. The intervention aimed to provide them with better healthcare, sanitation, and alternative livelihoods. The results were tangible: since 2007, it reduced disease transmission and human-wildlife conflict and strengthened local support for conservation.

Women, leadership, resistance

"Exciting, but very challenging," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka said of becoming Uganda's first wildlife veterinarian. She encountered scepticism at every turn, including disbelief that a woman could handle large mammals such as elephants.

One defining moment came during Uganda's first elephant translocation in the late 1990s.

Farmers had complained about crop raids, and the then First Lady of Uganda, Janet Museveni, intervened. While then Uganda Wildlife Authority executive director Eric Edroma supported Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka, others questioned her insistence on humane handling.

Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka assessed the situation on site, coordinated with local rangers, darted and collared the elephants, and oversaw their safe translocation, all while managing community interactions and logistical challenges.

"Later, I realised you cannot just be a vet," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka said. "You need diplomacy, logistics, and patience."

Her experience shaped her commitment to mentoring women in conservation. Through the Women for the Environment Africa Leadership Council, she still works to address the stark gender gap in conservation leadership across the continent.

She noted that women in conservation in India enjoy more leadership opportunities and visibility whereas women in Uganda struggle for recognition.

"People like to put you in boxes, either veterinary or community or public health," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka added. "But you don't have to be in only one. Each

In Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka's view, conservation is less about imposing solutions and more about creating conditions where humans and wildlife can thrive together

one builds on the other."

Above all, she insisted, conservation must begin with people. In her view, conservation is less about imposing solutions and more about creating conditions where humans and wildlife can thrive together.

Cultural crossings

Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka's worldview was also shaped by cultural experiences beyond conservation. She grew up in Uganda in the 1970s, when Idi Amin was expelling Indians, many of whom later returned. She recalled maintaining close family ties with Indian friends and business partners.

"My dad had Indian friends. My mom had a very close Indian friend; she even wrote about her in her book. I was too young to notice cultural differences," she said. "What I noticed was friendship."

She studied in the U.K. and later in the U.S. In her 2023 book *Walking with Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet*, she recalled a classmate using a racial slur, a rude awakening after her sheltered upbringing in Uganda. When she returned to the country after time in Britain, she was struck by how warm and open people were, only later realising this wasn't exceptional behaviour so much as the Ugandan way.

Food, however, offered clearer distinctions and comforts. She grew up in central Uganda and she savoured simple, traditional dishes, from mashed matooke – the country's national dish of steamed, mashed green bananas – to luwombo, a rich stew of meat, chicken or groundnuts steamed in banana leaves. Her personal favourite, she said, was plantain, a humble staple that connected her to home and heritage.

Lessons from Jane

One of the most formative influences on Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka's career was Jane Goodall, who wrote the foreword to her book. Meeting Goodall for the first time left a lasting impression, not because of celebrity but because of humility: "She gave everyone equal attention, from a forest tracker to a head of State," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka recalled.

She added that Goodall's greatest lesson was collaboration: in a field often marked by competition, Goodall demonstrated the power of quiet influence from persuading institutions,

shaping policy, and advancing conservation without also stealing the spotlight. "She was powerful without being loud," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka put it.

She had considered other figures to write the foreword. David Attenborough was approached but he declined endorsements to avoid a flood of requests. Her agent also suggested someone like Michelle Obama, whose public profile could bring conservation to a wider audience. Coincidentally, Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka's sister had been at Princeton at the same time as Michelle Obama and Jeff Bezos, though she was unable to contact them.

Gorillas and humans

When asked what humans can learn from gorillas, Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka turned philosopher: "They say chimps are what we are, but gorillas are what we want to be."

A striking example of gorillas' gentleness is birth spacing. Gorilla mothers give birth roughly every four and a half years, ensuring their older offspring are emotionally independent before a new baby arrives.

"Animals think about consequences," Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka said. "Many humans don't."

(Aside: asked who would win in a hypothetical fight between 100 men and one gorilla, she laughed. "A gorilla would beat 100 men. After one or two are taken down, the rest will run away.")

Faith and AI

Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka is a believer and said she turns to prayer in moments of disappointment. She swims for a hobby, which she said offers solace and reminds her of her fisherman grandfather from the Ssese Islands, as does time with her children.

As for the future: the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics may one day aid conservation, particularly by reducing human-wildlife interactions and limiting disease transmission, but Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka insisted that such tools must respect the intelligence of the animals themselves.

"Gorillas are very intelligent creatures, so any technology applied should be thoughtfully designed," she said.

As Uganda continues to rebuild its ecological heritage, Dr. Kalema-Zikusoka's career is a reminder that conservation is as much about saving species as about rebuilding trust and reimagining what coexistence can look like.

(Dr. Nobinraja M. is a postdoctoral researcher at the Conservation Genetics Lab in ATREE, Bengaluru. He won the Hasmukh Shah Memorial Award for Ecological Studies (research). nobin.raja@atree.org)



This artwork imagines the event GW250114 which produced the clearest gravitational wave signal yet. AURORE SIMONNET (SSUEDEON)/LVK/UR

General relativity survives its hardest test yet

Vasudevan Mukunth

On January 14, 2025, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatories (LIGO) recorded a cosmic tremor unlike any before. Named GW250114, the signal was the 'loudest' gravitational wave scientists had ever detected.

In a study published in *Physical Review Letters* on January 29, an international team of researchers reported that it had used this powerful signal to conduct the most rigorous test of Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity and the nature of black holes to date.

For more than a century, the theory, also called general relativity, has been the gold standard for understanding gravity. It predicts that when two black holes merge, they will form a single, distorted survivor that settles down by 'ringing', much like a bell that has been struck, emitting gravitational waves in a process called ringdown.

The researchers wanted to use the exceptional clarity of GW250114 to check whether black holes truly are as simple as Einstein predicted or if they hide more complex features

According to the no-hair theorem, a black hole in vacuum can be characterised only by its mass and spin. This means its 'ringing' should follow a specific, predictable pattern, which is called the Kerr metric. The researchers wanted to use the exceptional clarity of GW250114 to check whether black holes truly are as simple as Einstein predicted or if they hide more complex features that might point to new physics.

To analyse the signal, the researchers used a technique called black hole spectroscopy. Gravitational-wave scientists look for specific frequencies and decay times in the 'sound' of a black hole's ringdown.

The team also used several advanced mathematical tools. Software packages called RINGDOWN and pyRing were used to fit specific models to the post-merger data to identify individual notes in the signal. A method called pSEOBNR analysed the entire signal to check if its beginning and end told a consistent story.

The researchers also compared the real-world data against supercomputer simulations of black hole mergers to see how well they matched, a technique called numerical relativity.

The study's results were a resounding victory for general relativity. The team successfully identified at least three distinct 'notes' in the black hole's ringing, the dominant tone, its first overtone, and a mode at a higher pitch.

The frequencies and damping times of these modes matched the predictions for a Kerr black hole within just a few percent. Because the signal was so loud, the single event also allowed the team to run other tests that were 2-3 times more stringent than previous studies that combined dozens of weaker events.

The data also confirmed Hawking's area theorem – which states that a black hole's surface area can't decrease – at a high statistical significance of 4.8 sigma.

"In summary, the single, loud event GW250114 has yielded the scientific return of dozens of previous detections, offering a preview of the unprecedented science that upcoming LIGO-Virgo-KAGRA observing runs will unlock," the researchers wrote in their paper.

A new LIGO observatory, the third after the two in the U.S., is coming up in Maharashtra. Once it's online it's expected to improve the precision with which the network of observatories can identify the source of gravitational waves by an order of magnitude.

For feedback and suggestions
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Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of foreign visitors to Indonesia last year

15.4 In million. Indonesia recorded 15.4 million foreign visitors in 2025, up 10.8% from 2024, marking the highest number of arrivals since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, before the pandemic, Southeast Asia's largest economy saw 16.1 million foreign visitors. REUTERS

Number of manuscripts digitised under Gyan Bharatam

7.5 In lakh. Over 7.5 lakh manuscripts have been digitised under the Gyan Bharatam initiative, with 1.29 lakh out of these available on its dedicated portal. Gyan Bharatam is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Culture, aimed at preserving India's vast manuscript heritage. PTI

Number of tourist visits to Jammu and Kashmir in 2025

1.78 crore. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that tourism continues to be a vital pillar of Jammu and Kashmir's economy, with the Union Territory recording 1.78 crore tourist visits in 2025 despite security-related incidents and natural calamities. PTI

Number of tiger deaths in Madhya Pradesh this year

9 A tiger and a tigress died of electrocution in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district, taking the death toll of big cats in the State this year to nine. The two carcasses were found less than 100 metres apart in agricultural land in the north Shahdol forest division, some 75 kms from the district headquarters. PTI

Number of underage Snapchat accounts blocked in Australia

4.15 In lakh. Snapchat has blocked 4,15,000 accounts under Australia's social media ban for under-16s, the company said on Monday, but warned some youngsters may be bypassing the age verification technology. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Why are tribals protesting in Maharashtra?

Why did thousands of tribals hit the streets in the State? What are the reasons behind the protests? What are concerns about the implementation of the Forest Rights Act? Why are land rights, which are at the heart of the protest, a long-pending demand?

EXPLAINER

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

The story so far:

Over the last few days, thousands of tribal farmers from the Palghar and Nashik districts embarked on two separate long marches in Maharashtra. The marches were organised by the All India Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India (M) (CPI-M) over pending land rights of the tribals. The Palghar long march started on January 19, and was partially suspended on January 22 after local demands related to administrative intervention were accepted by the district administration. But protests continued for the policy-level demands of the tribals, and on January 25, a long march started from Nashik. It was declared successful and withdrawn on January 29. Both the Nashik and Palghar districts have a dominant tribal population.

What are their demands?

The primary demands of the tribals are about their land rights, employment, irrigation and education. They demand that as per the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, the forest land which they have been tilling for generations, should be made in their name. They have raised concerns over the current format in which land ownership titles have been issued. They claim that the current format in which the government has listed their names on the titles, excluded them from benefiting from any government schemes or institutional loans.

The other demands include the construction of small dams and river-linking projects for irrigation requirements. They state that west-flowing rivers should be arrested with small dams and be diverted to east-flowing rivers to help irrigate regions which have been facing water scarcity. This act, say the tribals, will enable them to take crops throughout the year. They



The road ahead: Tribal residents take part in the All India Kisan Sabha march from Nashik to Mumbai demanding land rights, and implementation of forest rights, in Kasara, Maharashtra, on January 27. PTI

currently take only one seasonal crop of paddy. Additionally, they want agricultural produce apart from paddy, which includes corn, soybean, onion, strawberry, mangoes, ragi, jowar, bajra, etc. to be sold at the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

They have also demanded the completion of pending recruitments under the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996, which will give employment opportunities to educated tribal youth. PESA empowers tribal communities in 'Scheduled Areas' with self-governance. The other demands include the filling up of vacant teacher posts and other staff members in Zilla Parishad schools; more education opportunities for tribal children; and

24-hour supply of electricity.

What are the concerns?

The biggest demand at the heart of all the long marches has been the proper implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Tribals have claimed that their individual claim rights are rejected; that they are allotted only a minuscule proportion of the land they actually till, thereby making them ineligible for government schemes. Tribal groups state that at present the record of land ownership is in the name of the entire village, and that their individual names are only mentioned in the village ownership document. They want the ownership record to reflect their individual names. The demands related to

irrigation and the implementation of the Forest Rights Act have been constant since 2018. Government sources said that concerns about the allotment of just a fraction of land the tribals tilled were taken cognisance of. They also said that they were looking into the possibility of the digitisation of governance records leading to incongruences and denials in a few cases.

What does the government say?

As per data accessed by *The Hindu*, over 45% of claims under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected so far. Recently, the Government of Maharashtra held a round of talks with a 15-member delegation of the protestors, consisting of the leaders of the All India Kisan Sabha and the CPI(M). Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the government is positive about resolving the issues. As per 2025 data about the claims under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (presented in the Lok Sabha in July, 2025), Maharashtra has disposed off 3,80,966 of the 4,09,156 claims filed so far. Of the 3,80,966 claims, 2,08,335 titles were distributed, while, 1,72,631 claims were rejected. The pendency in the State is of 28,190 claims.

Government sources indicated that the work on the Act was going on incrementally, while admitting that there was a difference in the interpretation of the Act. Renowned ecologist Madhav Gadgil, who recently passed away, observed in his article published this year that the misinterpretation of the provisions of the Forest Rights Act has led to anomalies. "There is a constant ideological tension between a traditional conservation approach, which resists human presence in forests, and the perspective of the Forest Rights Act, which integrates forest dwellers into conservation and management. This tension reflects a deeper mindset framed as 'conservation versus forest rights', he said in an article published in *The India Forum* titled 'Making Forest Conservation Work for Forest Communities' co-authored with Vijay Edlabadkar.

THE GIST

The primary demands of the tribals are about their land rights, employment, irrigation and education. They demand that as per the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, the forest land which they have been tilling for generations, should be made in their name.

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As per data accessed by *The Hindu*, over 45% of claims under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected so far.

How can adaptive testing be adopted in India?

Why has the IIT Council recommended adaptive tests over linear examinations?

O.R.S. Rao

The story so far:

The IIT Council has recommended that an expert committee evaluate the possibility of making the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Advanced adaptive in order to create a "a better and less stressful assessment".

What is adaptive testing?

In a traditional competitive test, every candidate answers the same set of questions. Test scores are based largely on the number of correct answers. Most coaching centres therefore prioritise test-cracking tactics over conceptual understanding, or critical thinking.

Adaptive testing is a dynamic form of assessment which uses the Item Response Theory (IRT). This means that the questions in the test are not the same for all students. A question bank is prepared

with questions of varying difficulty covering all the items in the syllabus. The test normally begins with a question of medium difficulty. If it is answered correctly, the computer selects a more difficult question from the question bank using the scientifically established psychometric models. If incorrect, an easier question is presented. After each answer, the computer recalculates the candidate's estimated ability. The test ends when a pre-defined level of assessment is reached or the set number of items as per syllabus are tested. The goal is to assess the ability of the candidate more precisely by asking fewer but better-targeted questions. The result is that two candidates may see different questions but are assessed on the same underlying scale.

Adaptive testing builds fairness into the test design itself rather than correcting for variations subsequently. Since the next question depends on the previous

answer, a student who is not conceptually sound cannot answer the progressively high-difficulty questions, which have higher weightage. Global testing agencies have been using computerised adaptive testing for admissions to premier institutions for over 25 years.

Are there potential legal challenges?

In the Indian constitutional context, 'equality of opportunity' is often interpreted as everyone getting the same question paper. Therefore, a move towards adaptive testing may face Article 14 challenges (Right to Equality) in Indian courts, if the normalisation process is not transparent. Algorithm opacity could invite bias suits under equity mandates. However, this can be mitigated through disclosures and equity audits.

In India, where a single rank can make or mar a rewarding career, it may be difficult to convince a parent how a student who solved 20 difficult questions

correctly has scored higher than another student who solved 50 easy ones. Ensuring lag-free technical infrastructure in tier-3 cities is key, as any technical glitch during the test could be seen as maladministration in a court of law. Without clear documentation and grievance mechanisms, litigation risks rise. Data centre reliability, proctoring invigilation systems, and incident handling must be far stronger than today's baseline.

How can it be eased in?

Transitioning from the traditional linear test to adaptive tests requires building large, calibrated item question banks, pretesting questions without the possibility of leakage, and ensuring strict syllabus coverage. There are also trust challenges: candidates must believe that different questions can still be fair, and testing agencies must be prepared to defend this scientifically and legally. International experience from GRE and GMAT shows that transparency, technical documentation, and phased rollouts are essential for acceptance.

The IIT Council has proposed a two-year transition from 2026 to 2028. It includes the launch of free and optional adaptive mock tests in 2026 to calibrate the item bank and familiarise students with the interface.

Prof O.R.S. Rao is Chancellor of ICFAI University, Sikkim. Views are personal.

THE GIST

The goal of adaptive testing is to assess the ability of the candidate more precisely by asking fewer but better-targeted questions. The result is that two candidates may see different questions but are assessed on the same underlying scale.

In the Indian context, 'equality of opportunity' is often interpreted as everyone getting the same question paper. Therefore, a move towards adaptive testing may face Article 14 challenges.

Transitioning from the traditional linear test to adaptive tests requires building large, calibrated item question banks.

FULL CONTEXT



The next step: A Kudumbashree kiosk at Ranni-Perunad that markets and sells forest produce harvested by the Malaipandaram tribal community in Kerala in 2025. FILE PHOTO

What is the next phase for rural women entrepreneurship?

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission has been enhancing rural women's entrepreneurship and political power in India by empowering over 10 crore households through self-help groups

Charanjit Singh

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY NRLM), an understated program of the Ministry of Rural Development has unleashed a silent revolution in rural India. Around 10 crore households have been mobilised into 91 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs) which have been further federated into 5.35 lakh Village Organisations (VOs) and 33,558 Cluster-Level Federations (CLFs). These SHGs have mobilised credit of more than ₹11 lakh crore from banks with Non-Performing Assets (NPA) of around 1.7% only.

The number of *Lakhpatti didis* (SHG members who earn more than ₹1 lakh per annum) has also crossed two crore.

On strengthening CLFs

Along with economic and social empowerment, this program has also led to the political empowerment of women. A majority of State governments, understanding their importance, are now focussing on unattached Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes such as the Ladli Laxmi Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, the Maiya Samman Yojana in Jharkhand, the Ladki Bahin Yojana in Maharashtra etc. In the latest such initiative, ₹10,000 each was transferred to more than one crore women in Bihar under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Rozgar Yojana.

These developments could boost livelihoods and entrepreneurship for women under the next phase of the DAY NRLM programme.

As per government directions, the DAY NRLM scheme is going to be appraised again for the next financial cycle, that is from 2026-27 to 2030-31. Therefore, this is an appropriate time to think about the strategy for the next five years of this critical program for women empowerment. One must begin with the lynchpin of the SHG ecosystem – the CLFs, which are sub-block level groups

organised under the program. As it is a formally registered body, various activities of the program are anchored here. However, there have been concerns in various quarters that it has become subservient to government functionaries, and that leaders of these groups are not able to take independent decisions. Therefore, going forward, strengthening/revitalising the CLFs needs to be the main focus area, as per the original vision of the program. In fact, the CLFs need to become community owned institutes in the real sense, free from government interference. There are already successful models of CLFs, for example, the Kudumbashree in Kerala and Jeevika in Bihar, which could be emulated by other States.

The other cause of concern is the large amount of funds lying idle with the CLFs which are prone to misuse. Around ₹56.69 lakh crore have been given to community institutions as capitalisation support. Then there are other funds given to them by the Centre and the States along with the interest earned on them. These funds have to be accounted for by putting in place a robust institutional system of community monitoring through social audits along with statutory audits of CLFs.

Further, work needs to be done on saving and loan products by the CLFs. Considering the varied status of members and the activities proposed, a uniform rate and time period for all loans may not be a good idea. The community should be empowered to take a call on this. The ultimate aim has to be the judicious use of these funds, so that CLFs can ensure equitable development as well as earn a good amount of revenue to undertake various activities.

Moreover, a large amount of credit has been leveraged by the SHGs from the banks. However, it has been observed that many SHG members are not happy with the limited amount of loans made available through the SHG bank linkage program. As their enterprises stabilise,

they would want to scale-up through higher dosages of credit. For this, they need to go for individual credit programmes; but the difficulty here is that SHG members don't have individual credit history. Therefore, efforts need to be intensified to ensure CIBIL scores are generated for individual SHG members. Further, a model needs to be developed for the CLFs to play a proactive role in these bank loans and their repayments, as it does for the SHGs. This will give further confidence to the banks for extending individual loans.

The need for coordination

The Indian economy has diversified a lot in the last decade. The program needs them to move from debt financing to other models of innovative financing such as equity, venture capital, and blended financing. Partnerships with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and other financial institutions, including with Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and neo-banks etc., need to be explored to ensure funding for individual entrepreneurs. In fact, customised financial products suited to rural women entrepreneurs need to be developed as their needs are different.

The DAY NRLM strives for enhancing the livelihoods of SHG members through its various sub-schemes but these usually work in silos with their impact being limited. Considering the rising aspirations of the members, these interventions now need to work in a synchronised manner, so as to reach every village and SHG member. For this, livelihood action plans need to be prepared every year for each State/Union Territory (UT). The data generated by the Village Prosperity and Resilience Plan (VPRP) can provide the basis for this ground-up comprehensive approach. In fact, to give impetus to livelihoods/entrepreneurship, CLFs need to be developed as business clinics/hubs where all services related to livelihoods/enterprise development are housed.

With the above interventions, women empowerment at the rural level will definitely move to the next phase.

Charanjit Singh is a retd IFS officer. Moreover, a large number of departments are implementing various schemes related to livelihoods/entrepreneurship for rural beneficiaries. The involvement of the NRLM in the implementation of some schemes of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Food Processing Industries and the Department of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare has shown good results. However, such convergences are usually officer-based and are prone to disruption. The institutionalisation of the convergence through the creation of a 'Convergence Cell' at the NITI Aayog will not only ensure efficient utilisation of resources but will also avoid duplication of efforts.

Spreading the word

The biggest hurdle in boosting the livelihoods of SHG members is the lack of marketing of their products. This needs to be tackled head-on by creating a separate vertical, at the National Mission level, dedicated to only marketing in the program. The vertical should focus on proper packaging, branding, quality, designs, pricing and logistics etc. for various products. Select CLFs can become logistic hubs for specific products. Further, a professional market facing independent organisations needs to be put in place at the State/UT level for SHG products. This may help in direct interaction with private market entities.

As delineated above, there are huge expectations from community-based organisations. Accordingly, to guide and support them, sufficient professionals from various fields need to be placed with them. However, one should not forget that these organisations are at various stages of development, and have their own pace to move ahead. This should be respected.

With the above interventions, women empowerment at the rural level will definitely move to the next phase.

Charanjit Singh is a retd IFS officer.

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

THE DAILY QUIZ

With everyone online reminiscing on the heydays of 2016, a look at some of the artefacts of the bygone era. A quiz on 2016 and nostalgia

Mohammed Hidhayat

QUESTION 1
Which smartphone game led to mass public gatherings in 2016?

QUESTION 2
Which photo filter became the defining trend of 2016, dominating Snapchat selfies and group photos worldwide?

QUESTION 3
Which actor received his first Oscar in 2016, cementing a long-running pop culture moment?

QUESTION 4
2016 marked 10 years since: a.) the launch of which microblogging service? and b.) the acquiring of which media-sharing platform by Google?

QUESTION 5

Groups froze in stylised poses for viral videos. What was this 2016 trend called?

QUESTION 6

The year also reshaped global politics. Who was elected President of the United States in 2016? The U.K. voted to leave the European Union. What was the referendum called?

QUESTION 7

India too saw several headline-making developments in 2016. a) which telecom launch changed market dynamics? b) which economic move faced backlash for its flawed execution? and c) which sitting woman Chief Minister died after prolonged hospitalisation in December?



Visual question:

This very popular social media platform, the logo of which is seen above, was launched to the public in 2016. Name it. AFP

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The convention was signed on February 2, 1971 in this city. **Ans: Ramsar**

2. The theme for World Wetlands Day 2026.

Ans: 'Wetlands and traditional knowledge: Celebrating cultural heritage'

3. The three types of wetlands as per the convention.

Ans: Inland wetlands, Coastal wetlands, and Human-made wetlands

4. This country has the highest number of sites designated under the Ramsar Convention.

Ans: U.K.

5. Number of sites India has.

Ans: 98 sites

6. Name the first two Indian sites to join the convention in October 1981.

Ans: Chilika Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)

Visual: Name this site in India.

Ans: Patna Bird Sanctuary

Early Birds: Piyali Tuli| Sukdev Shetty| Tom Alan Faith| Arun Kumar Singh| Tito Shiladitya



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"How do you pronounce h.o.o.o.p.l.a?"

"The 'oo' in the first syllable is pronounced like the 'oo' in words like 'pool', 'cool' and 'fool'. The 'a' in the second syllable is..."

"...pronounced like the 'a' in 'China'?"

"No, it isn't. The 'a' is like the 'a' in 'calm', 'balm' and 'palm'. The stress is on the first syllable 'hoop'. Do you know what 'hoopla' means?"

"Doesn't it mean excitement or something like that?"

"Yes, that's right. Hoopla is the excitement which surrounds an event."

"Like the premiere of a movie?"

"Yes. Here's an example. There was a lot of hoopla when Sonia Gandhi withdrew her resignation."

"I still don't understand what the hoopla was all about, though."

"That's true."

"A lot of hoopla surrounded the departure of the Indian team to England. Does that sound O.K.?"

"It does. The funny thing is that in spite of the public hoopla, the Indian players themselves showed very little interest in the World Cup. For some strange reason they themselves didn't get caught up in all the hoopla."

"Our boys played very well. It was the points system which ruined..."

"...not you too! I wish people would stop whining about the points system."

"Wine? What are you talking about? You know that I don't drink."

"...no, no! The word that I am referring to is spelt w.h.i.n.e. It's pronounced the same way as w.i.n.e."

"And what does w.h.i.n.e mean?"

"When somebody whines about something, they start complaining about it in a manner that annoys other people. Ever since our lousy performance in the World Cup, everyone has been whining about the points system."

"Sujatha whines about her job."

"The day she stops whining, the world will come to an end."

"That's true. Her father is very different. He is not one to whine when things don't go his way."

"You have a point. By the way, have you picked up your shirt from the tailor?"

"I went yesterday, but he asked me to come back later."

"Still not ready, eh? He's been giving you the runaround for quite some time, hasn't he?"

"Has been giving me the runaround? What do you mean?"

"When someone gives you the runaround, they give you a series of excuses for not doing something. They..."

"...just like the people in government offices!"

"You do get the runaround in most government offices. When you walk into a government office, the only thing that the people there do is send you from one department to another."

"Or they tell you to come back later because they haven't completed your job. Nothing ever gets done!"

"That's right! When I asked for the Manager, I was given the runaround."

"I hate it when people give me the runaround."

"So do I. Maybe I should start giving some of my friends the runaround."

"If you start doing that you won't have a friend left."

Published in The Hindu on June 22, 1999.

Word of the day

Apathetic:

showing little or no emotion or animation; marked by a lack of interest

Synonym:

indifferent

Usage:

He performed for an apathetic audience.

Pronunciation:

newsthr.live/apatheticpro

International Phonetic Alphabet:

/æpəθētik/, /æpəθētɪk/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

CM YK S CHE