TUESDAY
February 24, 2026
CHENNAI
CITY EDITION
20 Pages ₹ 5.00

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THE HINDU GROUP

A Special Publication from The Hindu Group

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND ANCIENT CULTURES OF TAMIL NADU

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

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

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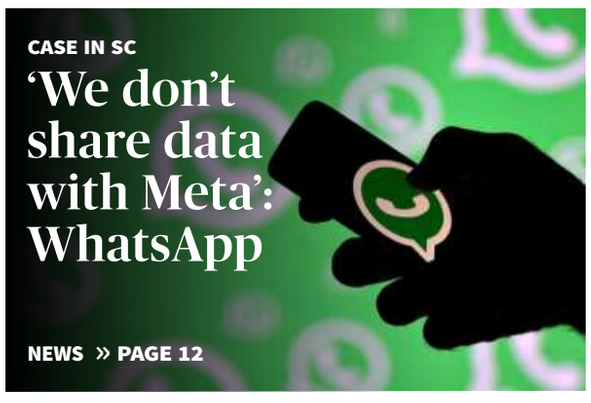
TRADE TALKS

Canadian PM to arrive in India on Feb. 27

NEWS » PAGE 10



CASE IN SC

'We don't share data with Meta': WhatsApp

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Staff plotted with outsiders: Bank CEO

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STRATEGIC ADOPTION

Energy shift through green ammonia

India's approach can shape global standards

EDITORIAL » PAGE 8

CALYPSO TIME

Hetmyer on song as WI crushes Zimbabwe

SPORT » PAGE 15

NEARBY

Prepared to face ED, I-T Dept. and CBI, says Stalin

CHENNAI
If the BJP brings in "its forces" in the form of the ED, the Income Tax Department, and the CBI, "we are very well prepared to face them," Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Monday. » PAGE 6

Vijay rejects CM's 'Tamil Nadu vs Delhi' claim

VELLORE
TVK founder and actor Vijay on Monday rejected Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's claim that the coming polls would be a "contest between Tamil Nadu and New Delhi". The real fight would be between the TVK and the DMK, he said. » PAGE 6

Centre unveils policy to tackle terrorism threats

PRAHAAR states that India faces terrorist threats on all three fronts — water, land and air; the policy adds that capacities have been developed to protect critical sectors of the economy

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Monday released the country's first-ever anti-terror policy, emphasising that other than terror sponsored from across the border, "criminal hackers and nation states continue to target India through cyber-attacks".

The policy – titled PRAHAAR – has been uploaded on the Ministry's website.

It states that India faces terrorist threats on all three fronts – water, land and air – and that capacities have been developed to protect critical sectors of the economy, including power, railways, aviation, ports, defence, space and atomic energy, from both state and non-state actors.

The Hindu first reported on December 23, 2025, that the National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy had been finalised and would be released soon. The policy underlines that "India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation". However, it notes that India has been affected by "sponsored terrorism" from across the border, with "Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organisations" continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks. "India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and IS, which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells," it says, adding that extremists operating from foreign countries have hatched conspiracies to promote terrorism.

"Their handlers from across the border frequently use the latest technologies, including the use of drones, for facilitating terror-related activities and attacks in Punjab and J&K. Increasingly, terrorist groups are engaging organised criminal networks for logistics and recruitment to execute and facilitate terror strikes in India," the policy says.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Protection plan

India has released its first-ever National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy, PRAHAAR

Assessing threats: India has been affected by 'sponsored terrorism,' the policy says.

- The nine-page document details the threat-profile, counter-terrorism strategy and the way forward
- It lists key agencies responsible for specific tasks
- It stresses that terrorism is not linked to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation

Four die after consuming 'adulterated milk' in A.P.

T. Appala Naidu
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

Four elderly persons have died from acute renal failure after consuming adulterated milk in Rajamahendravaram City in Andhra Pradesh, the East Godavari district administration said on Monday.

Officials said 12 people, including the dead, had taken ill after consuming the milk. Eight victims are suffering from anuria (absence of urine), and are undergoing treatment. Three of them are children aged below four and are critical, said doctors.

East Godavari District Collector Kirthi Chekuri said the victims consumed milk supplied by the same vendor, Addala Ganeswara Rao. The vendor, who procured milk from 46 dairy farmers and supplied to 106 families, has been detained.

"All the 12 persons are from Swaroop Nagar and Chowdeswari Nagar areas of Rajamahendravaram," Ms. Kirthi said.

"People in the age group of 50-70 and those below five years are prone to anuria. A State-level expert team has collected blood samples from 73 families who consumed milk supplied by the vendor. The samples have been sent to the forensic laboratory for tests," she said. Experts have also collected the fodder given to the cattle for tests, she said.

Superintendent of Police D. Narasimha Kishore said post-mortem reports, which are awaited, will establish the reasons that caused anuria and acute renal failure.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu announced an *ex gratia* of ₹10 lakh each for the families of the dead.

Former Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy alleged that negligence in enforcing food safety norms has endangered public lives and demanded strict action.

Tragic incident: A health official collecting blood sample from a person who consumed milk supplied by the vendor. PTI

Air ambulance with seven aboard crashes in Jharkhand forest

Press Trust of India
RANCHI

A Delhi-bound air ambulance carrying seven persons crashed in a forest near Simaria in Chatra district of Jharkhand on Monday, Ranchi airport Director Vinod Kumar said.

Search and rescue teams have been dispatched, but there was no immediate confirmation about casualties, officials said. The crash occurred after the air ambulance took off from the Ranchi airport at 7.10 p.m.

The ambulance had lost contact with air traffic control around 20 minutes after take off.

Inclement weather could be a reason for the crash, but the actual reason would be ascertained only after a probe, Mr. Kumar added.

An Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) team is being dispatched for investigation.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Wreckage of the air ambulance after it crashed near Simaria in Chatra district of Jharkhand. PTI

Final poll rolls after SIR show Tamil Nadu has 5.67 crore voters

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu had more than 5.67 crore electors as the Election Commission of India published the final electoral rolls of the State on Monday after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

The list includes 2,89,60,838 women, 2,77,38,925 men, and 7,617 third-gender electors. Since the publication of the draft rolls last December, 27.53 lakh eligible electors have been included and 4.23 lakh ineligible electors deleted. In total, the electorate went up by about 24 lakh since the draft rolls were published.

About 74 lakh entries have been deleted since October last when the EC froze the rolls that had 6.41 crore electors. When the draft rolls were published in December last year, there were 5.43 crore voters. During the claims and objections period, 27,85,195 Form 6 applications were submitted and 27,53,796 were accepted. For objections and deletions, 4,38,425 forms were submitted and 4,23,172 of them were accepted.

Since the draft rolls were published in December last, 27.53 lakh eligible electors have been included

RELATED REPORT
» PAGE 6

25 troops killed as violence erupts in Mexico after Army kills cartel leader

Agence France-Presse
GUADALAJARA

Twenty-five Mexican troops died in clashes with cartel gunmen following a raid that led to the death of the country's most-wanted drug lord, a top security official said on Monday.

Nemesio 'El Mencho' Oseguera, leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, was wounded in a clash with soldiers in the town of Tapalpa, in Jalisco State, and died while being flown to Mexico City, the Army said on Sunday. He had a $15 million U.S. bounty on his head.

News of his death triggered cartel members across the country to block roads, torch vehicles and businesses, and send fearful residents into hiding.

Security Secretary Omar Garcia Harfuch said that apart from the 25 National Guard members, a prison guard, a member of the state prosecutor's office, and 30 suspected members of Oseguera's criminal organisation were killed in the clashes.

The streets of the State capital Guadalajara were almost empty as stores, pharmacies and gas stations shut down. The violence spread to the neighbouring Michoacan, where the cartel has a presence, and gripped the resort city of Puerto Vallarta.

The Indian Embassy in Mexico on Monday issued an advisory to Indian nationals residing in the country, urging them to exercise caution and remain indoors amid escalating violence.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Conflict zone: A bus set on fire by organised crime groups in Zapopan, Mexico, on Sunday. AFP

VIT CHENNAI

THE HINDU GROUP

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Building on the resounding success of its inaugural edition, The Hindu, in partnership with VIT School of Law, VIT Chennai, presents Justice Unplugged 2026, now convening in New Delhi, the nation's constitutional and legal epicentre.

The conclave addresses key questions, including the impact of Gen AI on legal practice, fundamental rights in the digital age, and improving access to justice, offering aspiring lawyers, law students and young legal professionals a rare opportunity to engage directly with distinguished leaders of the legal fraternity and gain valuable insights.

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INBRIEF

Traffic disrupted as lorry gets stuck in road cave-in

A road cave-in occurred on the Menambedu-Karukku Main Road in Ambattur, trapping a goods lorry and disrupting traffic flow on Monday. For the past few months, sinkholes had developed on Ambattur Karukku Main Road due to damage of the underground sewage pipeline. Residents alleged that each time a cave-in occurred, only temporary repairs were carried out. The incident on Monday led to traffic congestion in the area and caused inconvenience to motorists. Residents urged the authorities to find a permanent solution as the road poses a serious safety risk to motorists. Officials who reached the spot have planned to undertake repair work on the road once again.

Text & Context and Health

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carry explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (February 24, Tuesday), the following articles are available:

- On the independence of the Election Commission **newsth.live/electioncommiexp**
- Unusual ancient gene governs sex of ant, bee, wasp newborns **newsth.live/ancientgene**

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

City has 28.3 lakh voters in final electoral roll after SIR

Perambur constituency has the highest number of voters at 2,22,792 while Harbour has the lowest at 1,16,896; a total of 11,73,758 voters have been deleted; pre-revision roll had over 40 lakh electors

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The final electoral roll for the 16 Assembly constituencies in Chennai district following the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise has 28,30,936 electors – 14,64,344 women, 13,65,763 men, and 829 third-gender electors.

The final electoral roll was published by District Election Officer and Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner (GCC) J. Kumaragurubaran on Monday.

29.31% of voters deleted

A total of 11,73,758 voters (29.31%) have been deleted, with the pre-revision roll released in October 2025 listing 40,04,694 electors. There were 25,79,676 voters in the December 19, 2025 draft roll.

Later, during the claims period, 2,70,573 new names were added and 19,313 entries were deleted.

The newly added electors include 1,43,053 women, 1,27,418 men, and 102 third-gender electors. Perambur constituency recorded the highest number of additions with 24,142 new voters, followed by Virugambakkam with 23,113, and Velachery with 23,023. Harbour constituency registered the lowest new enrolments at 7,018.

Highest no. of voters

Overall, Perambur constituency retains the highest number of voters in the district at 2,22,792, while Harbour constituency has the lowest at 1,16,896.

Velachery has 2,11,691 voters, followed by Kolathur (2,07,251), Saidapet (2,00,697), Virugambakkam (1,96,536), Dr. Radhakrishnan Nagar (1,95,856), Mylapore (1,94,731), Anna Nagar (1,81,402), Thiru.Vi.Ka Nagar (1,78,793), Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni (1,63,866), Villivakkam (1,59,764), Royapuram (1,56,931), Thiyagarayanagar (1,54,943), Thousand Lights (1,53,908), and Egmore (1,34,879).

More young voters

The number of young electors aged 18 and above increased from 20,904 to 62,005.

Voters aged above 85 years rose from 22,293 to 23,350, and electors with disabilities increased from 9,598 to 12,347.

The number of service electors remained unchanged at 555.

Further, 4,079 polling stations have been established. Velachery has the maximum number of polling stations at 314 while Harbour has the minimum at 192.

The electoral rolls will be available for public viewing at the GCC zonal offices in Tondiarpet, Royapuram, Thiru.Vi.Ka Nagar, Anna Nagar, Teynampet, Kodambakkam, and Adyar, and at all polling station centres, the release said.

Final list

Number of voters in Chennai after the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in each constituency

Assembly constituency	Men	Women	Others	Total
Dr. Radhakrishnan Nagar	93,576	1,02,201	79	1,95,856
Perambur	1,07,995	1,14,726	71	2,22,792
Kolathur	99,607	1,07,607	37	2,07,251
Villivakkam	76,947	82,785	32	1,59,764
Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar (SC)	85,724	93,008	61	1,78,793
Egmore (SC)	65,677	69,149	53	1,34,879
Royapuram	75,870	81,004	57	1,56,931
Harbour	58,221	58,620	55	1,16,896
Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni	79,412	84,396	58	1,63,866
Thousand Lights	73,500	80,343	65	1,53,908
Anna Nagar	87,325	94,029	48	1,81,402
Virugambakkam	95,025	1,01,461	50	1,96,536
Saidapet	96,950	1,03,685	62	2,00,697
Thiyagarayanagar	74,682	80,228	33	1,54,943
Mylapore	93,017	1,01,691	23	1,94,731
Velachery	1,02,235	1,09,411	45	2,11,691
Total	13,65,763	14,64,344	829	28,30,936

Initiative launched to empower women in local body elections

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

In an effort to democratise political knowledge and deepen political consciousness of women, The Penn Collective (TPC), a non-governmental organisation, is organising political training and mentorship for women.

The initiative, Thenkoodu, aims to mentor 100 women and transwomen, aspiring to contest in the 2026 local body elections. "Through a phased, community-rooted programme that includes immersive training, network-building, digital civic education, mentorship, and campaign support, we aim to build and strengthen a cadre of grassroots women leaders," said Poorani, founder of TPC, addressing media-persons in the city on Monday.

In the six-month programme supported by the Harvard Kennedy School, the participants will first attend a five-day immersive training that will build their political skills, from understanding democratic structures to designing campaign strategies. "Firstly, they will be taught about a sense of self, governance, election application process, campaigning, budgeting, among others. There will also be field immersions, and campaign specific mentorship," she added.

The pilot programme is open to women across political parties as well as independent candidates. The participants will generate digital content, build local visibility, and increase their civic footprint and hence, also form strong community leadership. "Women constitute over 50% of voters, hold 50% seats in the local office. Yet we constitute only 5% of the State legislature and 13.6% of the Parliament. Thenkoodu also seeks to democratise political knowledge and skills. It will form a community of women who can voice issues even if they don't win," she added.

Applications are accepted until March-end and the programme will begin after the Tamil Nadu Assembly election. Women can register through WhatsApp or call 9629020856 or message on social media platforms @thepenncollective.

Governor felicitates Padma awardees from T.N.; hails contributions of people from various walks of life

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Governor R.N. Ravi on Monday hosted a function at the Lok Bhavan in the city to felicitate the 2026 Padma awardees of Tamil Nadu.

Those who were felicitated included gastroenterologist K.R. Palaniswamy, industrialist and social activist S.K.M. Maeilanandhan, medical practitioner and former Tamil Nadu Health Minister H.V. Hande, author and activist Sivasankari, mridangam exponent Thiruvaarur Bakthavathsalam, former Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agriculture University K. Ramasamy, exponent of Thirumurai songs tradition *Othuvaar* Thiruthani Swaminathan, Director of IIT Madras V. Kamakoti, veterinary scientist Punniamurthy Natesan, bronze sculptor Rajastapathi Kaliappa Goundar, and Carnatic vocalist duo Gayatri Balasubramanian and Ranjani Balasubramanian.

Due recognition: Governor R.N. Ravi with the Padma awardees at the Lok Bhavan in Chennai on Monday. M. SRINATH

Suseela, widow of R. Krishnan, who is credited with the revival of Kurumba tribal art through his cloth paintings, received felicitations on behalf of her husband.

Mr. Ravi said the Padma awards were "a modest way to say thank you for what you have done". He said, "People from different walks of life, be it art and culture, or industry, or literature, have been building the country for thousands of years."

When the Republic came into being as an institution to serve the country, it was realised that it would not be enough until the "great sons and daughters" serving the country in their own ways were identified and located, he added.

Dr. Palaniswamy said digestive disorders have become quite common because of our dietary habits and lifestyle. People need awareness to overcome this. Dr. Hande recalled his tenure as the Health Minister of Tamil Nadu when he turned focus on leprosy eradication efforts. "When I took over, in leprosy (incidence), we were second in India. So, I took several steps, including multi-drug regimen. Today, I am glad to tell you, the leprosy homes are all empty," Mr. Palaniswamy added.

Prof. Kamakoti spoke about IIT Madras's initiatives to set up over 7,000 rural interaction centres across the country to assist school students find help with studies and establish the Shakti Processor Programme to create an open-source processor ecosystem in India.

Dr. Natesan outlined how his research helped stem losses to Indian dairy farmers, which ran to about ₹20,000 crore annually, due to mastitis and how the "robust Indian knowledge base" led to a reduction in the quantum of drug residue in milk as well as in dung and urine leading to soil fertility conservation.

Van runs over woman while reversing in Tiruvottiyur

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

An 86-year-old woman died after a load van ran over her while reversing inside the premises of the Vadivudai Amman Temple in Tiruvottiyur on Sunday night. The police identified the victim as E. Kaliya Nayagi, a resident of Thiruvottiyur.

She was rushed to a private hospital nearby, where doctors declared her dead at around 1.45 a.m. on Monday.

The Tiruvottiyur police registered a case and arrested the driver, Sarath Sai, 22. The body was later sent to Stanley Medical College Hospital for post-mortem examination.

THE HINDU
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OPEN TENDER NOTICE
NOTICE INVITING OPEN TENDER, Tender Notice No. 30/TRD/DNR/OT/25-26 The Divisional Railway Manager, E.C. Railway, Danapur invites sealed open tender on behalf of the President of India for the following works.
Tender No. : TRD/DNR/OT/30/25-26
1. Name of work with its location : POH of 05 nos. 21.6 MVA, 132/25 KV Power Transformer of JAJ/TSS (2 Nos.), KOO/TSS (1 No.), NLD/TSS (1 No.) & DNR/TSS (1 No.) for improving power supply over Danapur Division., 2. Approx cost of the work (NIT value) : ₹ 2,27,53,908.62/-, 3. Earnest money to be deposited : ₹ 2,63,800.00/-, 4. Date & time for online submission and closing of all above tenders : Date & time for online submission of tender : 18.03.2026 up to 12.30 hrs., 5. Website particulars, notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc. : Detailed tender notice, eligibility criteria & tender documents can be seen from the CRIS website : http://www.ireps.gov.in & full details of notice can be seen on notice board of Sr. DEE (TRD)/E.C. Railway/ Danapur. All corrigendum will be uploaded on website, if required.
Divisional Railway Manager, E.C.Railway, Danapur
PR/1826/DNR/TRD/T/25-26/40

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice
Tender for Contract for outsourcing of Electrical Maintenance contract including Repair/ Rehabilitation/ modification/ fitment, miscellaneous electrical items in TL Coaches (ICF and LHB) and Repair and reconditioning along with Spares of EBC (2.5 kW) equipments for emergency light in coaches of DHN Division.
For and on behalf of the President of India, E-Tenders on "Two Packet System" are invited from the Firms/Agencies/ Contractors of repute having technical expertise and financial solvency for the following works : -
i) GeM Bid No. & Date : e-tender Notice No. MC-10-OPEN-2025-26 Dated:19/02/2026, ii) Name of work with its location and completion period. :- Contract for outsourcing of Electrical Maintenance contract including Repair/ Rehabilitation/ modification/ fitment, miscellaneous electrical items in TL Coaches (ICF and LHB) and Repair and reconditioning along with Spares of EBC (2.5 kW) equipments for emergency light in coaches of DHN Division for Three (03) Years., Completion period – 03 years. iii) Approx. Cost of the work : Rs. 4,96,29,456.48 (Rupees Four crore ninety-six lakh twenty-nine thousand four hundred fifty-six and forty-eight paise) only.iv) Earnest Money to be deposited : Rs. 3,98,200.00 (Rupees Three lakh ninety-eight thousand and two hundred) only., v) Date & time for closing of e-tender : 17:00 hrs. on 12/03/2026, Date & time for opening of e-tender : 17:30 hrs. on 12/03/2026, vi) Website particulars https://www.ireps.gov.in No manual tender will be accepted against e-tendering.
ADME/C&W/DHN
Divisional Railway Manager
E. C. Railway, Dhanbad
PR/1829/DHN/MECH/T/25-26/52

Fisherfolk of Chennai and suburbs want subsidised engines to be distributed soon

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Each engine costs around ₹75,000, of which ₹25,000 is given by the State government as subsidy to individual boat-owning fisherfolk

Faced with frequent engine breakdowns, fisherfolk of Chennai, Chengalpattu, and Tiruvallur have urged the Fisheries Department to release the subsidy amount for 335 motorised boats meant for 2025.

Each engine costs around ₹75,000, with the State government providing ₹25,000 as subsidy to individual boat-owning fisherfolk.

Community leader 'Kabaddi' Maran said that boat engines last for a maximum of three years after which they need to repaired frequently.

"If we have proper harbours, the engines will last longer. Here, we park the boats on the sand and the repairs start in just 1.5 years. The mechanics demand quite a lot of money for repairs. We would end up spending ₹25,000 per repair," he said.

Neelakantan, a fisherman of Nochikuppam said that 22 persons from his village had applied for engines last year in August and they were yet to get them.

"A month after we applied, someone came and verified our boats and other documents. But nothing happened after that. Earlier, we used to get engines in about a month after we applied for them," he said.

Community leader K. Bharathi said that Tiruvallur district had applied for 115 engines, Chennai 100, and Chengalpattu 150.

"At this rate, fisherfolk would not get any engines for 2025. We are already in February 2026. Fisherfolk say they plan to stage protests if they don't get the subsidy soon," he said.

Private hospital removes 20 cm ovarian cyst from 21-year-old

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Doctors of a private hospital in the city performed a fertility-sparing surgery on a 21-year-old IT professional to remove a 20-cm ovarian cyst. It had caused severe abdominal pain due to torsion, a condition in which the ovary twists and compromises its blood supply.

The surgical team from V.S. Hospitals performed an emergency staging laparotomy, an open abdominal procedure to remove the tumour and assess whether the disease had spread.

The cyst was excised along with the affected fallopian tube, while the healthy ovary and other reproductive structures were preserved to safeguard her future fertility.

Girija Ashok Kumar, Senior Consultant Obstetrics and Gynaecology, emphasised that women should not ignore persistent lower abdominal pain, bloating, irregular menstrual cycles, nausea, or sudden severe pain, as these could indicate an underlying ovarian problem, according to a press release.

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BENGALURU EAST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer (M.P & C.S),
Old Madras Road, K.R. Puram, Bengaluru - 560036.
No: BECC/PR/EE(MPCS)/10/2025-26 Date: 23-02-2026
CORRIGENDUM
Subject: Postponing of Tender.
Reference: This Office Short Term Tender Notification No: BECC/PR/EE/MPSC/10/2025-26, Dated: 19-02-2026.
This is for the kind information for Contractors / Bidders / Public that the Short Term Tender Notification published read at ref. is hereby Postponed Due to Technical Reasons. Hence New Calendar of Events is as follows.

Sl. No.	Earlier Calendar of Events	New Calendar of Events to be read
1	Downloading of Tender Documents: 23-02-2026	Downloading of Tender Documents: 26-02-2026
2	Pre Bid Meeting Date: 26-02-2026, 3.00 PM at Executive Engineer Office, K.R. Puram.	Pre Bid Meeting Date: 02-03-2026, 3.00 PM at Executive Engineer Office, K.R. Puram.
3	Last Date for Submitting of Tender Document: 02-03-2026 upto 4.00 PM	Last Date for Submitting of Tender Document: 06-03-2026 upto 4.00 PM
4	Technical Bid to be Opened on 03-03-2026 at 4.30 PM	Technical Bid to be Opened on 07-03-2026 at 4.30 PM

Other than this, everything is remained unaltered.
Sd/- Executive Engineer (MP & CS), BECC.

CHENNAI METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Office of the Superintending Engineer,
Circle-II, Construction Wing, Fifth Floor,
A-Block, E-Road, Koyambedu, Chennai - 600 107
TENDER CUM AUCTION
Tender Cum Auction Dated :20.02.2026
Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority has invited sealed application for Allotment of 66 shops on monthly rent / lease basis in the newly constructed "Kolathur Modern Market" in Paper Mills Road at Chennai. Applications for the same are being distributed at Koyambedu office of Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority.

Application distribution of date and Time	From 24.02.2026 to 02.03.2026 (except Sunday) From 11.00 AM to 4.00 PM
Application Fee per shop	Rs.1,000/- (Demand Draft in favour of "The Executive Engineer, Division II, CW, Chennai 107")
Application distribute place	Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, 5th floor, E-Road, Koyambedu, Chennai 107.

DIPR /1334 / TENDER/ 2026
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER-II
Circle-II, CW, CMDA, Ch-107

Civil Aviation Department
Airport Road, Patna – 800014.
Govt. of Bihar
TEL. No:- 0612-2225659, 2224423, Fax 0612 2224614
e-mail-cadbihar@bihar.gov.in
Letter. No: सि०वि०वि० (योजना) 09–03 / 2026 - 273 Patna
Corrigendum for RFP
(PR.NO.23415 (Cabinet) 2025-26)
This Corrigendum is issued in continuation of Request For Proposal (RFP) documents published vide Letter No-168 Dt. 05.02.2026 for the Selection of Consultant for Preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for Development of Sonpur (Saran) and Sultanganj (Bhagalpur) Greenfield Airports in Bihar, India. Revised Date of Events as Follows :-

Sr No.	Event Description	Date as per Published RFP	Revised Date
1	Last date for submission of Bid	27th Feb. 2026, by 15.00 Hrs	12 March. 2026, by 15.00 Hrs
2	Technical Bid Opening	10th March, 2026, by 15.00 Hrs.	13th March, 2026, by 15.00 Hrs.
3	Technical Presentation	17th Mar 2026, 12.00 Hrs. onwards (Tentative date) at Conference Hall, Civil Aviation Department, Airport Road, Patna- 800014.	17th Mar 2026, 12.00 Hrs. onwards (Tentative date) at Conference Hall, Civil Aviation Department, Airport Road, Patna- 800014.

Note : The pre-bid queries received from prospective bidders and the consequent rectifications/amendments in the RFP have been duly examined and published on the Department's official website. For detail corrigendum, kindly visit the department website; www.state.bihar.gov.in/cad
PR- 024917 (Cabinet) 2025-26
Additional Secretary
Civil Aviation Department
For further details please visit : www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar
नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार

Weeks after eviction, pavement dwellers in city wait for housing

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

R. Eswari, 23, who represented India in the Street Child Football World Cup-2018 held in Russia, is now unsure of where she will live. And she isn't alone. Weeks after encroachments were cleared around Broadway, families of Walltax Road continue to wait for housing allotments. The families hope that they are allotted a house nearby, such as the Tamil Nadu Urban Housing Development Board's (TNUHDB) Stanley Hospital-Seven Wells units, which were inaugurated recently, or the tenements on Anna Pillai Street.

"Our belongings were removed by the police and officials from the Greater Chennai Corporation stating that we were encroaching the place. Though they said houses would be given, there has been no update. Only 11 families on this street have received allotments. We were told that we wouldn't get houses as we don't have huts to establish our residence," said Lakshmi, 35, a resident of Rattan Bazaar Road.

Selvi, 65, explained how difficult it was to survive on the streets. "We face a constant threat to our lives, from the traffic to wandering men. We are on alert all the time. There is no toilet or drinking water facility," said Ms. Selvi, who has been living on the street for three generations now. "Advance for a house is at least ₹50,000. If we could manage that, then why will we continue to live on the streets?" she asked. She said they were evicted a month ago, but only 11 families were allotted houses in the new tenements. "We were told that in the next [TNUHDB] scheme, we would be accommodated. But how do we believe there will be another scheme?" Ms. Eswari, who lived near Memorial Hall, asked.

"Only we know the pain of having to get new copies of birth certificates. We can't get good jobs as we don't always get access to water to bathe. Our health takes a back seat all the time," said the fourth-generation pavement dweller.

Ms. Lakshmi, echoing her sentiments, said her 11-year-old daughter died three years ago after constant exposure to rain and developing epilepsy-like symptoms.

A GCC official said that they only clear encroachments and don't conduct enumerations or allocations. Meanwhile, a TNUHDB official said that the department which clears encroachments takes care of enumeration and they only look at eligibility. P. Sriramalu, Royapuram Ward Committee Chairman, said that he would inspect the area on Tuesday.

Krishna water to bolster city's summer water supply

The water discharge is part of an inter-State agreement; though Chennai's reservoirs are nearly full this month, the Krishna supply will help balance storage and regulate withdrawal, says WRD

WATER WATCH

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Krishna water was released from Andhra Pradesh on Monday to aid Chennai in meeting its summer drinking water demand. The city is likely to receive water at the entry point in Tiruvallur district by Thursday morning.

Though city reservoirs are nearly full this month, the Krishna supply will help balance storage and regulate daily withdrawal, noted the Water Resources Department (WRD). The discharge from the Kandaleru reservoir in Andhra Pradesh followed a representation from the WRD seeking release for the current spell.

"We have asked for release of 500 cubic feet per second of water (cusecs) to enable storage of a minimum of 1,000 million cubic feet (mcft) by mid-March. Water is likely to reach the city faster as the canal bed is wet," said a WRD official.

The water discharge is part of the inter-State agreement under Krishna Water Supply Project, which stipulates water release in two spells: July-October and January-April. Chennai has to be provided with 4,000 mcft of Krishna water between January and April. However, the WRD had earlier deferred the request as the reservoirs in Tiruvallur district were full post-monsoon and lacked storage space.

Although the Poondi reservoir, which is the prime storage point of Krishna water, is nearly 98.61% full, inflow would be diverted to other major waterbodies for distribution. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Officials noted that Chennai is well placed to meet its drinking water needs this year

While there is a demand for irrigation and drinking water en route, the Andhra Pradesh authorities have promised to release additional quantum of water to offset the withdrawal by localities along the canal, said WRD officials. The department is expecting to receive Krishna water for nearly two months before Andhra Pradesh begins annual maintenance work of the Kandaleru Poondi canal in its jurisdiction.

Currently, the five major reservoirs feeding drinking water to Chennai, including Chembarambakkam and Red Hills, have a combined storage of 9,836 mcft, which is nearly 83.6% of their capacity. Though Poondi reservoir, which is the prime storage point of Krishna water is nearly 98.61% full, inflow would be diverted to other major water bodies from where it would be drawn for distribution.

On average, about 400 cusecs are being drawn daily from Red Hills and Chembarambakkam for city supply.

Officials noted that Chennai is well placed to meet its drinking water needs this year, given the sufficient storage in the reservoirs. Krishna water and Veeranam supply is expected to augment steady supply during peak summer.

Chennai Metrowater now supplies nearly 1,212 million litres of water daily (mld) and of this, nearly 1,166 mld is supplied to domestic consumers.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin distributing house pattas to residents in Kolathur Assembly constituency on Monday R. RAGU

Kolathur is a model constituency under DMK govt., says CM

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday said that his Kolathur Assembly constituency in Chennai has become a model constituency under the "Dravidian Model government".

Listing the various welfare and development measures he had undertaken in the constituency over the past five years, Mr. Stalin claimed that many people from north India visited the hospital located in Periyar Nagar and were impressed by its state-of-the-art facilities.

During his visit, Mr. Stalin inaugurated new buildings for the Arulmigu Kabaleeswarar College of Arts and Science under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Department, constructed at a cost of ₹31.45 crore. He said he was proud of having established such a college and commended HR&CE Minister P.K. Sekarbabu. From the entrance to the classrooms, world-class facilities have been created , he added. Mr. Stalin also inaugurated the *Mudhalvar Padaippagam* established on the college campus.

He further inaugurated various infrastructure projects undertaken by the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) and the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC), including a ration shop and an integrated child development services (ICDS) centre. He also distributed free house pattas to around 2,000 beneficiaries.

Ministers K.K.S.S.R. Ramachandran, S. Muthusamy, R. Sakkarapani, P.K. Sekarbabu, Govi. Chezhiaan, and Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi; Chennai Mayor R. Priya; MPs Kalanidhi Veeraswamy and R. Girirajan; legislators Thayagam Kavi, A. Vetriazhagan, and Joseph Samuel, and officials, were present.

Two persons arrested for flying kites using *manja*

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tiruvottiyur police arrested two persons for flying kites using the Chinese *manja*, which was banned for causing deep cuts that in many cases result in fatalities.

Greater Chennai City Police Commissioner A. Arun had issued standing orders banning the manufacture and sale of *manja* thread, as well as the flying of kites using the thread, within the limits of Chennai city.

The accused – Venkatesan, 25, and Arun, 30, of Tiruvottiyur – were arrested. The police seized 10 kites and four spools containing *manja* from them.

Doctors disappointed over Budget, urge DMK govt. to fulfil demands

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Legal Coordination Committee (LCC) for Government Doctors has expressed disappointment and shock over the absence of any announcement to fulfil the promises made to government doctors in the final Budget of the DMK regime.

In a statement, the LCC stated that they expected the government would announce the fulfilment of promises to doctors in the final Assembly session. They also hoped that a government job would be provided for the wife of Vivekanandan, a government doctor who died during COVID-19 duty, and expected an announcement to double the posts of doctors and nurses in government hospitals.

Unlike Central government doctors and doctors of other States, government doctors in Tamil Nadu are denied equal pay.

The LCC said they were not asking for new pay hikes but to only implement Government Order (G.O.) 354. Despite years of struggle demanding the allocation of ₹25 crore per month for government doctors, the government has not fulfilled the demand.

The LCC requested the Chief Minister to announce doubling of posts for doctors and nurses in government hospitals.

Odisha youth among 2 held for smuggling ganja in city

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Ambattur Prohibition Enforcement Wing arrested two men who smuggled ganja from Odisha near Korattur railway station.

The police found that they were in possession of 31.5 kg of ganja. The ganja was seized and the accused were arrested and taken to the police station for further investigation. The accused were identified as Prakash Majhi, 19, of Odisha and Manikandan, 20, of Tirunelveli district.

Investigation revealed that they had procured the 31.5 kg of ganja from an unidentified person in Odisha with the intention of selling it.

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, PERUMAL S, Father of minor child Lakshit P aged 5 years (DOB:10/Aug/2020), hereby declare that my son's name has been changed from Lakshit P to Lakshithdev Perumal. Henceforth, he shall be known as Lakshithdev Perumal for all purposes. By Father/Guardian, Perumal S s/o Sundaresan, No.55/5, Thirukazhukundram Salai, Melavalam, Karunguzhi, Chengalpattu District - 603303

I, JAKKULA Prabhakara Rao s/o J Subrahmanyam r/o 603, Servarayan, DAE Township, po: Anupuram, dist: Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu – 603127 have changed my name to Jakkula Prabhakar Rao.

I, Sujal Tushar Acham, S/o. Tushar Nemichand Acham, Aged 21 Years, residing at Room No 302, Godavari Hostel, IIT Madras, Chennai - 36, have changed my name to SUJAL ACHAM and shall henceforth be known as SUJAL ACHAM for all purposes.

I, ANITHA Raj Selvaretnam Padma, Resident of 112, Abinaya Flats, Plot No.1 to 10, AIBEA Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai–600041 have change my name from Anitha Raj Selvaretnam Padma to Anitha Raj vide Affidavit dated 23.02.2026 at Chennai.

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Timings
CHENNAI

TUESDAY, FEB. 24		
RISE 06:28	SET 18:17	
RISE 11:23	SET 00:00	
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 25		
RISE 06:27	SET 18:17	
RISE 12:21	SET 00:47	
THURSDAY, FEB. 26		
RISE 06:27	SET 18:17	
RISE 13:24	SET 01:51	

Chennai Weather	max	min
Tiruvallur	32	21
Chennai Airport	33	25
Chennai City	32	26

Chennai Airport Today
33°C The morning will be pleasant. The day will be warm. The night also will be pleasant. Dry weather to prevail.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
34°C The weather will be dry. The day will be warm. The night will be pleasant.

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CINEMA ❖ ARTS ❖ EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

PSN Disciples' Foundation
TODAY 5.00 pm: at Ragasudha Hall, Mylapore - Annual Day Celebrations - 5.00 pm: Laya Vinyasa on Mridangam by B SUBRAMANI. 6.15 pm: Felicitating MADIRIMANGALAM S. SWAMINATHAN. Chief Guest: K. HARISHANKAR. PSN Foundation Fellowship Award (2026) to R. SRIKRITII , an outstanding and young violinist. 6.45 pm: Vocal Recital by BHARATHI RAMASUBBAN accompanied by Madan Mohan on Violin, B. Sivaraman on Mridangam and Anirudh Athreya on Khanjira. All are welcome.

SRI PARTHASARATHY SWAMI SABHA
(Estd:1900) Ph: 9444701446
DANCE FESTIVAL
at R.K. Swamy Auditorium,
(Sir Sivaswamy Kalalaya S.S. School)
Sundareswarar St., Mylapore
Today - Feb 24 - 5.30 p.m. Bharatanatyam by **PADMAPRIYA R** (Disciple of Guru Vanishree Ravishankar)
7.00 p.m. Bharatanatyam by **HARSHINI R** (Disciple of Guru H. N. Nandhini Suresh, Sri Sai Nrithyalaya) - All Are Welcome.
Presented by : Nalli

MISCELLANEOUS

Rasika Ranjani Sabha Foundation, Ch-4.
Today at 6.30 pm Jayakeerthana Creation presents SPARISAM Story Dialogue - Ramanan, directed by Anand Srinivasan Produced by Kalaivanar Kitcha. Ph. No: 86103 57987. Rasikas Welcome.

Narada Gana Sabha Trust
Ph: 24993201
Daily up to 28.2.2026 - Main Hall (Sathguru Gnanananda Hall) 6.30 pm - "Bhagavad Gita"- Chapter 2 - Discourse by Pujyasri Sri Ramana Charna Tirtha (Nochur Swamigal). All are welcome.

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3rd Dr. S. S. Badrinath Endowment Oration
by
Dr. Soumya Swaminathan
Chairperson, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Topic: Well-being as a Way of Life
Tuesday 24 February 2026 | 4:00 PM
Venue: V. D. Swami Auditorium
7th Floor, T. S. Santhanam Floor, KNBIRVO Block
Sankara Nethralaya, Padma Bhushan Dr. S. S. Badrinath Campus
41/18, College Road, Chennai – 600 006
ALL ARE WELCOME

Published by Nirmala Lakshman at Kasturi Buildings, 859-860, Anna Salai, Chennai 600002 on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT.LTD. and Printed by Ra Babu Vijay at THG PUBLISHING PVT.LTD. Plot B-6 & B-7, CMDA Industrial Complex, Maraimalai Nagar, Chengalpattu Taluk, Chengalpattu Dist., Pin 603209. Editor: Suresh Nambath Chandrasekar (Responsible for selection of news under the PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

Southern Railway withholds employees' allowances citing financial constraints

Staff representatives say the decision will adversely affect the workforce and call for urgent remedial action; officials point to insufficient funds and express hope that Railway Board will release a special grant, enabling payment of allowances for February and March along with April salary

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

Citing financial constraints, Southern Railway has decided to withhold payment of certain allowances to employees for the month of February 2026.

Officials expressed hope the Railway Board would release a special financial grant soon, enabling disbursal of allowances for February and March along with the April salary.

According to Railway sources, a note circulated by the Southern Railway headquarters stated that the actual expenditure incurred so far had exceeded the budget allocation for the financial year 2025-26. As a result, several allowances have been excluded from the February salary.

Railway sources said there would be no change in the payment of basic pay and Dearness Allowance (DA). However, more than a dozen categories of allowances, including medical reimbursement, night duty allowance and ration money, were being withheld, based on circulars issued by Finance Managers.

With funds remaining tight this fiscal, allowances for March may also face delay, the sources said. The note did not specify whether the arrears would be cleared along with the April 2026 salary.

Note of concern

Employee representatives voiced concern over the development. "Even payments for work already done, such as overtime and night duty, are being withheld. These allowances are factored into employees' monthly financial planning," a trade union functionary said.

A note circulated by Southern Railway says the expenditure it incurred so far has surpassed the budget allocation for 2025-26.

Responding to queries, a senior Railway official said while the budget allocation for the fiscal was commensurate with projected demand and estimated expenditure, additional maintenance costs had to be incurred to protect railway assets.

"Operational expenses include onboard housekeeping services, laundry, coach cleaning and maintenance works. It is a fact that funds are currently insufficient. Some contractor payments have also been kept pending," the official said.

He explained that passenger and freight earnings were directly credited to the Railway Board's account, which then allocated funds to various zones annually based on requirements. "There is no provision or discretionary power for the General Manager to divert earnings towards payment of salaries or allowances," the official said.

'Unfair labour practice'

The All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) has sought immediate redressal of the issue as non-payment of allowances would adversely affect the workforce.

"Delaying or denying allowances for work performed is unfair. The operations, maintenance, security and medical departments function round the clock. Withholding due payments amounts to unfair labour practice," said V. Balachandran, central organising secretary of AILRSA. He said paying travel or mileage allowances for two or three months in lump-sum could pose additional financial burden for Loco Pilots and Train Managers, as Income Tax exemptions for such allowances are capped at ₹10,000 a month.

"It is not merely a question of money, but the approach in handling financial administration in a labour-intensive organisation like the Indian Railways. The decision will affect thousands of employees," Mr. Balachandran said.

Incidentally, Southern Railway is among the largest passenger-earning zones in the country.

A senior official said a decision taken late on Monday reduced the number of allowances that were withheld to three – kilometre, travel and overtime. Other allowances may be paid, the official said.

Son of DMK member held after car mows down official

The Hindu Bureau
HOSUR

The son of a DMK functionary was arrested for mowing down an assistant labour inspector with his SUV on Sunday night.

The accused, Adhithya, 20, son of Seenivasan, a former DMK councillor of Vasanth Nagar, was driving his car in Annai Aravindan Nagar, accompanied by two friends, when he knocked down a two-wheeler outside a house.

Three hospitalised

The owner of the vehicle, Sivamurthy, 54, his son Kirubakaran, 34, and his daughter-in law Hamsavalli, 30, came out of the house and got into an altercation with the accused.

Sivamurthy's granddaughter Nilani was also with them.

Adhithya then rammed his car into them, and Sivamurthy got dragged under the vehicle. He was declared dead at the hospital, while the other three are under treatment.

TRB begins scrutinising objections to answer key

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Teachers' Recruitment Board (TRB) has begun the scrutiny of objections to the answer key for the examination held in December 2025 for recruitment to the post of assistant professors in government arts and science colleges and government colleges of education.

The tentative key was released on January 5, 2026, along with an objection tracker. Candidates were instructed to submit their objections and representations online till January 13, 2026.

An expert committee has been set up to go through the objections and come out with the final key before the results are announced.

A total of 47,048 candidates had enrolled for the examination, with 42,064 candidates writing it at 196 centres set up across the State. According to the notification, there were 2,708 vacancies to be filled.

Hospitals cannot treat doctors like workmen in a factory, says Madras High Court

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

In a significant verdict, the Madras High Court has held that private hospitals cannot treat doctors like workmen in a factory and include non-compete and non-solicit clauses in the agreements reached with them.

It has also said rivalry between hospitals is a misnomer since they are expected to be service-oriented and not business-oriented institutions.

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh passed the judgment while dismissing a petition filed by MIOT Hospitals Private Limited for appointing an arbitrator to resolve a dispute between it and cardiothoracic surgeon Balaraman Palaniappan.

The judge also imposed costs of ₹1 lakh on the petitioner hospital and directed the hospital to pay the money to the surgeon.

The judge found that the petitioner-hospital and the surgeon had entered into a professional agreement on September 8, 2022, for three years. Clause 8.3 of the agreement stated that the surgeon shall not join any rival hospital or set up practice, in the vicinity of 15 km from the petitioner-hospital, for a further period of three years after termination of the contract.

Since the surgeon had terminated the contract midway in 2025 and joined Apollo Hospitals, the petitioner-hospital demanded liquidated damages of ₹42 lakh, which was the sum

The court said hospitals are expected to be service-oriented and not business-oriented.

equivalent to his three months' professional fees, along with interest, and approached the court for appointment of an arbitrator under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

Shocked by the hospital's act, Justice Venkatesh wrote: "It must be kept in mind that the respondent, who is a doctor by profession, cannot be construed as an employee of the petitioner hospital since, by the very nature of service provided by a doctor, at best, a hospital can only utilise the services and cannot treat a qualified doctor like a regular employee of an organisation."

On clause 8 of the agreement, he said: "It is quite unfortunate that a hospital has incorporated such a clause in an agreement entered into with a doctor. Either the above clause is as a result of cut, copy and paste syndrome from an agreement, which is regularly entered into between technology companies with their employees, or the petitioner-hospital has forgotten the fact that they are running a hospital to serve the patients and that they are indirectly admitting that the organisation is nothing short of a profit making entity."

The judge also wrote: "Doctors can thrive without hospitals whereas a hospital can never exist without doctors supporting such hospitals by rendering their services. Therefore, by no stretch, a hospital can treat a doctor like a workman in a factory or a technical person or a regular employee employed by an organisation in the field of technology and other service sectors."

The judge held that a professional agreement entered into by a doctor with a hospital would certainly be opposed to public policy if it contained a non-solicitation and/or non-compete clause, and such an agreement would be squarely hit by Section 23 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. "Consequently, it must be held to be unlawful, unenforceable and *void ab initio* to that extent," he said.

(For the full report, visit newsth.live/docs)

Steering Committee set up for coordination and governance of health workforce

This strategy will help to improve availability, skills, and retention of health workers at public health facilities

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government recently constituted a State-level Steering Committee to spearhead the development of a comprehensive Human Resources for Health (HRH) strategy aimed at strengthening the State's public healthcare workforce. The move comes under the World Bank-supported Enhanced Health Service Delivery Program (EHSDP).

The committee, chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Health and Family Welfare, and having the Mission Director of NHM, Tamil Nadu, as its Member-Secretary/Convenor, has been constituted to ensure systematic planning, coordination and governance of the health workforce. It has 16 members. The government also gave the nod to the Mission Director of NHM, Tamil Nadu, to develop the HRH Strategies for Tamil Nadu.

Program-for-Results

The EHSDP uses the World Bank's Program-for-Results model under which funds are released when specific key results are achieved – Disbursement-Linked Indicators. The development and adoption of State-Specific HRH Strategies for public health facilities is one of the DLIs. A mandatory requirement, it will help identify gaps in recruitment, capacity-building, workforce distribution and retention.

The implementation of the HRH Strategy will ensure that the States can systematically address workforce gaps and improve availability, skills, and retention of health workers across public health facilities. It will be developed and implemented through a three-tiered, graded approach to ensure comprehensive planning, expert guidance, and effective execution – Technical Working Groups for micro-level planning, data analysis and drafting; Technical Advisory Group for meso-level review, expert inputs and policy refinement; and State-level Steering Committee for macro-level decision-making, approval and overall governance, according to an order by the Health Department.

The Technical Advisory Group and the Technical Working Groups have already been constituted under the NHM and tasked with preparing the technical guidance report and strategy document by coordinating with technical experts and the World Bank, submission of draft strategy recommendations for review and further approval by the Steering Committee.

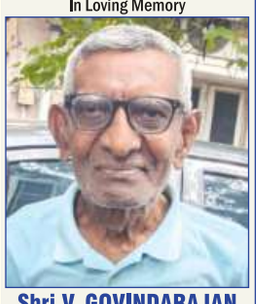
OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

N.R. KRISHNAN, IAS (Retd.,)
(87 Years)
Former Secretary, Environment & Forests, Government of India
attained Acharyan Thiruvadigal around 12 noon on 23rd February 2026 at his residence at Second Floor, 46/18, Balaji Nagar 2nd Street, Royapettah, Chennai 600014.
Ceremony starts at 9.00 a.m. on 24.02.2026. Funeral at 11 a.m. at Besant Nagar Crematorium.
Mourned by Anusuya (Wife), Malavika & Srinivas and Ajay & Chitra.
Contact: 9500069767, 9892322183, 9740745239

DEATH

OBITUARY
In Loving Memory



Shri V. GOVINDARAJAN
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22.9.1945 - 22.2.2026
Deeply mourned by
Family & Friends.
Last respects: 6 to 10.30 am
Final journey: 24 Feb 2026, 11 am
Sakthi Towers, 107, Gandhi Road, Velachery, Chennai. Ph: 9566129555

SAD DEMISE

Dr.SAROJASUNDARARAJAN
Passed away on 21-02-2026
Former Principal, Bharathidasan Women's College And Former Director, Kanchi Maamunivar P.G.Centre
Grieved By Sister Sharada

DEATH

N.R. KRISHNAN, IAS (Retd.,)
(87 Years)
Former Secretary, Environment & Forests, Government of India
attained Acharyan Thiruvadigal around 12 noon on 23rd February 2026 at his residence at Second Floor, 46/18, Balaji Nagar 2nd Street, Royapettah, Chennai 600014.
Ceremony starts at 9.00 a.m. on 24.02.2026. Funeral at 11 a.m. at Besant Nagar Crematorium.
Mourned by Anusuya (Wife), Malavika & Srinivas and Ajay & Chitra.
Contact: 9500069767, 9892322183,
With fond memories from TNRDC & ITEL

DEATH

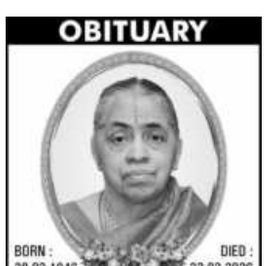
Chatta Subramaniam
(Textile Technologist)
Born: 21 April 1946-Died: 23 February 2026
Son of CA Chatta Ramalingam
Passed away peacefully.
Deeply mourned by
his Wife, Brothers, Sons, Daughter, Daughter-in-law and Grandsons.
A loving husband and devoted father who cherished his wife and children above all else.

OBITUARY

K. Sujatha BA, BL (73 Yrs.)
Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on 23/2/2026
You kept laughing and kept everyone around you laughing! Your laughter keeps ringing in all our ears, all the time.
Forever in your remembrance
Your very dear brother Kuppu, Ramah, Sharanyah, Shreyaah and your countless dear friends
Phone : 9840464654

DEATH

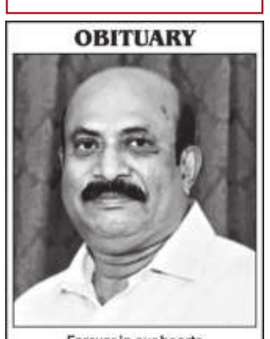
OBITUARY



BORN : 29-03-1946 DIED : 23-02-2026
Partner, M/s. N.C.Rajagopal & Co., Chartered Accountants, Salem
Chairman, Rajaji Institute of Technology
W/o. Late. Dr.CA.M.V.Rengarajan
Mrs.SOWJANYA RENGARAJAN
Passed away peacefully on 23-02-2026 around 2.00 am
Deeply Mourned by
Family Members, Relatives & M/s. N.C. Rajagopal & Co., Staffs
6-D, Ramakrishna Road, Shanmuga Colony, Salem-7. Cell : 9980169904

Dr. G THIRUMAVALAVAN
BSc.,MA, PhD
Retd. Reader in History
DOB:15.06.1940 DOD:19.02.2026
Historian, author, gifted teacher, inspiring & supportive son, husband, father, uncle, grandfather, brother and friend.
Remembered by grieving family
Ph: 9840492908

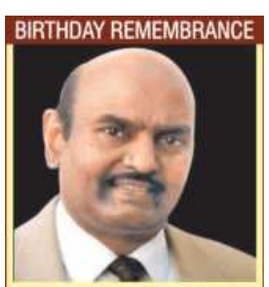
OBITUARY



Forever in our hearts
JOSEPH PUTHEN PURAYIL OOMMEN
Manager (Retd.), Abbott
Husband of Late Usha Joseph
DoD: 22.02.2026
Funeral services will be held on Wednesday (25-02-2026) at 10am at the family residence - N295, 26th St., N Block, Annanagar East, Chennai-102, & at 11 am at Jerusalem Mar Thoma Church, Annanagar East. The burial will take place thereafter at Kilpauk Cemetery.

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE



Rev. Dr.Theodore Williams
24.02.1935 ~ 29.12.2009
Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight. - Matthew 12:18
Remembering gratefully God's chosen servant, who immensely enriched us in CHRIST
Inserted by:
Dr.S.Prince Arockia Doss

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Sri T R Narayanan (Raja)
Retd. Manager - Indian Bank
(21.8.1932- 24.2.2025)
Fondly remembered by
Thumbavanam Family
tnarun@yahoo.com

21st Anniversary

YOUSUFALI JAMNAGARWALA
on 22.02.2026
"Your guidance continues to inspire us"
Fondly Remembered by :
PARTNERS and STAFF of
FLUID CONTROL SPECIALISTS
Chennai - 600 001.

REMEMBRANCE

Dr. DEBASHISH DANDA
Founder
Dept. of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology CMC Vellore.
Remembered everyday since 24.02.2024
Family, Friends, Students & Patients

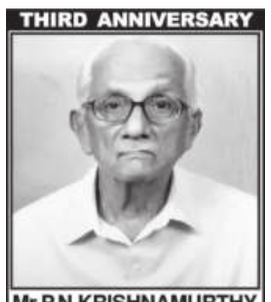
DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

20th Death Anniversary

Tr.T.Punniyakoti, Retd. ICI
Fondly Remembered by Family,
S.Gomathy, Fmly. Pen. S.Rly,
P.Damotharan, Retd. ICI,
P.Pandian, Advocate,
Latha Sundaram,
P.Venkatesan, Ex. IBM,
Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren
Mob. 7993868656

1st Death Anniversary
Your love and wisdom will live in our hearts forever...
Mr. D. Sreedaran M.A.,B.L
Retd DRO, Advocate High Court Madras
24.02.2025
Fondly Remembered by:
Sundari Sreedaran, Family & Friends

THIRD ANNIVERSARY



Mr.P.N.KRISHNAMURTHY
Retired State Bank of India
Former Vice President SBSU (CC)
DOB: 20.07.1936 - DOD: 24.02.2023
Fondly remembered by
FAMILY MEMBERS
Ph: 9940054976

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES
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TAMIL NADU WAQF BOARD

No.1, Jaffar Sarang Street, Vallal Seethakathi Nagar, Chennai - 600 001, Tamil Nadu.

E-TENDER NOTICE

Date:24.02.2026

The Tamil Nadu Waqf Board Invites Requests for Proposal (RFP) from eligible tenderers for repair and improvement works of the toilet sewer system under the Single-Cover system.

- E-tender Notice No. : **TNWB_Renovation_2026 dt.24.02.2026**
- Tender publish date in **http://tntenders.gov.in** portal through online : **24.02.2026 at 10.00 A.M.**
- Bid Submission Closing date in : **05.03.2026 at 06.00 P.M.**
- Bid Opening Date : **06.03.2026 at 3.00 PM**
- Downloading the tender document : From **24.02.2026** to **06.03.2026** upto **02.0**0 P.M. by Free of Cost
- For further details visit website : **http://tntenders.gov.in**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
TAMILNADU WAQF BOARD, CHENNAI-600 001.

IPRO/08/CHENNAI/2026/DATE : 23.02.2026

CENTRAL RAILWAY

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORKS

Open e-tender notice No.CR-DRM(W)BB-2026-09 of 20.02.2026

Sr.No.1. Name of work: A) Painting and repairs to station FOB'S of CSMT station FOB connecting PF No. 1 to 7 at km 0.250, SNRD station FOB km 2.050 and Sewri station CSMT end FOB at km 6.884 total 03 Nos. FOBs between CSMT-VDLR section with Zinc rich primer, MIO coat and PU painting scheme to steel structure. **B)** Replacement of inspection damaged/wornout board to FOB's /ROB's / Pipeline Bridge & Provision by Bridge Board to FOB's & Pipeline Bridge in the BY-VK section over main Line & KCE-MNKD section over HB line. **C)** Repairs, Provision of OHE protective screen & protective painting to Trombay Line ROB at km. 19/18A-19B between CLA-TMBY Line. **Approximate Value**: ₹108.89 lakhs. **EMD**: ₹2,04,500/-. **Completion period** :12 months.

Sr.No.2. Name of work: CLA- Miscellaneous annual maintenance work at station areas, platforms and service building in lieu of zone under SSE(W)CLA for year 2025-26. **Approximate Value**: ₹106.29 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹2,03,200/-. **Completion period**: 12 months.

Sr.No.3. Name of work: A) Miscellaneous P.way work for SSE (P.Way) VSD for 2026 under ADEN(NE)KYN. **B)** Miscellaneous P.Way work for SSE (P.Way) KYN East Section under ADEN (NE)KYN for the FY 2026-27. **Approximate Value**: ₹308.39 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹3,04,200/-. **Completion period**: 12 months.

Sr.No.4. Name of work: A) Miscellaneous P.Way work for SSE(P/Way) KSRA; **B)** Miscellaneous P.Way work for SSE(P/Way) IGP for the FY 2026-27 under Sr DEN(NE) CSMT. **Approximate Value**: ₹316.12 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹3,08,100/-. **Completion period**: 12 months.

Sr.No.5. Name of work: (A) Improvement to Vasind & Asangoan Yard under SSE P.Way VSD; **(B)** Improvement to Titwala & Khadvali Yard under SSE P.Way VSD. **Approximate Value**: ₹162.27 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹2,31,100/- **Completion period**: 8 months.

Sr.No.6. Name of work: (A) Igatpuri Yard Improvement for year 2026; **(B)** Titoli Yard Improvement under Sr DEN (NE) section. **Approximate Value**: ₹127.44 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹2,13,700/-. **Completion period**: 8 months.

Sr.No.7. Name of work: A) Repairs to Diesel Shed including leaky roof, replacement of small size valley gutter, repairs to damaged road at Kalyan Diesel Shed, under ADEN(W)KYN. **B)** Proposal of G+2 service building for replacement of indoor and outdoor signalling gears of DCC cabin with electronic interlocking at DCC. **C)** Repairs to service buildings, external & internal painting at Kaman Road, Kharbav, Bhivandi Road and Juchandra stations under ADEN(W)KYN. **Approximate Value**: ₹554.77 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹4,27,400/-. **Completion period**: 12 months.

Sr.No.8. Name of work: A) Improvement to existing boundary wall of Kurla railway colony. **B)** Repairs to road at Kurla Railway colony under ADEN(Wks)BY. **C)** Repairs to drainage line at Kurla Railway Colony under ADEN(Wks)BY. **D)** VVH - Repairs to approach road, side drain, pathway of building, plinth protection of bldg. at VVH Colony under SSE(Wks)CLA under ADEN(W)BY. **Approximate Value**: ₹660.50 Lakhs. **EMD**: ₹4,80,300/-. **Completion period**: 12 months.

I) Tender closing date & time of aforesaid tender: Up-to 15:00 hrs. of Sr.No.1 on 19.03.2026, Sr.No.2,3 and 4 on 10.03.2026, Sr.No. 5 and 6 on 13.03.2026, and Sr.No.7 and 8 on 17.03.2026 to be opened after 15:00 hrs.

II) The prospective tenderers are requested to visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in** for details of tenders & corrigendum, if any.

III) Tenderer may participate in above e-tender electronically through website **www.ireps.gov.in** only & submission of manual offers against e-tender are not allowed. Manually, if submitted shall neither be opened nor considered.

IV) The Bid Security shall be deposited either in cash through e-payment gateway or submitted as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in tender documents.

V) For further enquiry, may contact: Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Central Railway on phone. 022-67455323.

VI) This tender complies with Public Procurement Policy Order 2017 dated 16.9.2017.

Complete details of tenders are available at the website "**www.ireps.gov.in**". The complete details of tenders are also available in the "Notice Board" of the Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Mumbai CSMT.

AK-924

Unsafe and unauthorized work near the railway line is a punishable offence

भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
डॉ राम मनोहर लोहिया अस्पताल
अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान, नई दिल्ली

DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIA HOSPITAL
ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
NEW DELHI -110001
No.HA-II-11022/1/2023-HA-II Section-Dr. RMLH/594

16/02/2026

Recruitment Notice for the post of Senior Resident (Regular Basis)

The Medical Superintendent, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital & ABVIMS, New Delhi invites applications from Indian National in the prescribed form available on website **rmlh(dot)nic(dot)in** for the posts of Senior Resident (Non-Academic) on regular basis.

The detailed advertisement, numbers of posts, eligibility conditions, pay structure, age criteria, application form and other details can be seen in the full advertisement on the website www.rmlh.nic.in. Any corrigendum/ modification order regarding this advertisement will be issued on the hospital website only. Candidates are advised to visit hospital website **www.rmlh.nic.in** regularly for this purpose. **Last date for submission of application is 10/03/2026 till 03-00 p.m.**

Officer-in-charge
HA-II Section

CBC 17147/11/0011/2526

Government of Karnataka
FOOD, CIVIL SUPPLIES & CONSUMER AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
(Procurement and Distribution Section)
8, Cunningham Road, 4th Floor, Sahakara Bhavan, Bengaluru-560052.
Website: www.ahara.kar.nic.in & www.neml.in
e-mail: indirafoodkit@gmail.com

No. 1/2025-26/ComFCS/IFK Date:23.02.2026

CORRIGENDUM-2

CORRIGENDUM FOR EXTENSION OF DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF TECHNICAL BID FOR PROCUREMENT OF FOOD MATERIALS- TUR DAL, SUNFLOWER OIL, SUGAR AND IODIZED SALT UNDER ANNA BHAGYA SCHEME OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA THROUGH E-AUCTION.

The Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, Bengaluru, Government of Karnataka with reference to the earlier notification regarding submission of documents for the INDIRA Ahara Kit published **on 23.01.2026,** it is informed to all concerned that the last date for the submission of Technical Bid has been extended. The date of submission of Technical Bids which was previously fixed as **23.02.2026 till 5:30 P.M.** has been extended to **02.03.2026 till 5:30 P.M.** The details of which will be uploaded in the website: **www.neml.in.**

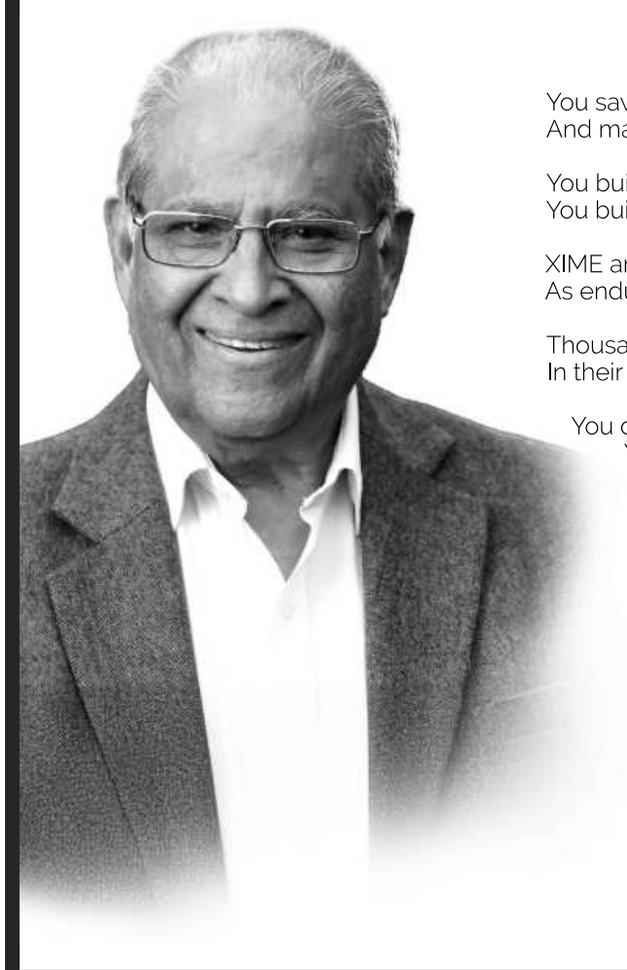
For further information, if any, please contact NCDEX e Markets Ltd Toll-Free No. 1800-210-1222 or e-mail at **askus@neml.in.**

Sd/- Commissioner,
Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department

Chevalier Prof. J Philip

21 May 1936 - 21 Feb 2026

You Chose A Higher Calling



You saw promise in young minds.
And made it your mission to shape them.

You built more than institutions.
You built ideals. Value by value.

XIME and XIS stand today,
As enduring symbols of your vision.

Thousands carry your imprint.
In their careers. And in their character.

You didn't just raise the bar for education.
You defined it.

You are, and always will be,
A legend. A light. A lasting legacy.

Rest in peace, Dear Sir.

Viewing

24 February 2026 | 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Xavier Institute of Management & Entrepreneurship, Hosur Road, Phase II, Electronic City, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560100

Funeral service

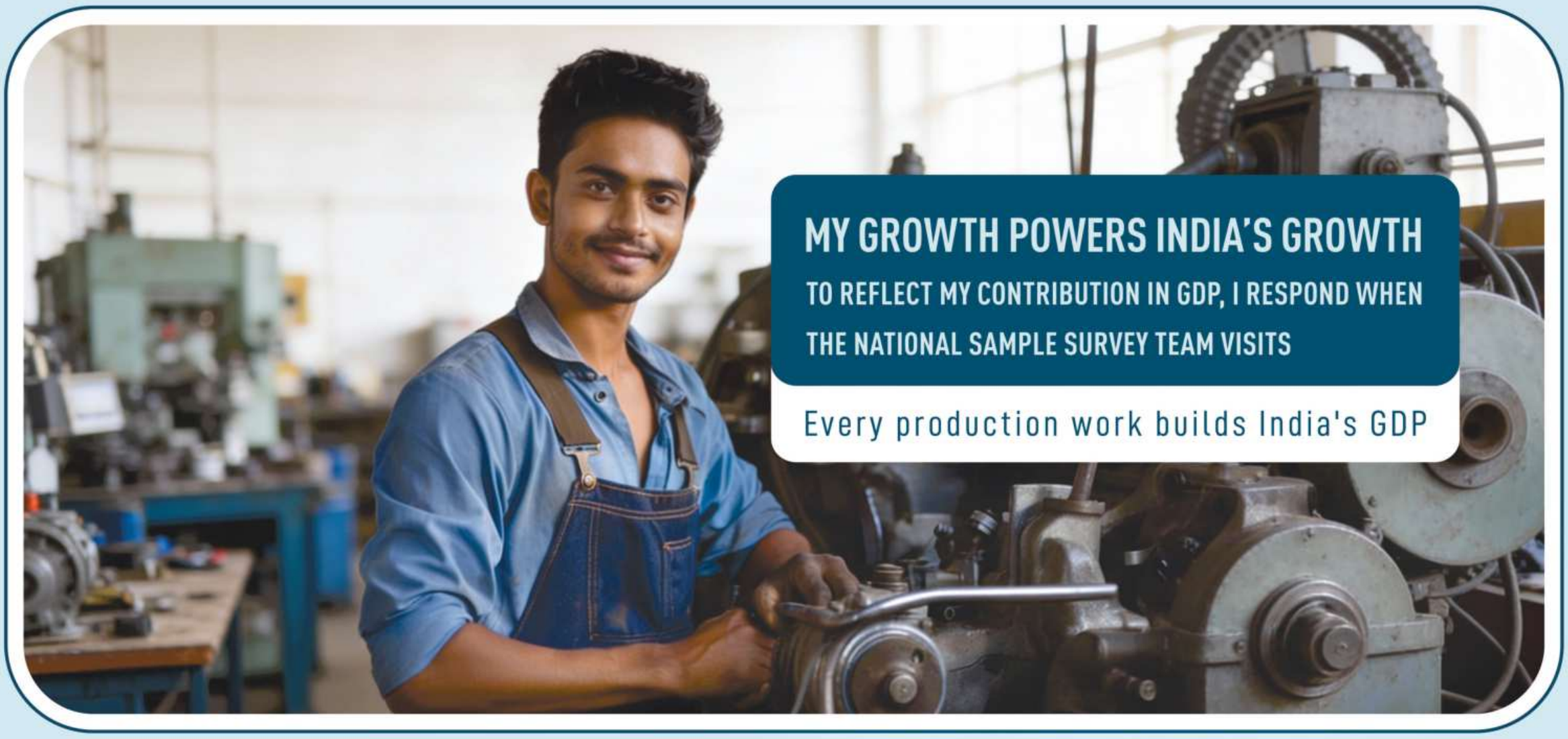
24 February 2026
Funeral Mass | St. Anthony's Friary Church, Hosur Road | 2:00 pm
Burial | St. Patrick's Cemetery

XIS XIME INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
Inspired Learning

XIME
Shaping Future Leaders
Bangalore | Kochi | Chennai

Government of India
Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
सत्यमेव जयते

DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT



UPDATING GDP BASE YEAR TO 2022-23:

• INCORPORATING NEW DATA SOURCES • IMPROVED METHODOLOGY • FOR BETTER DATA BASED DECISION MAKING

Release Date: 27 February 2026

Please cooperate with NSO enumerators when they come for survey. Your identity will be kept confidential.

CBC 39101/13/0010/2526

mospi.gov.in @GoIStats /goistats GoIStats Ministry of Statistics & PI

INBRIEF

CPI leader Nallakannu's health deteriorates, CM visits hospital

The health of veteran leader of the Communist Party of India (CPI) R. Nallakannu deteriorated, as he continued to receive medical treatment at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital in Chennai on Monday. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin visited the hospital and enquired about the leader's health with his family members and doctors. Ministers Thangam Thennarasu and P.K. Sekarbabu and CPI State secretary M. Veerapandian were present during the Chief Minister's visit. Earlier in the day, Mr. Veerapandian told reporters the veteran leader had been admitted to the hospital for the past 20 days. "As of now, his health is declining," he said.

50 companies of CAPF to be allotted to the State for polls

Fifty companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have been initially allotted to Tamil Nadu by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs for the Assembly election, Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik said on Monday. "The initial 50 companies of CAPF will be inducted on March 10 to Tamil Nadu," the officer said.

We are prepared to face ED, I-T Dept., and CBI, says Stalin

The BJP-led government at the Centre has been preventing the registration of FIRs related to corruption charges against some ex-Ministers through the Governor, the Chief Minister alleges

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

If the BJP brings in "its forces" in the form of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Income Tax Department, and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), "we are very well prepared to face them," DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said in Chennai on Monday.

He also accused the BJP of using the investigation agencies to further its political ambitions.

Speaking at the *CNN News 18*'s Town Hall event, he said, "The NDA [National Democratic Alliance] is an alliance that has been formed by threatening the corrupt. Many who were Ministers of the AIADMK government were raided. Cases filed by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) are still pending against about 10 of them. The BJP is protecting them because of the alliance."

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin speaking at the event in Chennai on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Stalin further alleged, "In fact, they [the BJP government] have been preventing the registration of FIRs against some former Ministers through the Governor for long. Now, they are trying to threaten us with the ED, the Income Tax Department, and the CBI. Even if the BJP brings its forces..., we are very well prepared to face them."

Questioning how many of the 8,000-odd cases registered by the ED had been fully investigated and the agency's rate of conviction, Mr. Stalin said, "Those against whom corruption charges are framed are joining hands with whom? The BJP is undertaking political witch-hunting by pettily using the investigation agencies. And they have named it the NDA."

Later, at an interview, asked whether there would be a multi-cornered contest in the coming Tamil Nadu Assembly election, Mr. Stalin said, "Certainly, there may be a multi-cornered contest. But they are not strong enough."

Replying to a question on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Tamil Nadu recently and the BJP's efforts to ensure the victory of its alliance, Mr. Stalin said, "As I keep repeating, the Prime Minister should visit often. [Union Home Minister] Amit Shah should keep visiting, too. This Governor [R.N. Ravi] should not be replaced."

'Aware of my stature'

Asked about voices appealing to him to head the INDIA bloc, Mr. Stalin recalled the observations made by late leader and former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi that he was well aware of his stature. "*Thalaivar* said he was aware of his stature. I, too, will act according to my stature." Referring to an article he had penned in *The Hindu* that India's federalism was in need of a structural reset, Mr. Stalin said an understanding at the national level on the issue was necessary.

Vijay rejects Stalin's 'T.N. vs Delhi' remark, says fight is between his party and DMK

The Hindu Bureau
VELLORE

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) founder and actor Vijay on Monday rejected Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's claim that the 2026 Assembly election would be a contest between "Tamil Nadu and New Delhi". He asserted that the real fight would be between the TVK and the ruling DMK.

Addressing TVK office-bearers and functionaries at a conference held at Agaramcheri near the Pallikonda toll-plaza in Vellore, Mr. Vijay was referring to Mr. Stalin's recent remarks that the 2026 election would be a fight between the people of Tamil Nadu and the BJP-led Centre in New Delhi over the protection of the State's rights.

In other words, Mr. Vijay said, the contest was being projected as one between the people of Tamil Nadu and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), of which the BJP is a constituent in the State. "It does

TVK president Vijay addressing a meeting in Vellore on Monday. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

not sound logical. The 2026 Assembly election is a battle between the people of Tamil Nadu and corruption. In short, it is a fight between the 'clean force' led by the TVK and the 'evil force' that is the DMK," he said.

Mr. Vijay cautioned voters, especially the youth, against making light of this election. He said such a fiercely contested election would happen only once in 50 years, not every five years. "When you vote in this election, you should remember that one of the contestants is your family member. We are inseparable," he said.

As Congress pushes for more seats, DMK hints at retaining '25 + 1 formula'

B. Kolappan
Udhav Naig
CHENNAI

The ruling DMK and the Congress were unable to come to a preliminary understanding on the number of seats the latter would contest in the upcoming Assembly election in Tamil Nadu, before they could begin formal seat-sharing talks on February 26 or 27.

"The Congress is expecting more than 30 Assembly seats but the DMK is not willing to allot more than 25 and one Rajya Sabha seat," a source in the DMK said. The original demand of the Congress was one Assembly seat for every Lok Sabha seat in Tamil Nadu, which is 39. Though it has reduced its demand, it remains firm on getting more than 30. A senior Congress leader, however, claimed that the party high command had pitched for 41 seats, 25% representation for Congress in local bodies, and appointments as trustees in Temple Boards as part of the negotiations. Besides, it expected the DMK to consider accommodating its representative in the Cabinet during government formation, post-polls. According to this leader, the party has also sought two Rajya Sabha berths.

On Monday, All India Congress Committee in-charge of Tamil Nadu Girish Chodankar and TNCC president K. Selvaperunthagai met DMK Parliamentary party leader Kanimozhi and discussed the issue. This followed Sunday's meeting between DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal in Chennai. "What has caused the stalemate is the Congress's insistence on getting more than 30 Assembly seats," the DMK source said.

Mr. Chodankar, after meeting Ms. Kanimozhi, also acknowledged that talks remained inconclusive though the discussion on the Rajya Sabha seats and the local body elections went "positively". He said the seat-sharing committees of the two parties would meet and iron out the issue. "We are waiting for the date," he said.

Sources in Congress said its demands had reportedly been laid out in a letter from party leader Sonia Gandhi, which was handed over to Mr. Stalin by the Congress delegation. "It has been communicated that we will not raise the issue of share in power in public until the elections are over. But, we have insisted on share in power," said a Congress leader, privy to the development.

MMK, MDMK hold talks

Earlier in the day, Manithaneya Makkal Katchi (MMK) held talks with the DMK's seat-sharing committee at Anna Arivalayam. M.H. Jawahirullah, the party's leader and MLA, said the MMK had in 2021 contested two seats – Papanasam and Manapparai – and won both. "Our party has roots in all districts. This time, we have sought five seats. The committee told us our demand would be brought to the notice of Mr. Stalin," he said.

Mr. Jawahirullah added that as in the previous election, his party would contest on the 'rising sun' symbol of the DMK. Leaders of Vaiko's Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) also held talks with the DMK seat-sharing committee headed by party treasurer T.R. Baalu.

Sholinganallur continues to have the highest number of electors

Electorate round-up

District-wise list of voters in T.N. (as on February 23, 2026)

District	Men	Women	Third gender	Total
Tiruvallur	15,44,710	16,12,090	613	31,57,413
Chennai	13,65,763	14,64,344	829	28,30,936
Kancheepuram	5,78,080	6,13,917	197	11,92,194
Vellore	5,49,654	5,83,769	164	11,33,587
Krishnagiri	7,76,318	7,77,458	264	15,54,040
Dharmapuri	6,24,647	6,15,311	150	12,40,108
Tiruvannamalai	9,43,727	9,75,277	155	19,19,159
Villupuram	7,83,288	8,03,154	211	15,86,653
Salem	13,70,962	13,84,548	320	27,55,830
Namakkal	6,35,299	6,75,452	200	13,10,951
Erode	8,38,466	9,01,574	182	17,40,222
The Nilgiris	2,61,317	2,85,791	25	5,47,133
Coimbatore	13,00,889	13,95,396	528	26,96,813
Dindigul	8,12,937	8,58,964	174	16,72,075
Karur	4,06,027	4,39,054	83	8,45,164
Tiruchi	10,31,354	10,94,642	307	2,126,303
Perambalur	2,71,634	2,83,466	31	5,55,131
Cuddalore	9,91,527	10,23,976	293	20,15,796
Nagapattinam	2,59,620	2,68,298	29	5,27,947
Tiruvarur	4,80,679	4,98,919	54	9,79,652
Thanjavur	9,47,278	10,04,012	155	19,51,445
Pudukottai	6,41,276	6,57,562	69	12,98,907
Sivaganga	5,44,035	5,66,526	38	11,10,599
Madurai	12,08,651	12,58,051	252	24,66,954
Theni	5,02,311	5,30,887	175	10,33,373
Virudhunagar	7,28,539	7,68,632	246	14,97,417
Ramanathapuram	5,56,321	5,66,653	55	11,23,029
Thoothukudi	6,71,742	7,04,689	193	13,76,624
Tirunelveli	6,11,601	6,41,518	145	12,53,264
Kanniyakumari	7,51,016	7,59,390	144	15,10,550
Ariyalur	2,59,234	2,63,692	28	5,22,954
Tiruppur	9,44,178	10,10,853	252	19,55,283
Kallakurichi	5,52,101	5,57,600	210	11,09,911
Tenkasi	6,18,063	6,46,180	168	12,64,411
Chengalpattu	11,04,511	11,55,144	381	22,60,036
Tirupattur	4,49,464	4,61,996	139	9,11,599
Ranipet	4,61,213	4,83,377	111	9,44,701
Mayiladuthurai	3,60,493	3,68,676	47	7,29,216
Total	2,77,38,925	2,89,60,838	7,617	5,67,07,380

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Sholinganallur Assembly constituency in Chengalpattu district continues to have the highest number of electors, estimated at 5,36,991, while the Harbour constituency in Chennai district has the lowest number of electors, at 1,16,896. Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik disclosed these details after the Election Commission of India published the final electoral rolls on Monday.

At a press conference, she said the number of electors in the age group of 18-19 was 12.51 lakh. The number of electors marked as persons with disabilities was 4.63 lakh. The final rolls also have 3.99 lakh senior citizen electors aged above 85.

Electors could check their names on https://elections.tn.gov.in where the final rolls have been uploaded. Appeals against the decision of the Electoral Registration Officer could be filed before the District Magistrate within 15 days under Section 24(a) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, read with Rule 27 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

"Even now, you could submit Form 6 for inclusion or forms if you want any changes. Appeal, if any, could also be made now," said Ms. Patnaik. The first appeal could be filed with the District Election Officer and the second appeal could be filed with the Chief Electoral Officer. For inclusion, one could submit Form 6 to the Booth Level Officers (BLOs) or apply online.

There is no change in the number of polling booths, which remains at 75,032. During the claims and objections period, about 7.40 lakh people in the 18-19 age group were included, she said. To a question on the possible deletion of entries from the final rolls, Ms. Patnaik said, "Continuous update is ongoing." As for Form 8, Ms. Patnaik said 3,400 applications were received and 3,351 were disposed of.

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar will visit the State on February 26 and 27. Ms. Patnaik said he would meet the District Election Officers and the Superintendents of Police concerned, the Commissioners of Police, the Inspectors-General of Police, officials of 23 enforcement agencies, and representatives of political parties.

State Cabinet approves incentives for 46 projects

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A meeting of the Tamil Nadu Cabinet headed by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday approved incentives for 46 industrial projects with investments to the tune of ₹31,592 crore.

These investment proposals are expected to come up in 16 districts and are expected to generate employment for over 61,000 people, Minister for Industries T.R.B. Rajaa said.

Briefing journalists after the Cabinet meeting, Mr. Rajaa said among the investors are Sakthi Aircraft Industry, NMB-Minebea, Yield Engineering Systems, Dixon, SFO Technologies, Vikram Solar, Minerva's Special Purpose Vehicle, Hikoki Power Tools, Festo, Aequs, Schneider Electric, Bharat Biotech, Caterpillar Inc., Boeing, and Saint Gobain.

Incentives have also been approved for investment proposals from M2P Fintech, HD Supply, Ford, Flextronics, Adidas, Bella-Premier, and LMW. Mr. Rajaa said the DMK government was focusing on distributed development across the State.

Sri Lankan Navy arrests 12 fishermen from Pamban

The Hindu Bureau
RAMESWARAM

The Sri Lankan Navy arrested 12 fishermen of Pamban and impounded a mechanised trawler on the charge of poaching in the Palk Strait in the early hours of Monday.

According to officials of the Fisheries Department, the trawler, owned by David of Pamban, was seized with the 12 fishermen on board. They were detained while fishing between Katchatheevu and Mannar. The fishermen put out to sea on Sunday, and were expected to return to the shore around noon Monday. After preliminary interrogation, they were taken to the naval port at Talaimannar, officials added.

Condemning the arrest, fishermen leader Jesu Raja said only last week were 22 fishermen arrested and four trawlers impounded by the Sri Lankan Navy. "With just a few days left for the festival at St. Antony's Church on Katchatheevu, such incidents have created disharmony among the fisherfolk," he said. He said though the Sri Lankan authorities had invited pilgrims from India to the two-day Katchatheevu festival, such incidents caused mental agony. "We are unsure whether to accept the invitation and take part in the festival or stay back," he said.

Following a recent court

The arrested fishermen have been taken to the naval port in Talaimannar in Sri Lanka.

directive to release six trawlers, around 10 fishermen of Rameswaram travelled to Sri Lanka a few days ago, hoping to retrieve their boats.

However, while they were waiting in the court hall, officials reportedly said the boat-owners would also be booked on the charge of poaching. The fishermen-leaders and boat owners returned home empty-handed two days ago.

Narrating the ordeal, Mr. Raja said the Union government's intervention was the only way to achieve a permanent solution. A boat owner alleged that advocates in Sri Lanka were unwilling to represent them in court. "As a result, we were unable to obtain any legal relief. Only if the Union government issues directions to officials at the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka will the matters move in our favour," he said.

CM writes to Jaishankar

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin wrote to Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar, requesting him to take diplomatic action to prevent any further arrest of fishermen and secure the early release of all the detained fishermen and their boats. As of now, 116 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, including those arrested on Monday, and 259 fishing boats remain in Sri Lankan custody, he said. "There is an urgent need for sustained and concrete diplomatic efforts to prevent further arrest of our fishermen."

In a statement, Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar) leader G.K. Vasan condemned the arrest and called on the State and Union governments to secure the release of the fishermen and retrieve the seized boat.

Panel for Union-State relations deliberates on Part-II of report

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government-constituted high-level committee for Union-State relations, which submitted Part I of its report to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin earlier this month, met in New Delhi on Sunday to deliberate on Part II of its report.

Justice Kurian Joseph, the committee's Chairperson and former Judge of the Supreme Court and its members M. Naganathan, former Vice-Chairman of the State Planning Commission, and K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty, retired IAS officer, discussed various topics to be included in Part II of its report, covering 10 chapters, an official release said.

Part I of the report – in Tamil and English – was tabled in the Assembly on February 16. It covered 10 key topics ranging from language policy to the Governor, education, health, delimitation, elections, and Goods and Services Tax, among others. "A notable feature is that the Tamil version of the report has been made 'open access' so that anyone can publish it, either in its entirety or in part, provided that the source is duly acknowledged and no changes of any kind are made. This is to ensure that the ideas and recommendations of the Committee are disseminated widely," it said.

Multiple translations

The Tamil Nadu government has also proposed to release the first part of the report in Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, and Telugu, and make them "open access" too. In April 2025, the State government constituted the committee "as a non-partisan exercise," and it commenced work on June 1 that year.

Four loading workers killed as slab collapses on them in Kozhikode

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

Four headload workers were killed when the sunshade of an old godown owned by the Kozhikode City Corporation collapsed on them on Monday.

The victims were identified as Jabbar, Ashraf, Basheer, and Vinod.

They were taking rest under the 50-metre-long sunshade after unloading goods at a nearby shop in Valiyangadi around noon. Though a Fire and Rescue Services squad rushed the victims to a nearby hospital, they succumbed to injuries on the way.

Four other workers sustained grievous injuries in the incident.

A police officer on the premises of the godown in Kozhikode on Monday. K. RAGESH

Labourers protest

The incident triggered a protest by labourers and they resorted to a flash strike alleging negligence on the part of the Corporation authorities in ensuring the fitness of the building. Goods movement was completely stalled following the strike.

Headload workers and trade union leaders claimed that the authorities had been informed of the poor condition of the building several times, but to no avail.

The labourers also complained that the building had developed cracks without proper maintenance.

SC allows parallel inquiry into Tirumala laddu row

The one-man panel for administrative inquiry initiated by the A.P. govt. will not come in the way of criminal proceedings in which multiple chargesheets have already been filed, says Supreme Court

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said an administrative inquiry conducted into the lapses which led to the alleged adulteration of the sacred Tirumala 'Srivari laddu prasadam' cannot be said to either overlap or interfere with the criminal proceedings into the affair.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi said the one-man committee administrative inquiry initiated by the Andhra Pradesh government would not come in the way of criminal proceedings in which multiple chargesheets have already been filed in court.

The administrative inquiry was initiated to identify the lapses which led to the omissions in the preparation of the laddus. The probe would also delve into the nature of the slip-up, the persons responsible and consequences thereof.

The SIT report on the Tirumala laddu adulteration row had outlined serious irregularities and alleged deliberate misconduct. FILE PHOTO

"Such an administrative inquiry, in our considered opinion, cannot be said to overlap the criminal proceedings, which already culminated into a chargesheet and supplementary chargesheet," Chief Justice Kant observed.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing in the case, said the criminal probe was complete. The FIR in the laddu adulteration was registered in 2024. Eventually, the investigation was entrusted to a Special Investigation Team (SIT) of officers and agencies in April of the same year.

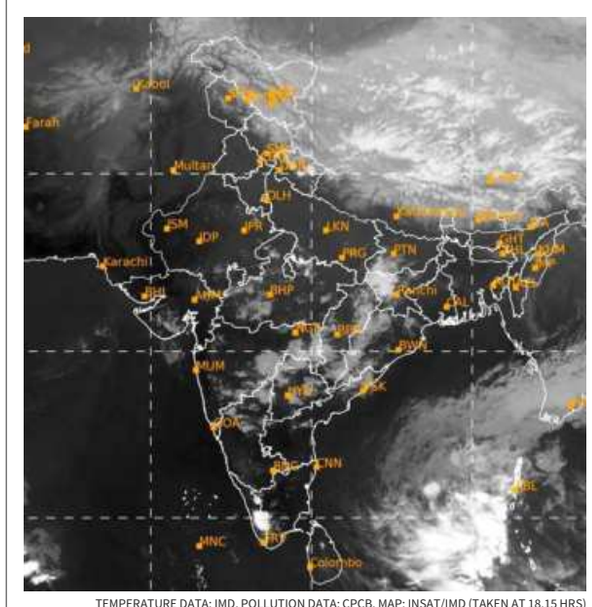
The court was hearing a plea by Subramanian Swamy, who contended that a parallel investigation by the State would undercut the criminal proceedings. Mr. Mehta said the SIT had found administrative lapses during its criminal investigation, and had duly intimated the State government.

The 11-page SIT report had outlined serious irregularities, rule violations and alleged deliberate misconduct that had taken place between 2019 and 2024. It had recommended stringent action against those responsible.

The SIT had recommended that the government take suitable action against the erring members and TTD officials.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	31.2	16.8	Kozhikode	43	34.0	22.9
Ahmedabad	—	34.2	19.5	Kurnool	—	36.2	23.1
Aizawl	—	28.9	10.5	Lucknow	—	28.9	13.4
Allahabad	—	31.4	14.6	Madurai	—	37.4	23.6
Bengaluru	—	32.8	19.2	Mangaluru	—	32.8	24.8
Bhopal	—	31.0	14.4	Mumbai	—	34.5	21.0
Bhubaneswar	—	35.8	20.6	Mysuru	—	34.4	18.6
Chandigarh	—	27.2	11.6	New Delhi	—	30.5	11.8
Chennai	—	34.0	24.3	Patna	—	29.6	18.0
Coimbatore	—	35.0	23.4	Port Blair	—	30.5	25.5
Dehradun	—	26.8	12.7	Puducherry	—	31.7	23.5
Gangtok	0.4	17.0	10.3	Pune	—	35.4	21.1
Goa	—	32.8	25.0	Raipur	—	27.7	20.6
Guwahati	—	30.3	14.9	Ranchi	—	29.6	14.0
Hubballi	—	34.0	21.0	Shillong	—	19.0	8.9
Hyderabad	—	32.1	23.0	Shimla	—	20.8	9.3
Imphal	—	26.9	11.6	Srinagar	—	21.0	1.0
Jaipur	—	29.7	19.2	Thiruvananthapuram	30	33.6	22.8
Kochi	—	31.0	26.2	Tiruchi	—	34.7	22.6
Kohima	—	22.0	9.0	Vijayawada	—	33.2	21.6
Kolkata	—	31.6	19.5	Visakhapatnam	—	31.7	23.1

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	102	93	52	162	222	
Bengaluru	21	11	51	78	102	
Chennai	6	14	54	26	53	
Delhi	56	90	90	247	306	
Hyderabad	—	8	40	160	153	
Kolkata	8	84	48	173	139	
Lucknow	11	26	65	143	169	
Mumbai	13	49	43	158	142	
Pune	—	117	47	173	140	
Visakhapatnam	7	73	20	43	83	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ballabgarh, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 315 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 23

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

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: 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.

PM2.5 & 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

Crowd control SOP to be in force till law is enacted: High Court

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Monday directed that the standard operating procedure (SOP) for crowd control and mass gathering management which was submitted to the court by the State government incorporating suggestions from *amicus curiae* and others would be enforced and operated till the government came with a law for crowd management.

Can renew petition

A Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice C.M. Poonacha, issued the direction while disposing of a *suo motu* PIL petition over the stampede outside the M. Chinnaswamy cricket stadium on June 4, 2025, which claimed 11 lives.

However, the court gave liberty to *amicus curiae* Senior Advocate S. Susheela, who was appointed as *amicus curiae* in the petition, to renew the petition if the need arose in the future.

The Bench closed the proceedings on the petition after the Advocate-General K. Shashi Kiran Shetty informed it that the Home Department had forwarded the SOP to the Secretary of the Legislative Assembly to place it before the scrutiny committee of the Assembly for reviewing the SOP along with the proposed Karnataka Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and place of Gathering) Bill, 2025.

Pointing out that the measures provided in the SOP are much better when compared to the provisions made in the Bill, Ms. Susheela had suggested that the legislature panel could also take into account measures indicated in the SOP while finalising the Bill.

The State government last year submitted the SOP for the court's consideration and the Advocate-General in December, 2025, agreed to take suggestions from the *amicus curiae* and various parties to the petition, including the Karnataka State Cricket Association, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, DNA Entertainment Networks Pvt. Ltd., and others. The government on January 13 submitted revised SOP.

INBRIEF

Remark on *Kantara*: Ranveer Singh moves HC against FIR

Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh has moved the High Court of Karnataka questioning the FIR registered against him by the Bengaluru City Police on the direction of a metropolitan magistrate court for allegedly hurting the religious sentiments by his act of "mocking" the sacred *daiva* tradition portrayed in the Kannada film *Kantara Chapter 1*. The actor's petition has been listed for hearing today. The complainant had approached the magistrate court after the police did not act on his complaint.

Bill scrapping two-child norm for A.P. ryots' bodies passed

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly on Monday paved the way for the removal of the two-child norm that disqualifies farmers from being the office-bearers of water users' associations and water distribution and project panels by passing the A.P. Farmers – Management of Irrigation Systems (Amendment) Bill, 2026. Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu said the norms were to address the population explosion. Having felt the sub-optimal rate would adversely affect the State's demographic dividend, the government decided to do away with the norm, he said.

Bring back MGNREGA, revoke VB-G RAM G: Siddaramaiah

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday urged the Centre to abolish the newly-enacted Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevik Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, and re-implement the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Asking to re-establish the right to employment, he said the Centre should declare a uniform minimum wage of ₹400 per day for rural employment. He made the demands during the MGNREGA Bachao Andolon organised by the Congress at Chikkaballapur.

Up to speed

NCC cadets get a closer look at Infantry Combat Vehicles during the MILAN-2026 naval exercise in Visakhapatnam on Monday. K.R. DEEPAK

'Centre to consider Church's request for micro minority tag'

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Centre will consider the Syro-Malabar Church's request to accord Christians the status of a 'micro minority,' BJP Kerala State president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Monday.

Mr. Chandrasekhar said Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil placed the request before Union Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju during the latter's visit to Mount St. Thomas, the Church's headquarters at Kakkanad here on Monday.

"The Church requested micro minority status because it feels only one religion is getting the resources and benefits of reservations for minorities. Minister Rijiju has promised to consider the proposal fully," Mr. Chandrasekhar said. The Church was yet to issue any statement.

Addressing the media, Mr. Rijiju said the BJP was able to build "good confidence among minorities, especially those who are smaller minorities." The Syro-Malabar Church is reportedly planning to send a delegation to Delhi to place the request for micro minority status.

SC to hear Guruvayur appointment appeal by KDRB on March 10

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court posted an appeal filed by the Kerala Devaswom Recruitment Board (KDRB) against a State High Court decision to strike down provisions which empowered it to appoint candidates to various posts in the Guruvayur Devaswom and aided educational institutions on March 10 for final hearing.

A Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath recorded an assurance given by the KDRB, represented by senior advocate V. Giri, who on the instruction of advocate-on-record G. Prakash, to not make any selections in the interregnum.

Advocate Mukund P. Unny, for candidates, said thousands had written the exam and were now "caught in the cross-fire".

The KDRB has sought a stay of the High Court decision while submitting that its functions were limited to affairs of recruitment and did not intervene in the religious duties concerning temples.

The High Court had directed that proceedings relating to the appointment or selection of candidates to posts must be done as per the Guruvayur Devaswom Act, 1978.

The High Court direction had come on an appeal filed by the Guruvayur Devaswom Employees Union Congress and others, challenging the relevant provisions of the KDRB Act.

Doctors suspect neurotoxin to be reason for seafood poisoning at hotel in Kerala

C. Maya
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Food safety authorities as well as doctors who treated persons hospitalised with acute condition after consuming seafood from a restaurant at Vizhinjam in Thiruvananthapuram have pointed to the possibility of a neurotoxin present in the food.

They suspect that the seafood, which triggered serious symptoms, was contaminated by a naturally occurring and extremely potent marine neurotoxin, tetrodotoxin (TTX).

Present in fish roe?

They also pinpoint fish roe (eggs) to be the possible culprit, as all those who ended up in hospitals had consumed this seafood delicacy.

The duration in which people became ill, the neurological symptoms and death are consistent with TTX poisoning, say doctors. FILE PHOTO

Three persons belonging to a six-member family fell seriously ill after consuming seafood from the restaurant on February 16 night and two of them died within hours.

Following this, more reports of people taking ill, all of whom had eaten at the same restaurant on the same day, came out.

After the first incident, six more cases of acute illness had been reported.

Having ruled out primary evidence of food poisoning due to spoilage or bacterial contamination, food safety officials had veered towards the angle that fish contaminated by marine algal toxins could have led to the deaths.

They based their suspicion on the fact that ciguatoxin had been recently detected in some samples of red snapper (*chempalli*) fish sourced from the Tamil Nadu coast.

However, the short duration within which people became acutely ill, the predominantly neurological symptoms displayed by the affected and death within a few hours are clinically consistent with TTX poisoning, doctors believe.

Tetrodotoxin (TTX) is one of the most powerful neurotoxins known, which is very heat-stable. This toxin has no known antidote and ingestion leads to severe, often fatal, paralysis.

The results of the chemical analysis of internal samples collected from the deceased is awaited, which alone would confirm the cause of death.

AI for all

The AI Impact Summit was a sign of things to come in India

The attendance at the AI Impact Summit, in New Delhi, showed an extreme enthusiasm for Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies by digitally connected Indians. While statistics shared by AI firms have frequently cited India as the biggest user base outside the U.S., the crowds over the week were the biggest indicator of just how keen many Indians are to adopt this technology. At its core, the summit was a continuation of a series of annual multilateral discussions on AI, and 89 countries have signed a declaration laying out a voluntary set of commitments to share knowledge on AI democratisation. The summit's context comes with foreboding challenges for India: namely, deploying and diffusing a technology whose capital and infrastructure reside abroad, and finding a place in the global AI ecosystem that will place Indians well in the economic transformations that this technology's adoption promises. India's data centre capacity is growing healthily, but the AI moment calls for further momentum, a difficult ask when the costs of graphics processing units (GPUs) driving AI push up the cost of domestic deployment so much, not to mention the additional electrical capacity that must be built. A national strategy that relies overwhelmingly on becoming a hub for the deployment of models, with less emphasis on their training and finetuning, could pose risks; after all, with fewer labour costs, the advantage that India has will be smaller than in the ITeS era.

On the international cooperation front, it is disappointing that India has so eagerly enabled the U.S.'s hands-off impulses for AI. This is a technology with enormous scope for economic and social disruption. Countries must use the annual AI forum to collectively build tools and safety standards that can exercise actual leverage over how LLMs diffuse throughout society. Leadership of the Global South entails empowering countries that are individually vulnerable to collateral damage in an era of great power rivalries. AI is increasingly defining that era more and more acutely. Consensus at all costs is not the appropriate approach. As a country of enthusiastic AI adopters, India has the leverage and capacity to articulate an optimistic but prudent way forward for AI governance, and the summit declaration showed no signs of this power. The summit's central pillar remains an important one: for AI to be a net good, its capabilities need to be democratised. As India closes its digital divide, there cannot be an inference gap. If the summit made anything clear, it was that India is as capable of organically contributing to worldwide growth as it has the capacity, should it choose, to be a force to shape its orderly growth.

Stick together

India and Brazil have realised the importance of their groupings

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's India visit last week sent important messages for both India-Brazil ties, and for solidarity in the developing world, as two Global South powers focused on global governance and leadership. After his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India and Brazil agreed to try and double trade to $30 billion by 2030, and signed agreements on critical minerals, steel mining, and digital cooperation to diversify beyond China-led supply chains. Mr. Lula, along with French President Emmanuel Macron, was among about 20 leaders at India's AI Impact Summit and was later accorded a state visit. The 80-year-old Brazilian President's presence was important, as he faces elections later this year, which may make it difficult for him to attend India's BRICS summit if it coincides with his campaigning for a fourth term. It also came amidst fresh turmoil over U.S.-imposed trade tariffs, after the American Supreme Court struck down U.S. President Donald Trump's rationale for the reciprocal tariffs. India and Brazil were both the highest taxed countries by the U.S. – 50% tariffs each – and both faced further possible tariffs over BRICS ties, Iran trade, and Russian oil imports. India and Brazil are also key members of the BRICS grouping of developing nations, the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA), G-4 with Germany and South Africa on UNSC reform, and co-founders of the biofuel alliance for alternative energy; each of these has faced challenges from Mr. Trump's policies on trade, territorial sovereignty, multilateralism and the UN, and fossil fuels. Amid such uncertainty, Mr. Modi and Mr. Lula reaffirmed their commitment to protecting the multilateral order.

Before leaving India, Mr. Lula, who is set to visit Washington next month, did not mince words while speaking to journalists about the challenges posed by the U.S. government. As a former trade union leader, he said he believed that the only way of tackling geopolitical uncertainty unleashed by the U.S. was for countries to "unionise", rather than cutting deals individually with Washington, which leave smaller nations at a disadvantage. The words are particularly important for both Delhi and Brasilia, as both have negotiated with the Trump administration on tariffs, but have not so far signed trade deals with the U.S. The U.S. court ruling offers an opportunity to reset the terms of the agreements, and it is significant that New Delhi has postponed a meeting of trade negotiators this week to give the U.S. and India time to assess the ruling. India and Brazil, and their developing world partners, should coordinate the next steps and stay engaged with Washington. Mr. Lula's warning is clear: it is easy to break a single stick, but far more difficult to do so if the sticks are bundled tightly together.

The quiet crisis of adolescent mental health in India

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya

is a practising cardio-metabolic physician, health policy expert and a specialist in parenting and child development

Dr. Deepak Gupta

is a leading child and adolescent psychiatrist

The passing of three adolescent girls in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, earlier this month, is a case that deeply unsettled the public. The intense media attention reflects collective grief – but treating this tragedy as an isolated incident risks ignoring a larger reality. India faces a growing, largely neglected crisis in child and adolescent mental health, rooted in early vulnerability and worsened by an unregulated digital environment.

Mental health challenges are no longer limited to adults or older teens. Clinicians increasingly see anxiety, depression, attention disorders and behavioural issues in much younger children. Yet, many families, schools and even parts of the health-care system still view these as "adult issues". In fact, emotional and behavioural disorders can appear as early as four or five years of age. Early trauma, neglect and chronic stress can disrupt emotional and cognitive development, often resurfacing with greater intensity during adolescence.

These conditions have also grown more complex. Where children showed a single diagnosis, comorbidities are now common – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with anxiety, depression with compulsive digital use, learning difficulties with emotional distress–making early recognition crucial.

The extent of the problem

Population-level data mirrors what clinicians observe daily. Findings from the National Mental Health Survey and subsequent studies suggest that between seven per cent to 10% of Indian adolescents have diagnosable mental health conditions, and five per cent to seven per cent of school-aged children have ADHD. Yet early signs – withdrawal, impulsivity, sudden behavioural changes – are often dismissed, leading to academic, social and long-term emotional harm. India faces an acute shortage of trained child and adolescent mental health professionals. With fewer than 10,000 psychiatrists for a population exceeding 1.4 billion–and only a small fraction specialising in child mental health – the gap is stark. Shortages of clinical psychologists, child psychologists and psychiatric social workers further strain an already fragile system. Families are left to navigate fragmented care largely on their own.

Childhood vulnerability has been amplified by a transformed digital landscape. The rise in mental health concerns parallels the spread of smartphones and low-priced Internet data, now used by over 800 million Indians–many of them children. The COVID-19 pandemic further embedded screens into daily life including education, recreation and social interaction.

With schoolwork, communication and entertainment all on the same device, boundaries have blurred. Internet addiction which is marked by loss of control, irritability, sleep disruption and social withdrawal, is now a routine clinical concern.

As early as 2019, the World Health Organization issued guidelines and had cautioned against excessive screen exposure among children and adolescents, highlighting its adverse effects on sleep, attention, emotional regulation and overall wellbeing. These recommendations predated the pandemic. It is important to understand that the excessive screen use does not cause neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD or autism spectrum disorders. However, it can significantly exacerbate symptoms, delay diagnosis and displace the human interaction essential for healthy brain development during periods of heightened neuroplasticity. In vulnerable children, this displacement can have lasting consequences.

Against this backdrop, parents and families have to assume a central role. They are not merely caregivers but a child's first mental health buffer – as the earliest observers of emotional change and the most consistent source of psychological safety. Trauma-informed parenting, which recognises how stress, loss and adversity shape behaviour, must extend beyond clinical settings into everyday life. Listening without judgement, noticing changes in sleep, mood or social engagement, and seeking help early can dramatically alter outcomes.

Support groups are proven to further strengthen this protective environment. Parent support groups reduce isolation, normalise help-seeking and enable shared learning. Adolescent peer-support groups provide safe spaces for emotional expression, resilience-building and the development of coping skills. Evidence consistently shows that such collective, community-based approaches are more effective than isolated, clinic-centred interventions.

Schools are a weak link

Schools, however, remain a critical weak link. Academic performance continues to dominate institutional priorities, often at the expense of emotional wellbeing. Examinations, rankings and competition define school culture, while structured attention to emotional regulation, stress management and happiness remains limited. This imbalance is neither benign nor sustainable. Mental wellbeing is foundational to learning, creativity and long-term productivity; without it, academic success is fragile and transient.

A further challenge lies in the gap between evidence and practice. India's research base on child and adolescent mental health, digital behaviour and early intervention has grown steadily. Yet, translation into routine care remains slow. Paediatricians – often the first point of contact for families – must routinely inquire about emotional wellbeing, sleep patterns, screen use and peer relationships, and not just physical growth. Teachers, counsellors, psychologists and all professionals working with children need structured training to identify early signs of mental health problems and Internet-related harms. Stigma continues to delay care, with families often seeking help only during crises.

> Families, schools and policymakers must prioritise youth mental wellbeing

In today's context, child and adolescent mental health is intricately linked to social media and Internet use. These concerns were explicitly acknowledged in India's Economic Survey 2025-26, released in January 2026, which highlighted rising mental health challenges among young people and proposed a range of preventive strategies. Several Indian States, drawing on precedents in Australia, France and South Korea, are considering regulatory steps to limit adolescent social media use. This is an idea whose time has come, provided it is implemented thoughtfully, alongside education and support rather than punitive controls.

Actions to implement

Policy and programmatic action must now align with reality. India can strengthen existing platforms – the National Mental Health Programme, school health services under Ayushman Bharat – health and wellness centre initiative, and tele-mental health initiatives – by introducing routine school-based screening, training teachers and frontline workers in early identification of child and adolescent mental health issues, and reinforcing referral pathways. Earmarked funding for child mental health initiatives, clear guidelines on digital use in schools, and affordable community-based counselling, especially for low- and middle-income families, are urgently needed.

Implementation, however, faces practical hurdles. Stigma surrounding mental health remains pervasive, and child psychiatry carries an even heavier burden of fear and misunderstanding. Concerns about labelling, judgement and long-term consequences often delay help-seeking until distress escalates into crisis. Normalising conversations around mental health within families, schools and health-care systems is not optional; it is a public health imperative.

The Ghaziabad case must not remain just a headline. Preventing similar tragedies requires coordinated action between schools, paediatricians, mental health professionals, and communities. Even modest, timely interventions can change developmental paths. While telepsychiatry and digital platforms have expanded reach, access remains unequal; extending these services to underserved families, alongside investment in training and interdisciplinary care, must be a priority.

Parents need guidance on early warning signs and healthy digital use. Schools should make mental wellbeing part of daily learning. Paediatricians must screen for emotional and behavioural issues, and community support networks strengthened. Policy must treat mental health as central to child development.

Equally important is a need to shift in what we value as outcomes. Childhood should foster wellbeing, resilience, and connection–not just competitiveness. Neglecting it now will carry far higher social and economic costs later.

India's energy shift through the green ammonia route

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At the inaugural session of the India Energy Week (IEW), in January 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi positioned India's ambitions at the centrestage of the global energy discourse, highlighting investment opportunities worth $500 billion across the sector. As India raises its ambition from energy security to energy independence, the affordability of clean energy such as green hydrogen and its derivatives is critical to the long-term competitiveness of India's energy transition. But from fertilizers to clean energy and marine fuel, there are now green ammonia applications which are wide-ranging. Green ammonia – produced by combining nitrogen with green hydrogen – is currently leading in the adoption of green hydrogen, with its strategic adoption advanced across regions such as the European Union (EU), India and South Korea.

Aggregated procurement mechanisms are starting to lay the foundation for a global green ammonia market. Some noteworthy examples include H2Global's tender of green ammonia under the EU's hydrogen import strategy, South Korea's Clean Hydrogen Portfolio Standard (CHPS) tender for clean ammonia procurement as a bulk fuel, and the recent tender concluded by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) under the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) programme of India's National Green Hydrogen Mission.

Green ammonia auction

Compared to these global procurement practices, India's green ammonia auction under SECI demonstrates broader market participation, attracting 15 bidders and resulting in seven unique successful awardees. Under the SIGHT programme, SECI floated a tender in June 2024 for an aggregated demand of up to 724,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually across 13 fertilizer plants in India. These tenders concluded in August 2025, and offered a 10-year, fixed-price offtake agreements to successful bidders. This clarity in price and offtake provided producers with the market certainty required for investment. The auctions established a significant breakthrough in cost-competitive green ammonia procurement, setting new global benchmarks, almost 40%-50% less than the prices from the H2Global auction

> The country's green ammonia auction model has the potential to redefine global standards for clean energy adoption

The tender process faced multiple extensions and revisions, primarily to resolve concerns around risk allocation, payment security, and clarity on offtake and pricing conditions, raised by both project developers and offtakers. These refinements successfully addressed concerns, leading to a balanced win-win framework for all stakeholders.

In this auction, seven bidders secured a total of 13 delivery contracts for green ammonia. Notably, one company won six contracts for 3,70,000 tonnes/year. These contracts include production subsidies of ₹8.82 a kilogramme, ₹7.06 a kg, and ₹5.3 a kg for the first three years and a 10-year fixed price supply agreement to existing fertilizer manufacturers in India.

The discovered prices of green ammonia across these tenders range from ₹49.75 and ₹64.74/kg ($572 and $744 a tonne). In India, the grey ammonia price is as high as $515 a tonne. When factoring in the newly discovered price of green ammonia, supported by longer-term contracts, the cost gap has significantly narrowed.

On delivery and transportation

Notably, a standout feature of SECI's tender is the pre-identification of delivery points, as most fertilizer plants where the green ammonia is to be delivered are located near coastal areas, enabling the transportation of green ammonia through shipping as well. The contracted volumes of green ammonia contribute to approximately 30% of the total ammonia being imported, offering price predictability and greater insulation from global gas market volatility, currency risks and geopolitical pressures. In locations where grey ammonia costs are higher, green ammonia procurement increases its appeal for scale-up.

Propelling the momentum

India's approach is increasingly shaping the clean ammonia landscape worldwide, owing to its combination of low renewable energy costs, large-scale logistics, robust contract design and targeted incentives. As more countries seek reliable clean ammonia imports to decarbonise industry, power and transport, India's successful auction model is well placed to shape emerging global market structures and accelerate adoption at scale.

However, sustaining the momentum created by India's green ammonia auctions will require coordinated and sustained action from policymakers, project developers and financiers. Developers must focus on strong technical and financial due diligence, integrate hybrid renewable systems with storage, and adopt transparent monitoring frameworks to ensure long-term operational viability. Policymakers, in turn, need to provide stable and harmonised regulations on grid access, banking and incentives, while strengthening safety standards and aligning certification frameworks with evolving global norms.

Long-tenor, blended finance facilities, backed by extended offtake agreements and dedicated risk-mitigation instruments, can further enhance project bankability and crowd in private capital. Together, these measures can reinforce investor confidence, accelerate scale-up, and firmly position India not just as a participant but also as a global leader in clean ammonia markets.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The price of membership

India's entry into the Pax Silica alliance marks a shift from exclusion to inclusion in key technology coalitions. The challenge now lies in meeting scrutiny and conditionalities that test its industrial capacity. Heavy reliance on PLI schemes exposes structural gaps. While telecom has advanced, battery manufacturing lags and upstream solar segments remain weak, highlighting the limits of capital subsidies without strong technology partnerships, skilled labour and R and D depth. Though Pax Silica promises trusted supply chains, it also brings export controls, and technology transfer guardrails.

Sowbakyatha S.U.,
Tiruchi

C.L. Ramakrishnan

C.L. Ramakrishnan, IPS, and a former Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, who passed away on February 22, was a remarkable personality known for his integrity, erudition, and deep knowledge of police procedure and law, honed over his long tenure in the Central Bureau of Investigation. His genuine simplicity encouraged junior officers to approach him freely and learn the intricacies of criminal investigation. He was also an accomplished Sanskrit scholar, whose discourses on scriptures, especially the Narayaneeyam, captivated audiences far and wide. Personally, his demise is a great loss, as his guidance taught me many subtle nuances of the law.

R.K. Raghavan,
Chennai

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

Rethinking tribal women's inheritance rights

Shalini Saboo

Junior Fellow, Centre for Contemporary Studies, Prime Ministers Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi

The question of women's inheritance rights in tribal communities remains unresolved. Customary laws of most tribal communities deny absolute property rights to their women, and the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, which grants daughters inheritance rights in ancestral property, keeps tribal women out of its purview. Until recently, however, the Supreme Court had in some cases granted inheritance rights to tribal women who had 'Hinduised', i.e., adopted Hindu customs and traditions after abandoning their customary practices. This inconsistent approach – excluding tribal women from inheritance rights in some cases due to the acceptance of exclusion clauses under Hindu laws, while granting rights in others because of 'Hinduisation' – created uncertainty for tribal women whenever questions of inheritance arose.

Reaffirming an old principle

This came to an end when, on October 8, 2025, the Court delivered a verdict, upholding the core inheritance provisions of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. A Bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Prashant Kumar Mishra stated that the Act cannot be applied to Scheduled Tribes under any circumstances. While this observation was not new, it reaffirmed the law's principle of providing special protection to indigenous communities under the legal system.

The verdict was given in the case of *Nawang v. Bahadur*. The civil appeal challenged the order dated June 23, 2015, passed by the High Court of Himachal Pradesh at Shimla, pertaining to a particular property case. The High Court had said that tribal daughters who had been 'Hinduised' ought to have an opportunity to inherit property under the Hindu Succession Act. The Supreme Court overturned that order stating that only Parliament had the authority to extend the Act to tribal communities. The Court brought to light the fact that the High Court had overstepped its jurisdiction by directing legislative changes. It affirmed that tribal inheritance falls under the rubric of the customary practices of communities unless the Central government officially intervenes.

The Supreme Court's decision came just months after it recognised, in *Ram Charan v. Sukhram*, that excluding daughters from ancestral property violates their fundamental right to equality. It invites not only deep analysis, but also partially answers certain questions. Is 'Hinduising' a tribe the only way to secure inheritance rights for tribal women? Should Scheduled Tribes be granted inheritance rights solely on the basis of religion, disregarding their unique social and cultural characteristics? Can they not be given equal inheritance rights by expanding any other statute? Or, in the absence of consistent statutory and customary law guaranteeing tribal women inheritance rights, should tribal women continue to face discrimination under the pretext of upholding tradition?

> Now that the Supreme Court has ruled that the Hindu Succession Act does not apply to tribal communities, a separate law could be introduced to govern inheritance among indigenous populations

Defining Hindu

On defining the term 'Hindu', the Supreme Court, in *Sastri Yagnapurushadji v. Muldas Brudardas Vaishya* (1966), said that "unlike other religions in the world, the Hindu religion does not claim any one prophet, it does not worship any one God, it does not subscribe to any one dogma, it does not believe in any one philosophic concept, it does not follow any one set of religious rites or performances, in fact, it does not appear to satisfy the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more". A person can be a Hindu either by birth or by conversion. Conversion means a bonafide intention to follow a particular faith with an unequivocal conduct expressing sufficient evidence of conversion. A converted person continues to be a member of the tribe unless his ancestors had converted long time ago and have stopped following tribal customs including the customary laws of inheritance and marriage, as are expected of the members of that tribe.

This judgment of the Supreme Court raises a question. Was not the earlier practice of 'Hinduisation' of tribal people a negation of the constitutional guarantee to protect the unique identity of tribal people? The ruling affirms the constitutional validity of Section 2(2) of the Hindu Succession Act, which excludes Scheduled Tribes from the Act. This provision had previously been challenged on the grounds that it created invidious discrimination between women belonging to Scheduled Tribes and those outside the category.

Earlier, the courts used to broaden the scope of Section 2(1) of the Hindu Succession Act to include Scheduled Tribes by holding that since they are not expressly excluded under the section, they would be included within the definition of 'Hindu' under Section 2(1) of the Act. This is not only contrary to Section 2(2), which states that notwithstanding anything to the contrary in Section 2(1), no provisions of the Act shall apply to notified Scheduled Tribes, but was also used to force tribal women to choose between their tribal identity and becoming followers of Hinduism.

An opportunity

Now that the Supreme Court has stated that the Act cannot be extended to tribal people irrespective of their religious allegiance, it would be wise to introduce a special enactment governing inheritance rights among the indigenous population. Codifying customary laws of succession in other States with significant tribal populations on the lines of Mizoram could provide a solution to ensure gender parity while preserving tribal identity.

Congress tightens grip, but tests lie ahead

The party cannot afford to be complacent even after winning the municipal polls

STATE OF PLAY

R. Ravikanth Reddy
ravikanth.ramasayam@thehindu.co.in

The results of the 2026 Telangana municipal elections mark another milestone in the Congress's steady political consolidation in Telangana. Before this, the party won the 2023 Assembly elections; secured eight seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, which was as many as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); and won a majority of sarpanch positions in 2025. Together, these victories have strengthened the Congress's organisational confidence and reinforced the public perception that the party is the new pole of stability in Telangana.

The municipal results have also served as an internal stabiliser for the leadership. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy appears to have firmly consolidated his position. Challengers and sceptics within the party seem to have resigned themselves to the reality that the Chief Minister is politically unshakeable, at least for the foreseeable future.

It is not uncommon, however, for a ruling party to perform well in local body elections. The advantages of incumbency, visibility of welfare schemes, administrative access, a favourable bureaucracy, and the perceived ability of ruling party MLAs to get work done often weigh heavily on voter psychology. This phenomenon was evident in 2020 as well, when the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) swept over 95% of municipal bodies and captured the Zilla Parishad chairperson's post in all the districts.

However, a comparison between 2020 and 2026 also highlights why the present Congress victory carries deeper political meaning. Unlike the BRS's sweep of 2020, the Congress secured just over 70% of municipal wards this time. Yet, this outcome is significant precisely because Congress faced two strong Opposition parties. The BRS still commanded a sizeable presence with 37 MLAs (including 10 defectors), while the BJP entered the contest with eight MLAs and eight MPs.

This stands in contrast to 2020, when the Congress was organisationally battered, reduced to just six MLAs, with 12 legislators defecting to the ruling BRS, and a mass migration of grassroots cadre. The BJP then had only one MLA, though it had four MPs. The Congress's journey from that nadir to its current dominance shows the scale of its revival.

The Congress has emerged as the single largest party this time. Securing 39.80% of the vote share, it finished 11.05% points ahead of the BRS. This gap is striking when viewed against the backdrop of the 2023 Assembly elections, where the difference between the two parties was just 2%. The Congress had already widened this lead in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, polling 40.1% while the BRS secured just 16.7%, with much of its vote share shifting to the BJP.

The municipal polls reveal an interesting reversal. While the BRS recovered a significant portion of its lost vote share, largely at the expense of the BJP, the Congress not only retained its base but also expanded it further. The BJP, which had polled nearly 35% in the Lok Sabha elections, slipped to a surprising 15.68%, which is a huge setback, especially in urban areas where it is considered strong.

The scale of the Congress victory is evident in seat distribution too. Of the 2,996 wards across 123 urban local bodies, it secured 1,347, winning 99 out of the 123 municipalities and corporations that went to polls. The party emerged victorious in 68 of the 81 Assembly segments where municipal elections were held, despite major urban centres such as Hyderabad, Warangal, and Khammam being excluded from this round.

Mr. Reddy himself set the campaign narrative in the final days, while adopting a decentralised approach that gave ministers and MLAs autonomy but with accountability. He also deftly diverted attention from sensitive urban governance issues towards broader political themes.

Yet, the Congress cannot afford complacency. Nearly 38 municipalities delivered hung verdicts, underlining local dissatisfaction and factionalism. The BJP's victory in Karimnagar Corporation and the BRS's continued presence in several municipalities signal that urban Telangana remains politically competitive. Moreover, incumbency fatigue, governance delivery in urban areas, and internal party management will become bigger challenges as the Assembly elections approach. Transforming the present momentum into a second Assembly victory will depend on whether the Congress is able to address its weaknesses.

Why upper caste support matters for the BJP

Sustained majority-level support suggests that upper caste voters view the BJP as their primary political vehicle at the national level

DATA POINT

Sanjay Kumar
Vibha Attri

In recent weeks, there have been debates and protests in universities across India over the University Grants Commission (UGC) (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, designed to promote fairness in higher education. The Supreme Court put the regulations on hold after concerns were raised that the key provisions were vague and prone to misuse.

While the protests focused on educational policy, they also revealed political tensions, particularly among upper caste voters. This is a constituency that is historically significant to the BJP. Although the initial anger was directed at the UGC rules, it soon extended to criticism of the BJP. This was especially true of upper castes who may have been most affected if the regulations were implemented. The episode highlights the continuing electoral importance of upper castes for the party.

Survey evidence from the National Election Study (NES) conducted by Lokniti-CSDS shows that upper caste Hindu voters have steadily consolidated behind the BJP and its allies over the past three decades **(Table 1)**. While upper castes form a modest share of the electorate, their cohesion and concentration in key States enhance their influence.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, about 60% of upper caste voters backed the National Democratic Alliance, with 53% voting directly for the BJP. Around 20% backed the Congress-led alliance and 14% voted for the Congress.

During the coalition era (1996-2004), upper caste voters leaned towards the BJP, though support had not yet reached majority levels for the party. The 2009 election marked a brief weakening. From 2014 onwards, consolidation became clear: upper caste support for the BJP crossed 50% and has remained above that level. This sustained backing suggests that upper caste voters increasingly view the BJP as their main political choice at the national level.

State-level data (2014-2024) show that this consolidation is geographically widespread. In Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, support for the BJP remained above 60% across three Lok Sabha elections. Delhi and Himachal Pradesh show similar stability **(Table 2)**. In Telangana, where the BJP was historically weak, upper caste support rose sharply from 12% in 2014 to 53% in 2024. In West Bengal, support surged in 2019 before moderating in 2024, yet remained much higher than a decade earlier. In Assam and Odisha, upper caste voters have consistently favoured the BJPdespite shifts in overall vote share. Together, this evidence indicates that upper caste support for the BJP is neither regionally confined nor episodic. It forms a durable pillar of the party's coalition.

Assembly elections provide a stricter test of alignment, as they are shaped more by regional leadership and local issues. If upper caste support were driven only by national mobilisation, it would likely be more volatile in these contests. The evidence instead shows continuity. In Uttar Pradesh, support rose from 71% in 2017 to 78% in 2022 **(Table 3)**. In Madhya Pradesh, it increased sharply between 2018 and 2023. Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh remain competitive, yet upper caste support for the BJP is strong. Even in States dominated by regional parties, the BJP's upper caste base has remained significant.

Across elections, upper caste voters remain a stable and strategically important constituency for the BJP. This explain why policy debates seen as affecting upper caste interests can carry political implications that extend beyond the issue at hand.

Voting patterns

The data were sourced from the National Election Study (NES), 1996-2024 conducted by Lokniti-CSDS and the various State Assembly election studies conducted in different States by Lokniti-CSDS

All the figures are in percent

TABLE 1: Upper caste Hindu votes for the BJP and Congress: Lok Sabha elections 1996-2024

Year of election	BJP	BJP allies	NDA	Congress	Congress allies	UPA/ INDIA
1996	35	4	39	25	-	25
1998	36	14	50	25	3	28
1999	42	20	62	20	-	20
2004	36	17	53	22	7	29
2009	28	7	35	25	9	34
2014	47	9	56	13	3	16
2019	52	7	59	12	5	17
2024	53	7	60	14	6	20

TABLE 2: State-wise upper caste Hindu votes for the BJP and Congress: Lok Sabha elections 2014-2024

State	BJP 2014	BJP 2019	BJP 2024	Congress 2014	Congress 2019	Congress 2024
Bihar	77	76	53	1	2	2
UP	74	80	77	7	5	7
MP	64	75	72	24	24	20
Rajasthan	60	70	65	20	22	23
Chhattisgarh	46	72	74	17	16	17
Haryana	40	63	54	15	27	35
Delhi	62	75	71	10	12	14
Himachal	60	68	70	35	29	30
Jharkhand	77	63	58	7	5	14
Uttarakhand	64	80	67	30	16	22
Assam	65	55	44	23	13	20
West Bengal	21	57	43	4	3	4
Odisha	26	42	49	9	10	5
Karnataka	64	71	66	35	16	22
Telangana	12	38	53	15	25	29

Notes: *Bihar: Include BJP allies (14% in LS 2014), (47% in LS 2019), (29% in LS 2024), Haryana: INLD-28% (2014 LS), Delhi: AAP (21% in LS 2014), (12% in LS 2019), (12% in LS 2024), Jharkhand: JVM (10% in LS 2014), in 2019 3% of AJSU included in BJP, West Bengal: In LS 2014 (AITC-40%, LF-29%), in LS 2019 (AITC-31%, LF-9%), in LS 2024 (AITC-43%, LF-7%)*

TABLE 3: Upper caste Hindu vote for the BJP and Congress and major regional parties. Last two State Assembly elections in different States:

State	Year of election	BJP/ NDA	Congress/ INDIA bloc/ MGB
Bihar	2020	54	16
	2025	67	9
UP	2017	71	2
	2022	78	1
MP	2018	57	32
	2023	74	21
Rajasthan	2018	50	35
	2023	61	32
Chhattisgarh	2018	50	43
	2023	54	39
Haryana	2014	37	18
	2024	42	39
Delhi	2020	54	3
	2025	62	4
Himachal	2017	51	38
	2022	49	38
Jharkhand	2019	42	25
	2024	66	20
Uttarakhand	2017	56	27
	2022	60	26
Assam	2016	71	20
	2021	68	21
West Bengal	2016	13	13
	2021	45	2
Karnataka	2018	42	32
	2023	60	22
Telangana	2018	10	33
	2023	20	39

Notes: *Haryana 2014: INLD (26), Delhi 2020: AAP (41), Delhi 2025: AAP (30), West Bengal 2016: AITC (43), West Bengal 2021: AITC (40), West Bengal 2021: AITC (40), Karnataka 2018: JD(S) (18), Karnataka 2023: JD(S) (14), Telangana 2018: TRS/BRS (44), Telangana 2023: TRS/BRS (36)*

Sanjay Kumar is a Professor and political analyst. Vibha Attri is a researcher working with Lokniti-CSDS. Views expressed by the authors are personal, do not reflect views of their institution.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 24, 1976

Photo-setting for books: Plant in Bangalore

Bangalore, Feb. 25: The Macmillan group of companies, the internationally known publishers, have selected Bangalore for locating their modern type-setting plant because of its climate, which is suited to men and woman as also the computers in the plant, as Mr. Harold Macmillan put it.

The former British Prime Minister and President of the Macmillan group of companies inaugurated the plant here this afternoon.

The Rs. 40-lakh-plant has been set up for photo-setting pages of texts composed for printing. The film negatives will be composed with the aid of computerised monokeyboards and film-setters. However the printing of the books would be done in the United Kingdom and Australia with the use of the films exported from Bangalore. The investment in the project will be doubled next year.

After the inauguration of the most modern type-setting project, Mr. Macmillan said his company had begun a "new phase of association between the U.K. and India which would open up a new field of exports for the latter." He envisaged that the value of exports of films from the plant would go up to Rs. one crore a year by 1978. Production would begin in a month or two.

He recalled that the company opened its branch in India over 100 years ago. To-day its operations in India were being carried on by an Indian company called the Macmillan Company of India Limited.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 24, 1926

Emigrants from Fiji

A representative of "The Hindu" interviewed the emigrants last night and was able to gather the following particulars concerning the present condition of the Indian labourers in Fiji, the wages obtaining there and the facilities afforded to them for settlement and comfortable living. Their general appearance, to begin with, betokened extreme poverty, great suffering and hardship.

Enquired about the general conditions in Fiji they all represented, without one single exception, that Fiji was no doubt a good and comparatively healthy place to settle down but they would never advise their brethren in India to leave their homes.

From Page One

Centre unveils policy to tackle terrorism threats

Union Home Minister Amit Shah had announced on November 7, 2024, that a National Counter Terrorism Policy and Strategy was being drafted to fight terrorism and its ecosystem.

Following the April 22, 2025, Pahalgam terror incident, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted meetings with anti-terror units of all States and apprised them of the measures aimed at preventing and pre-empting such attacks.

The policy further states that for propaganda, communication, funding and guiding terror attacks, these terror groups use social media platforms as well as 'instant messaging applications' and technological advancements such as encryption, dark web, crypto wallets etc, enabling them to operate anonymously.

"Disrupting/Intercepting terrorist efforts to access and use CBRNED (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive, Digital) materials remains a challenge for Counter Terrorism (CT) agencies. The threat of state and non-state actors misusing drones and robotics for lethal purposes remains another area of concern," it flags.

As a way forward, the policy suggests that to make appropriate cases against the perpetrators of acts of terrorism, there is a need to associate legal experts at every stage of investigation.

"Terrorist groups based outside (from abroad) nowadays use the infrastructure, logistics and terrain knowledge of local outfits for launching attacks. National actions, coupled with international and regional cooperation, are key elements in addressing the transnational terrorism challenge," it emphasises.

The MHA said Indian intelligence and law enforcement agencies have been continuously working to prevent the recruitment of Indian youth by extremist groups.

Underscoring the role of community and religious leaders, the policy states that moderate preachers and NGOs are engaged to spread awareness about the adverse consequences and impacts of radicalisation and extremist violence.

The Ministry said there is a move to establish a uniform anti-terrorism structure across States, as standardisation of processes and procedures would ensure similar and synergistic responses to terror attack.

It said that the policy aims to criminalise all terrorist acts and deny access to terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, weapons and safe havens.

Air ambulance with 7 aboard crashes

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in a statement said, "On February 23, 2026, Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd Beechcraft C90 aircraft VT-AJV operating medical evacuation (Air Ambulance) flight on Ranchi-Delhi sector crashed in the Kasaria panchayat of Chatra district in Jharkhand." There were seven persons on board, including a 41-year-old patient and two crew members.

"The aircraft was airborne from Ranchi at 7.11 p.m. After establishing contact with Kolkata at 7.34 p.m., the aircraft lost communication and RADAR contact with Kolkata at approximately 100 NM South-East of Varanasi," it added.

Chatra Deputy Commissioner G. Keerthishree said, "The aircraft went missing around 7.30 p.m. It crashed at the Bariatu panchayat in Simaria." The DC said that she could not confirm the casualties right now, as the place of occurrence was deep in the forest.

"A team has been sent. We can confirm when the team reaches there," she added.

Meanwhile, as per the DGCA website, Delhi-based non-scheduled operator Redbird has six planes in the fleet, including the one which crashed on Monday.

CEO of Devkamal Hospital in Ranchi, Anant Sinha, said that the air ambulance was arranged by one of the patients.

"The patient Sanjay Kumar (41), a resident of Chandwa in Latehar district, was brought to the hospital with 65% burn injuries on February 16. He was being treated in the hospital," he said. Mr. Sinha added that the family members decided to take him to Delhi for better treatment.

Violence sweeps Mexico after cartel leader killed

Travel warnings from the U.K., Canada and the U.S. have been issued in the fallout.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum urged citizens to remain calm.

Oseguera, 59, was considered the last of the drug lords who acted in the flashy, brutal mould of the now-imprisoned Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada. With his son Ruben 'El Menchito' Oseguera Gonzalez, 35, convicted by a federal jury in Washington in September, experts have warned the "the absence of a direct succession" could lead to a "power vacuum."

Mexico said in addition to its own military intelligence, the operation to seize Oseguera was carried out with "complementary information" from U.S. authorities. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said Washington "provided intelligence support".

Six suspected cartel gunmen besides Oseguera were also killed and three soldiers were wounded.

Canadian PM arriving on February 27 for trade talks

Carney to meet Modi on March 2 and discuss new tie-ups in energy, AI, defence; officials hope the visit will reset the ties ruptured by allegations over killing of Khalistani separatist leader Nijjar

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will travel to Mumbai and Delhi this week as part of a three-nation tour of India, Australia and Japan aimed at enhancing and diversifying Canada's trade relations, his office announced on Monday.

Mr. Carney is expected to land first in Mumbai on February 27, and meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi on March 2, and discuss "new partnerships in trade, energy, technology and artificial intelligence (AI), talent and culture, and defence", a statement released in Ottawa said. The visit to three of Canada's "strongest Indo-Pacific partners", who are all part of the Quad with the U.S., is also a significant push for Canada's own Indo-Pacific policy.

"In a more uncertain world, Canada is focused on what we can control. We are diversifying our trade and attracting massive new investment to create new opportunities for our workers and businesses," Mr. Carney was quoted as saying about the 10-day visit to all three countries. "We are forging new partnerships abroad to create greater certainty, security and prosperity at home," he added.

PM Narendra Modi met Canadian PM Mark Carney in June 2025 on the sidelines of the G7 Leaders' Summit in Canada. REUTERS

Ahead of the visit, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held talks with his Canadian counterpart, Anita Anand, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Forum last week.

During the visit, Mr. Carney is expected to focus on India-Canada trade negotiations for comprehensive economic partnership agreement, investment opportunities, cooperation in fossil fuel and nuclear energy, as well as critical minerals technology. He will also seek to put behind years of mistrust and sharp rhetoric between the Modi government and his predecessor, Justin Trudeau, whose last visit to India for the G-20 summit in 2023 proved to be particularly acrimonious over the Khalistan issue.

Last year, Mr. Modi's visit to Canada for the G-7 outreach and meeting with Mr. Carney began the process of repairing ties, which the return visit this week is expected to complete, officials said.

Thaw in ties

In what was seen as a particular breakthrough, National Security Ajit Doval visited Canada in early February, after years of India-Canada tensions over the killing of Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023, that the Canadian police accused the Indian government of orchestrating through agents there. The trial of four men who have been arrested is expected to begin later this year, but in a sign that the Canadian government wants to be sensitive to India's concerns over the case, the Canadian Attorney-General has, according to local reports, requested permission to suppress certain evidence disclosures as they could be "injurious to international relations and national security".

In a statement about the meeting between Mr. Doval and his counterpart Nathalie Drouin, the Ministry of External Affairs did not refer directly to the case but said that they "agreed to a shared workplan to guide bilateral cooperation on national security and law enforcement issues and to enable practical collaboration on respective priorities".

Mr. Carney will meet Mr. Modi for official talks on Monday and fly that evening to Australia, before travelling to Tokyo to meet newly re-elected PM Sanae Takaichi.

Mr. Carney's visit comes a month after his trip to Beijing, where Canada and China restored trade ties, visas, and reduced restrictions on Chinese electric vehicles.

IDFC First Bank fraud finds an echo in Haryana House

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

A day after IDFC First Bank Ltd. revealed a ₹590-crore fraud linked to the Haryana government's accounts, the Opposition Congress on Monday flagged the issue during the Budget Session in the Assembly, even as Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that a detailed investigation had been ordered in the case.

The alertness of State government departments had shed light on the issue, following which the government had immediately de-empanelled IDFC First Bank, Mr. Saini said.

"The statements provided by the bank did not match the records maintained by the departments concerned. The case has been handed over to the Anti-Corruption Bureau, and directions have also been issued to constitute a High-Level Committee to conduct a detailed probe," Mr. Saini told the House.

'Money safe'

IDFC First Bank had written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India acknowledging irregularities committed by certain bank employees, Mr. Saini said.

He added that the bank has also initiated action against the employees concerned.

Nayab Singh Saini

"... even before the government had taken cognisance of the matter, and on February 18 de-panelled the bank, [the government] directed that the entire amount, along with interest, be transferred to a nationalised bank. The money is completely safe. Every single rupee will be recovered," he said.

"The investigation will determine whether the irregularity was committed by a bank employee or whether it involved any other individual," Mr. Saini added.

Earlier, the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, Congress's Bhupinder Singh Hooda, raised the issue pertaining to the IDFC First Bank. "It is a massive scam, carried out by manipulating the accounts of 18 government departments," Mr. Hooda said.

RELATED REPORT ON
» BUSINESS PAGE

SC asks people affected by demolition drives to approach district election officer for SIR

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said persons whose homes have been demolished by local authorities can approach the district election officer regarding their inclusion on the electoral roll during the special intensive revision (SIR).

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant was hearing a petition filed by Sana Parveen on the plight of residents of Akbar Nagar in Lucknow of Uttar Pradesh, whose buildings, both residential and commercial, were razed after eviction notices in September 2023.

The scene during a demolition at Akbar Nagar by the Lucknow Development Authority in February 2024. SANDEEP SAXENA

Akbar Nagar is located on the banks of the Kukrail nullah in Lucknow. The National Green Tribunal had found the settlement "illegal". The eviction was part of the Lucknow district administration drive to "beautify the area".

The petitioner argued that the residents were excluded from the electoral roll in the Uttar Pradesh SIR process owing to lack of an "identifiable abode" after the demolition.

Ms. Parveen, through her counsel, argued that many of the residents were part of the Special SIR conducted in 2002-2003 and a summary revision of the electoral roll held in 2025. The petitioner said the Election Commission (EC) must distribute enumeration forms to the residents for submission.

The Bench initially asked the petitioner to approach the Allahabad High Court, saying the plea did not exactly raise an "all India social issue". The issue was local and could be dealt with by the High Court concerned.

Subsequently, the Bench observed that the petition raised "seriously disputed questions and facts" though the petitioner counsel tried to clarify that their representations to the EC met with no success. The top court ordered the District Election Officer, Lucknow to examine the issue and gave the petitioners liberty to approach the High Court in case the election authority's intervention proved to be ineffective.

Considering airfare fluctuation issue: Centre

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Monday submitted in the Supreme Court that the Ministry of Civil Aviation is actively considering the issues raised in a public interest petition seeking regulatory guidelines to control the sharp fluctuations in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines.

The Bench allowed the Centre four weeks to complete deliberations and inform the court about the outcome. The next hearing is on March 23.

Directions in hate crime ruling may be unmanageable: CJI

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Monday described as "unmanageable" the "general directions" issued by the Supreme Court in a 2018 judgment to the Centre and States to prevent and prosecute cow vigilantism and mobocracy.

Rather, the Chief Justice observed in favour of an individualistic approach, taking up each crime on its singular facts and merits, and acting on any abuse of law with immediate effect.

He said the top court only lays down general principles of law for the authorities to comply with and the people to raise in their protection in case of any violation of their rights. In case of any breach of rights, the public has a remedy in law through the courts concerned, he indicated.

The court refused to entertain contempt petitions that the State governments and authorities had not been acting in compliance with the 2018 *Tehseen Poonawalla* judgment.

"If somebody's rights are infringed or some action is taken in excess of the protection of law. Their rights must be protected. Immediate action must be taken," Chief Justice Kant observed.

The Bench led by then Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra had directed preventive, remedial and punitive measures to deal with lynching and mob violence while ordering the Centre and the States to implement the measures and file compliance reports.

However, when the case came up in February 2025, the apex court said that it could not "micro-manage" criminal prosecutions of mob lynchings and violence in "different areas or different States" across the country from Delhi.

House panel questions timing of PM's Israel visit amid rising tensions

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi set to visit Israel amid escalating tensions and a U.S. military build-up across the West Asian region, members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs on Monday raised concerns over the timing of the trip.

Mr. Modi is expected to arrive in Israel on February 25. This will be Mr. Modi's first visit to Israel in nine years and comes after the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, and Israel's bombardment of Gaza for two years, in which over 70,000 people were killed.

During his two-day visit to Jerusalem, Mr. Modi will address the Knesset (Parliament), attend an innovation event on technology cooperation, and go with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the Yad Vashem holocaust memorial museum.

Shashi Tharoor

The Standing Committee, chaired by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, met to discuss the Ministry of External Affairs's (MEA) budgetary allocations.

During the over three-hour meeting, at least one member questioned the rationale behind the Prime Minister's visit at a time when India had issued an advisory urging citizens to leave Iran amid fears of a possible U.S. strike. The member noted that Israel, too, could be drawn into the unfolding conflict.

Responding to the query, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that all prime ministerial visits were planned keeping security considerations in mind. He did not clarify whether the trip would be cancelled if tensions escalate further.

Several members also raised concerns over the absence of any allocation for the Chabahar Port in this year's Budget. Mr. Misri reiterated the Ministry's earlier response in the Lok Sabha that India had already fulfilled its commitment of contributing $120 million towards procuring port equipment and that no additional funding was due.

Some MPs, however, accused the government of compromising India's strategic autonomy and allowing the U.S. to influence its foreign relations.

Mr. Tharoor described the meeting as "comprehensive", saying it covered a wide range of issues.

'Inadequate allocation'

The members also criticised what they termed the government's neglect of the External Affairs Ministry. A previous recommendation of the panel had called for at least a 20% increase in the Ministry's allocation, but this year's Budget shows a rise of only 7.8%.

They noted that India had no diplomatic missions in 41 countries, and in many nations, a single Indian Foreign Service officer manages the entire mission with minimal staff. The Ministry's allocation remains roughly 0.4% of the total Union Budget.

Concerns were also raised about inadequate support for the Indian diaspora, particularly after the merger of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs with the External Affairs Ministry in 2016.

Parliamentary groups to seek legislative ties worldwide

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In a major step to deepen India's parliamentary engagement across the world, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has constituted Parliamentary Friendship Groups, aimed at strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation and legislative dialogue, with more than 60 countries.

A wide spectrum of political leaders are part of the groups.

The first phase involves engagements with countries such as Sri Lanka, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland, South Africa, Bhutan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the Maldives, the U.S., Russia, members of the European Parliament, South Korea, Nepal, the U.K., France, Japan, Italy, Australia, Greece, Singapore, Brazil, Vietnam, Mexico, Iran, and the UAE. These groups are expected to facilitate regular dialogue, exchange of legislative practices, and cooperation on trade, technology, culture, and shared global challenges.

The initiative seeks to build on the Centre's post-Operation Sindoor outreach, which saw multi-party delegations representing India abroad on issues of national interest.

Waiting for opportunity to serve people of Bengal: PM

Modi says entire nation is worried about the State as it sinks into 'darkness of anarchy'; he urges people to take an oath to build a 'Viksit West Bengal' in 2026; reaches out to Matua community

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Ahead of the Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote a letter to the people of West Bengal saying that the entire nation was worried about the State as it sank into the "darkness of anarchy". He urged them to take an oath to build a "Viksit West Bengal (Developed West Bengal)" in 2026.

Urging them to join this grand mission of development, Mr. Modi said he was eagerly waiting for an opportunity to serve them.

"An opportunity where, in the words of Kabiguru, 'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high – *Chitta Jetha Bhoy Shunya, Uccha Jetha Shiir*,' there will be freedom from corruption and misrule," the Prime Minister said.

> The irreparable damage done to West Bengal over the past six decades... is indescribable. On one hand, due to a lack of employment opportunities, the youth are forced to migrate to other States; on the other hand, due to a lack of security, the mothers and sisters of my West Bengal are scared and terrified today
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister

85 lakh toilets were built, 1 crore families were helped via Ujjwala Yojana, Prime Minister says

BJP initiative

The West Bengal BJP has started an initiative of *Griha Sampak Abhiyan* (An initiative to connect with households) in the State since the beginning of February 2026. The campaign is going on door-to-door with the common people. According to BJP sources, the open letter written by the Prime Minister will be handed over to the voters of the State as the BJP leaders reach out to the people.

Alleging that the "holy land [West Bengal] is tarnished by illegal infiltration and violence against women", Mr. Modi said, "Today, fake voters are ruling in golden Bengal".

The Prime Minister also reached out to representatives of the Matua community, and assured them citizenship through the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Good governance

"Our refugee brothers and sisters, victims of religious violence, will get citizenship through the CAA, and good governance free from illegal infiltration will be established in my West Bengal," the Prime Minister said.

Targeting the Trinamool Congress on several counts, Mr. Modi said that in the post-Independence era, West Bengal had been the guiding light of the nation's economy and the pioneer of industrialisation but, today, seeing this ailing and dilapidated state of West Bengal pained his heart. "The irreparable damage done to West Bengal over the past six decades due to misrule and appeasement politics is indescribable. On one hand, due to a lack of employment opportunities, the youth are forced to migrate to other States; on the other hand, due to a lack of security, the mothers and sisters of my West Bengal are scared and terrified today," the letter stated.

Union govt. initiatives

The Prime Minister highlighted various development projects of the Union government, and said that "despite extreme non-cooperation and hostility from the State government, today five crore people of West Bengal have been brought under the umbrella of banking services through the Central Jan-Dhan Yojana".

The Prime Minister said his government had constructed 85 lakh toilets in the State, and reached out to one crore families through the Ujjwala Yojana and over 52 lakh farmer brothers through direct financial assistance under the Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

250 judicial officers begin work on resolving pending SIR cases in West Bengal

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Tense wait: People stand in a queue for an SIR hearing at Krishnanagar in Nadia, West Bengal. FILE PHOTO

Following a Supreme Court order, nearly 250 judicial officers started work on Monday on the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal. Their leaves have been cancelled, and the urgent cases they have been hearing in courts have been shifted to other Benches.

Each of them has received a login ID for the Election Commission (EC) portal.

The judicial officers will directly give their verdict on the pending disputed SIR cases and offer their final decisions. According to sources, the number of disputed SIR cases may be nearly 45 lakh, but a final number was not confirmed by any official.

In a notice, the Calcutta High Court directed the judicial officers, including those on pre-approved leave, to report back to their courts by February 23, cancelling all leaves other than those for medical emergencies. The leaves shall remain cancelled till March 9, according to the notice.

On Sunday, district court judges held meetings with the District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police to chalk out a plan to address the disputed SIR cases.

The final electoral rolls are scheduled to be published on February 28. However, it remains unclear if all the pending SIR-related tasks will be over by then.

Three days ago, the Supreme Court agreed with the EC's suggestion that a list of voters whose names have been cleared should be allowed to be published on the scheduled date in February. The rest could be included on a supplementary roll.

The last date of the hearing was February 14. According to West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal, around 4.98 lakh people did not appear for their hearings till February 14, and 1.63 lakh voters have been flagged as "ineligible" due to errors.

Already nearly 58 lakh names were deleted when the draft voter list was published. They were categorised as deceased, permanently shifted, or untraceable.

Central forces deployed

In a related development, multiple companies of the Central forces have already reached West Bengal on Monday after the EC ordered their deployment.

Central armed police forces officials will conduct a meeting with the State Election Commission officials and State police forces on Monday to hash out details of their upcoming work during the elections.

President unveils bust of Rajaji, hails move to shed 'colonial mindset'

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu unveiled the bust of C. Rajagopalachari at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday, hailing it as a step towards "shedding the vestiges of colonial mindset".

The bust of Rajaji, the only Indian Governor-General of Independent India, has been installed at the Grand Open Staircase near Ashok Mandap and replaces that of Edwin Lutyens, the British architect who designed New Delhi.

"This initiative is part of a series of steps being taken towards shedding the vestiges of the colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness of India's culture, heritage, timeless traditions and honouring those who served Bharat Mata with their extraordinary contributions," said a statement from the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In remembrance: The President unveils C. Rajagopalachari's bust at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday. PTI

Ms. Murmu visited the venue of Rajaji Utsav that will be open to the public from February 24 to March 1. Speaking on the occasion, she said that when Rajaji arrived at the Government House (now known as Rashtrapati Bhavan), he placed portraits of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Mahatma Gandhi in his room.

"Rajaji sent a clear message that while India was formally still a dominion, Swaraj had been fully established in the hearts of Indians. Thus, Rajaji set an inspiring example of mental decolonisation. His ideals are reflected in the national campaign adopted by the people of India to take pride in India's heritage... Indian consciousness and connection with all Indians, especially the weaker sections, are reflected in Rajaji's thoughts and actions," she said.

The President said that while India moved towards "Viksit Bharat", icons such as Rajaji would inspire people with their ideas and ideals. She called for promoting the spirit of enterprise to fulfil his dreams.

Rahul, 'Mohammad' Deepak hit it out, Cong. leader to join 'Hulk' gym

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday met Deepak Kumar from Uttarakhand who confronted right-wing activists when they allegedly harassed a 71-year-old Muslim garment seller over the name of his shop.

Mr. Kumar had identified himself as 'Mohammad' Deepak to the men who had pressured the garment seller to change the name of his shop on Republic Day.

The meeting took place at 10 Janpath, the residence of Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi in the national capital. Mr. Kumar was accompanied by his friend Vijay Rawat, who supported him during the confrontation.

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi with gym owner 'Mohammad' Deepak in New Delhi on Monday. @INCINDIA X

'An example of unity'

The Congress posted pictures of the meeting on its official X handle and hailed Mr. Kumar for "setting an example of unity, brotherhood, and courage – one that will inspire every young person in the country to muster the courage to fight against injustice and hatred."

"*Do Bhai, Mohabbat Ke Sipahi* (two brothers, soldiers of love)," read the caption of a picture showing Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Kumar hugging each other.

Speaking to the media after meeting Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Kumar said that the Congress leader had extended solidarity with him and consoled his family which feared for his life after his confrontation with the right-wing 'goons'.

"Rahul ji said that he will come to Kotdwar and take membership in my gym... He assured me that I am not alone in this fight. He also gave me courage saying that whatever I have done was right," Mr. Kumar said.

Mr. Kumar, who runs the Hulk gym in Kotdwar town of Uttarakhand, said that the incident on Republic Day, registration of a first information report over it, and subsequent protests by Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal members have taken a toll on his business. Mr. Kumar also said that he is now getting support from across the country.

Earlier, Mr. Gandhi had expressed support to Mr. Kumar. In a social media post, he had said that the episode had reflected the values of equality and unity, both central to India's ethos. He had said that the spirit of harmony and courage should be reflected among the country's youth.

'Unite Humanity March'

Two days before meeting the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Kumar and Mr. Rawat had released a video on Instagram sharing their plan to organise a nationwide march which they named "*Insaniyat Jodo Yatra* (Unite Humanity March)".

"I am getting immense love from you people... Let me know what do you think about our plan," Mr. Kumar said in the video.

160 senior academics condemn YC protest

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Terming the "shirts-off" protest by the Youth Congress workers at the AI Impact Summit "profoundly regrettable and ill-conceived", 160 senior academics have said that the incident is a reflection of its "inability to distinguish between legitimate democratic dissent and the imperative of safeguarding national prestige on a global stage".

Among the signatories of the joint statement are JNU Vice-Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, IIT-Roorkee Director Kamal Kishore Pant, IIT-Dharwad Director Venkappayya R Desai, and IIT-Jodhpur Director Avinash Kumar Agarwal.

"The protest associated with Rahul Gandhi conveyed an unfortunate impression at a time when global investors... were assessing India's credibility as a long-term partner in AI and advanced technologies," said the statement.

Mukul Roy, Trinamool Congress leader and former Railway Minister, dies at 71

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress leader Mukul Roy passed away in the early hours of Monday morning. He was 71.

He was admitted to a private hospital in Kolkata with several ailments. Mukul Roy's son Subhranshu Roy said that his father suffered a cardiac arrest and passed away at 1.30 a.m.

One of the founding members of the Trinamool Congress, Mukul Roy was considered a Chanakya of West Bengal politics. Before the rise of Abhishek Banerjee in the Trinamool Congress, Mr. Roy was widely considered the number two in the party.

Mukul Roy

A trusted aide of Trinamool Congress chairperson and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Mr. Roy was key to the party's organisation and served as a link between the party and the government. Hailing from Kanchrapara in North 24 Parganas, Mr. Roy started his political career with the Congress and decided to set up Trinamool Congress with Ms. Banerjee in 1998.

It was under Mr. Roy's influence that several leaders from Congress joined the Trinamool Congress. Mr. Roy had also served as Railway Minister from March to September 2012.

West Bengal Chief Minister Ms. Banerjee described Mr. Roy as her "long-time political colleague and a comrade-in-arms in many political struggles", and said that the "news of his departure has left me heartbroken". Ms. Banerjee also added that Mr. Roy "devoted his life to the party from the very inception of the Trinamool Congress". The Trinamool chief in her message on social media added that "later he took a different path, only to return again".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled his death on X, saying, "Pained by the passing of former Union Minister Shri Mukul Roy *ji*. He will be remembered for his political experience and efforts to serve society... "

U.S. deal, Epstein links are shameful, not peaceful protests, Rahul tells Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Hitting back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for accusing the Congress of resorting to "shameful" politics, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Monday said that the India-U.S. trade agreement in which the country was sold out "was shameful, not the non-violent peaceful protests" by Indian Youth Congress (YC) workers.

Congress leader hits back at the Prime Minister for accusing his party of resorting to 'shameful' politics

"Narendra Modi *ji*, listen carefully – non-violence and peaceful protest are the foundation of democracy. This is the path shown by Gandhiji and Bhagat Singh: why are you so afraid of it? And you talk about shame? Let me tell you what is shameful. The trade deal you signed with America, in which you sold out the country, that is shameful," Mr. Gandhi said in a video on his X handle.

The trade deal handed over "our country's data, destroyed the farmers and ruined the textile industry," Mr. Gandhi said. The Congress leader, addressing the workers of the BJP-RSS, said: "[Late Jeffrey] Epstein, who was a paedophile, [and] your name, your Minister's name, and your friend's name appear in his files and mails. This is a matter of shame.".

"The whole country knows that the case going on against [Gautam] Adani in America has taken away your sleep because it is a case against the BJP and your financial architecture. That is shameful," Mr. Gandhi said.

His video was released even as Delhi Police arrested more YC workers for their "shirtless protests" during the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. Condemning the arrests and detention of its youth wing leaders, the Congress demanded that their "harassment" must stop. Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal strongly condemned the detention of YC president Uday Bhanu Chib.

Party veteran Margaret Alva, who had taken a divergent view on Sunday, saying that "at international events, there has to be dignity, discipline, a sense of responsibility", clarified on Monday that her comments are personal.

INBRIEF

Indian nationals advised to leave Iran amid rising tension

India on Monday advised all its nationals residing in Iran to leave the country by all available means of transport in view of the evolving security situation in the country. The Indian Embassy in Iran issued a fresh advisory to Indian nationals amid renewed protests in Tehran, and increasing fears of U.S. military strikes on the Gulf nation. According to official estimates, in January, a little over 10,000 Indians, including students, were living in Iran. "In view of the evolving situation in Iran, Indian nationals who are currently in Iran (students, pilgrims, business persons and tourists) are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights," the Embassy said. PTI

RSS-backed trade union to launch nationwide protest

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), the RSS-backed trade union, has decided to launch protests in every district on February 25 against the labour policies of the Union and State governments. The BMS demanded the Centre to urgently convene the tripartite body Indian Labour Conference to discuss workers' issues, including the implementation of the four Labour Codes. Talking to reporters in Delhi on Monday, BMS leaders said the Centre has promised that it will make amendments to the Code on Industrial Relations and the Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions in the second leg of the Budget Session beginning on March 9.

WhatsApp tells SC it does not share data with Meta

Will fully comply with National Company Law Appellate Tribunal directions on user consent for sharing data with parent company, it says as both challenge imposition of penalty of ₹213.14 crore

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The instant messaging platform WhatsApp maintained in the Supreme Court on Monday that it was not "quite right" to say the online entity was sharing data with other Meta platforms.

Appearing before a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for WhatsApp and its parent company, Meta, said its technology was very clear and put a premium on privacy. "There is no question of violating the law," Mr. Sibal submitted.

He said the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, comprehensively addressed the privacy concerns raised in the Supreme Court.

The court was hearing petitions filed by Meta and WhatsApp against a National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) decision to uphold a ₹213.14-crore penalty imposed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

The CCI had found WhatsApp's "take-it-or-leave-it" approach in its 2021 privacy policy an abuse of its market dominance. It found the prior consent sought from users to share their data with Meta "manufactured". It had concluded that users were forced to share data for continued access to WhatsApp messaging services.

In an appeal last year, the NCLAT concluded that the "core principle is to remove exploitation by restoring user choice".

"The users can be given choice if users retain the right to decide what data is collected from them, for which purposes, and for how long. We had also stated in our findings that any non-essential collection or cross-use (like advertising etc.) can occur only with the concerned user's express and revocable consent," the NCLAT had observed.

On Monday, WhatsApp said it would fully comply with the NCLAT directions relating to user consent for sharing data with Meta under its controversial 2021 privacy policy by March 16, 2026. The tribunal had, however, found the CCI's five-year ban on sharing data for advertisement purposes "redundant", considering that the user had already been given a choice to opt in or out.

WhatsApp has filed a comprehensive affidavit explaining its technology of end-to-end encryption, following scathing oral remarks from the Bench in the previous hearing on February 3.

The Bench had cautioned that it would not permit the platform and Meta to breach the right to privacy of millions of their "silent consumers" in India through the sharing and commercial exploitation of personal data. It had even compared sharing of private data to a "decent way of committing theft". Though WhatsApp and Meta had protested that users could "opt out" of the data-sharing provision, the court had persisted in its criticism.

Senior advocate Madhavi Goradia Divan, for CCI, said there was also a competition law concern attached to the case.

"Data-sharing has many facets. One may be privacy and data protection. But there is another aspect, protecting market and consumer, which stands on a totally different footing," Ms. Divan submitted.

Privacy message

WhatsApp submits its view before SC on user consent and sharing of data with Meta

- WhatsApp and Meta challenge NCLAT order upholding ₹213.14-crore penalty imposed by CCI
- Case arises from CCI findings on WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy

KEY ALLEGATION

- CCI found WhatsApp's 2021 privacy policy a 'take-it-or-leave-it' practice
- Regulator said users were forced to share data with Meta to keep using the app
- Tribunal stressed user choice and consent for non-essential data use

DEFENDING STATEMENTS

- WhatsApp denies improper sharing, cites encryption and DPDP Act
- Company says it will follow NCLAT directions by March 16, 2026
- CCI argued the matter also involves competition law and consumer protection

Bihar bans meat, fish sales near schools and religious places

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Vijay Kumar Sinha

The sale of meat and fish near religious places, educational institutions or crowded locations has been banned in Bihar to stop "violent tendencies" in children, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha has said while referring to a letter sent to municipal commissioners on meat shops operating in the open in urban areas.

"This is a new initiative of the new government. We held a meeting and we took seriously the issues raised... From a health perspective, for social interaction, and to prevent violent tendencies among children, we will ban the sale of meat and fish near educational and religious institutions, and in crowded open spaces," he said on Sunday.

Mr. Sinha, also the Urban Development and Housing Department Minister, was referring to a letter sent by the department's Principal Secretary, Vinay Kumar.

The Minister, however, clarified that the State government had no objection to food preferences of people, but said that strict measures had been taken to ensure that "social interaction and the spirit of purity are not violated". He said that "no one's sentiments should be hurt, and the environment must not be polluted".

Violation of provisions

Mr. Kumar had written to all municipal commissioners stating that illegal meat and fish shops were operating under various municipal bodies in violation of the provisions of Section 345 of the Bihar Municipal Act, 2007. However, in the letter, he did not mention about "violent tendencies" in children caused by meat shops.

"Such shops are either operating without licences or the conditions of the licences have not been ensured. Furthermore, meat is being sold in the open and in unsanitary conditions, and dead animals are being displayed," the letter said.

'Self-reliance key to India's ambition of becoming maritime superpower'

India has to create a maritime ecosystem to take leadership in the sector, says Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways; India will be among top five ship-building nations by 2047, he says

INTERVIEW

Sarbananda Sonowal

Shankari Nivethitha. B
THOOTHUKUDI

RAJESH. N

India cannot keep depending on foreign shipping lines for trade and has to create a maritime ecosystem to take leadership in the sector, says Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways. The Minister spoke about India's push towards green shipping fuels, shipbuilding expansion, and progress of the Sagarmala projects. Edited excerpts:

How does the Centre plan to scale green hydrogen and e-methanol hubs to ensure India leads as the primary bunker destination for global green shipping corridors by 2030?

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Hydrogen Mission, it was to promote green transport to achieve a blue economy. As follow-up action, we are developing infrastructure, so that in the near future, hydrogen, ammonia, and all our renewable energy can be promoted. Our target is to combat climate change.

Given the nation's goal to reach the top five countries in the ship-building sector, what are the specific execution milestones up ahead?

India cannot depend on foreign ships all the time. We want to grow on our own, that is why, in the principle of "Atmanirbhar Bharat", we want to create the ecosystem within India, so we can take leadership in this sector. For this, the Prime Minister has indicated two paths: Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.

As part of this, by 2030, we will be one of the top 10 ship-building nations in the world, and by 2047, we will be among the top five.

The Sagarmala programme has been witnessing a reduction in funds. Will that affect any ongoing projects in Tamil Nadu?

No, we are committed to whatever projects we have already accepted, we have already approved and committed. The project's work will definitely be done within the timeline.

Pray for peace to return in Manipur, says *Boong* director after BAFTA win

Press Trust of India
LONDON

Filmmaker Lakshmipriya Devi, whose debut feature *Boong* won a BAFTA award at a glittering ceremony in London on Sunday, used the moment on stage to pray for peace in her home State of Manipur.

"The walk up till here felt like the last few steps to reach the summit of a mountain we never knew we were climbing in the first place. I just want to use this opportunity to say that we pray for peace to return in Manipur," Ms. Devi said in her acceptance speech.

Boong, a Manipuri film starring Gugun Kipgen and Bala Hijam, won the award in the Best Children's and Family Film category.

"We pray that all the internally displaced children, including the child actors in the film, regain their joy, their innocence, and their dreams once again. We pray that no conflict is ever formidable enough to destroy the one superpower that all of us have as human beings, that is forgiveness," she added.

In a backstage interaction with presspersons, she said the movie was inspired by the folk tales of her grandmother.

"I come from a very troubled State. Those folk tales always cushioned me. There would be gunshots in the distance but I felt safe with her. I wanted *Boong* to be an urban version of her folk tales with the same kind of warmth that made you feel safe. It's also a closure for myself from those memories of having grown up in a place like that," she said.

Winning team: Director Lakshmipriya Devi with producers Alan McAlex, left, Farhan Akhtar, and Ritesh Sidhwani in London. AP

Producer Farhan Akhtar said backing the film set in a region of India from which we rarely get to watch films "just felt right".

'Moment of joy'

Congratulatory messages poured in from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Manipur Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh, and many in the industry.

"Congratulations to all those associated with this film. This is indeed and moment of immense joy, especially for Manipur. It also highlights the immense creative talent in our country," Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

Mr. Singh said the win was a moment of immense pride not only for Manipur but for the entire nation.

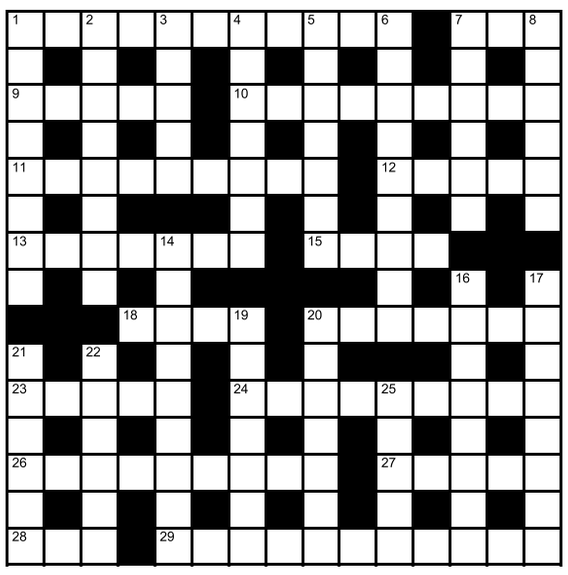
LIST OF WINNERS
» WORLD PAGE

TH CROSSWORD 14725

(set by Arden)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Fantastic idea, note India gets more coverage - it's a reminder (4-7)
7 Stole a launch, almost (3)
9 Old jail they say is best (5)
10 Regularly impair by blocking new beneficiary (9)
11 Motherland's hell-fire (9)
12 Like to check however, for fungus (5)
13 Brief pull out (7)
15 Keep here evenly - you'll need it for fencing (4)
18 Boring review of a poet (4)
20 Playing team - regret about it being not professional (7)
23 Groom very softly bites lip (5)
24 Respite on assignment (9)
26 "Drink from birth" - recollected a cheat (9)
27 Forget talk of rejecting some coffee (5)
28 Wool supplier - see how one ends up (3)
29 They look for another aspect with Harry (6,5)

Down

1 Bluebeard - born and raised in the city (8)
2 Killed uprising- China will destroy (8)
3 Holding formal talks in the island nation (5)
4 Red planet swallows eleven tons (7)
5 Infuriate a smoker (7)
6 Perhaps same hype about millions suffering from breathlessness (9)
7 Extra police for regulation by local authorities (6)
8 Cause trustee to reject the odd ones - very clever (6)
14 After a harvest, grain storage came up in the outskirts of Athens (9)
16 Go-between randomly to admire (8)
17 Greenhouse or cross over energy? (8)
19 Bitter about a cap - part of habit (7)
20 Annual call by clearing banks - crazy to lose interest (7)
21 Father in pain, is brave (6)
22 Delusion over border, time to support (6)
25 Maybe helps to carry (5)

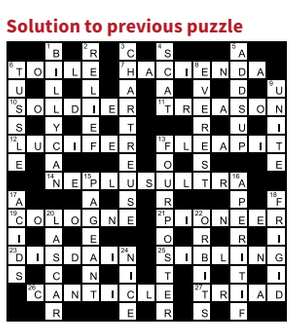
SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

No.SS6801 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Abhisheka Kandan

There is a Murugan temple in Sri Lanka, which is connected with a Tamil princess, said Desa Mangayarkkarasi in a discourse. Due to a curse, this princess had a digestive disorder, and the face of a horse. She visited Tiruchendur hoping for a cure. In Tiruchendur, Murugan faces the sea. The place which He faces is called Vadana Aramba Thurai. The princess bathed here, and a voice was heard. The voice instructed her to go to Keerimalai in Sri Lanka. The voice said there was a swayambhu Murugan in Keerimalai, and asked her to worship this Murugan for relief from her curse. Since the means of acquiring a human face was suggested here, this place in Tiruchendur is called Vadana Aramba Thurai. Vadana means face; aramba means beginning. Thurai means bathing ghat.

The princess went to Keerimalai, where sage Nakula, also known as Keeri muni, was doing penance. He had been cursed with the face of a mongoose, and this curse had vanished when he had worshipped Lord Siva in this place. Sage Nakula guided the princess to the swayambhu Murugan of the sthala, and asked her to do an abhisheka to the idol. When she did so, her horse face vanished and in its place was the face of a very beautiful young woman. She was also cured of her digestive problem. To show his gratitude, her father took granite boulders from Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka, and built a stone structural temple for Murugan. This place in Lanka is called Mavittapuram, and Murugan here is known as Maavai Kandan. He is also called Abhisheka Kandan. Although abhishekas for deities are common in temples, this place in Lanka is unique because the deity here has the prefix abhisheka before His name.

INBRIEF

SECL eyeing 7.5 MT of coking coal in Chhattisgarh, M.P.

South Eastern Coalfields Ltd. (SECL) would be tapping into coking coal and has already assessed potential for 7.5 million tonnes (MT) across varied regions in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, B.N. Jha, Area General Manager of Baikunthpur (Chhattisgarh) said on Monday. "We have already affirmed the potential for coking coal in the Kewai block (Madhya Pradesh)," he stated, adding, "Further, in the Baikunthpur [Chhattisgarh] area itself, we have affirmed the potential in Labji Pusla mine and Katkona mine."

Morepen Labs shares surge on bagging ₹825 crore deal

Morepen Laboratories shares surged more than 15% on Monday after the drugmaker said it had secured a multi-year contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMO) mandate valued around ₹825 crore ($91 million) from a leading global pharma major. Supplies, under the mandate, are expected to commence within next 4-5 months, with execution scheduled through Q1 of the following financial year. The shares closed ₹45.37 each on the BSE.

India amends tax treaty with France, cuts dividend tax

India has revised its three-decade-old tax treaty with France, which will help major French firms save millions of dollars in dividend levies, while it also broadens New Delhi's powers to tax certain transactions, the finance ministry said. French firms holding at least 10% in an Indian entity will now pay a 5% tax on dividends, down from 10% earlier. For minority French shareholdings of under 10% in Indian companies, however, dividend tax will rise from 10% to 15%. REUTERS

'SEBI will probe egregious behaviour in employees'

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will "get to the bottom of it" if any evidence of egregious behaviour is found in employees, Chairperson Tuhin Kanta Pandey said here on Monday.

It is important to take action if evidence of "egregious behaviour" arises, to avoid dissuading those who work with integrity, Mr. Pandey said, responding to questions on the suspension of General Manager Achal Singh over alleged 'integrity issues'.

"It's important that if there's any such case, we'll get to the bottom of it. But we do have [the] whole system in place to see that due opportunity is given, natural justice is given. Nevertheless, [in] the initial stage, the evidence was egregious enough for us to act," Mr. Pandey said at a media briefing.

On the ease of doing business front, Mr. Pandey, during his speech at an event, said that a comprehensive review of the SEBI (Portfolio Manager) regulations was underway and that the regulator was targeting to release a consultation paper proposing the changes by June.

He further said that SEBI was looking into representations from stock brokers regarding the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) new norm mandating a 100% collateral on credit to stock brokers among others.

'IDFC First staff plotted with outsiders in ₹590 cr. fraud'

Isolated case involved one branch and a Haryana government entity, recovery process initiated says CEO: bank well-capitalised to absorb shock, but magnitude of the issue is 'disturbing'

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

IDFC First Bank employees had perpetuated a ₹590 crore bank fraud through a 'traditional method' by colluding with external parties using forged physical cheque transactions, the private sector bank's MD and CEO V. Vaidyanathan said on Monday, a day after the bank reported the matter to the stock exchanges.

However, he said this was a "specific, isolated case involving one branch in Chandigarh and one client group, a Haryana Government entity, and not system-wide". He said no senior management staff of the bank was involved in the fraud and that the recovery process had been initiated. Four bank staff had been suspended.

"It's a case of employee fraud and external parties are involved. The bank has all the systems in place, but in this case it's not an electronic transfer and it's not a digital fraud. It's an older, traditional kind of fraud in connivance with employees. It is a case of collusion," Mr. Vaidyanathan told analysts over an investor conference call.

He said the bank had initiated necessary steps including police complaint to deal with the matter, first time in its 10-year history. It has also appointed KPMG as independent forensic auditor to detect the modus operandi.

The report is expected in four to five weeks, he said. Assuring investors and customers that a proper investigation would be conducted, Mr. Vaidyanathan said the bank was well capitalised to "bear the shock". "The bank is well capitalised and profitability is in positive territory. As far as the bank is concerned, it is now financially very strong but the magnitude of the issue has disturbed us. We will take provisions for this during this quarter. Despite this hit, we will still be profitable," he emphasised.

The bank has been making a quarterly profit of about ₹500 crore. He said the discrepancy of ₹590 crore comprised ₹490 crore that was identified after reconciliation and ₹100 crore of 'self identified' one through internal checks, he said, declining to disclose the timeline of the fraud. The MD said the bank would recover ₹35 crore from Employee Dishonesty Insurance. The fraud came to light when the Haryana government department concerned reached out to the bank asking it to close its accounts and transfer funds to another bank.

In the process, differences were observed between the balance in the accounts and the balance mentioned by the Haryana government entities holding the accounts.

It came to light that the entities had not issued such forged cheques which were cleared by the bank officials to outsider third party accounts in other banks. As news spread, the bank's stock fell 20%, but closed with a loss of 16.18% at ₹70.04 on the BSE.

The RBI is also watching the development, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said. Meanwhile, the Haryana government de-empanelled IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank after the fraud came to light.

In the red

IDFC First Bank stock tanked 16% a day after the ₹590 cr. fraud involving the bank's staff came to light

- Not digital fraud, but 'traditional kind' in connivance with employees, says MD
- Discrepancy comprises ₹490 cr. identified after reconciliation, ₹100 cr. self-identified via internal checks
- Lender to make provisions during this quarter, 'will still be profitable'

Bharti to invest $2.2 bn to expand digital lending

Reuters

Bharti Airtel on Monday said it will invest ₹200 billion ($2.2billion) in its financial arm over the next few years, as the telco steps up its push into digital lending.

The capital will be infused into its subsidiary, Airtel Money, which received a non-banking financial company (NBFC) licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on February 13.

Bharti's expansion comes as competition intensifies in India's non-bank lending sector, where conglomerates such as Jio Financial Services and established players like Bajaj Finance are scaling up retail credit operations.

The move strengthens Airtel's financial services business as it diversifies beyond telecom into areas such as data centres, cloud and enterprise services.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	83,295	0.58
US Dollar	90.89	0.05
Gold	1,62,800	2.06
Brent oil	71.88	—

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	2191.00	30.20
Adani Ports	1555.80	44.30
Apollo Hosp	7693.00	77.50
Asian Paints	2429.70	1.60
Axis Bank	1386.70	18.40
Bajaj Auto	9905.50	98.50
Bajaj Finserv	2051.60	-6.90
Bajaj Finance	1031.00	0.80
Bharat Elec	439.75	-1.40
Bharti Airtel	1997.30	19.90
Cipla	1326.50	-14.60
Coal India	426.00	2.45
Dr Reddys Lab	1307.40	27.00
Eicher Motors	8038.50	102.00
Eternal Ltd.	268.00	-1.45
Grasim Ind	2873.40	40.60
HCL Tech	1426.20	-10.30
HDFC Bank	923.60	11.75
HDFC Life	742.45	13.80
Hindalco	916.20	-19.50
Hind Unilever	2345.40	30.90
ICICI Bank	1399.40	4.90
IntGlobeAvi	4862.20	7.60
Infosys	1327.50	-25.70
ITC	325.40	-1.60
Jio Financial Services Ltd.	257.80	-0.80
JSW Steel	1240.50	4.70
Kotak Bank	430.70	9.35
Kwality Walls	26.95	-0.78
L&T	4418.10	37.50
M&M	3447.10	34.30
Maruti Suzuki	15072.00	95.00
Max Healthcare	1083.60	-4.30
NestleIndia	1315.10	21.30
NTPC	375.45	2.50
ONGC	275.65	-3.00
PowerGrid Corp	303.35	4.40
Reliance Ind	1428.00	8.60
SBI Life	2109.60	29.60
State Bank	1227.80	11.70
Shriram Finance Ltd.	1064.70	5.40
Sun Pharma	1732.30	7.90
TataConsumerProduct	1171.80	15.60
Tata Steel	208.14	-0.22
TCS	2676.30	-9.90
Tech Mahindra	1440.90	-16.00
Titan	4272.70	36.30
Tata Motors PV	379.95	1.95
Trent Ltd.	4054.90	-36.10
UltraTech Cement	12976.00	210.00
Wipro	205.89	-3.97

RODTEP rates cut

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade has amended the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products Scheme so that the rate applicable for all products shall be limited to 50% of existing rates and, where applicable, 50% of the notified value caps, with immediate effect.

What happens to India's Russian oil imports, $500-bn U.S. import goal?

NEWS ANALYSIS

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

The Indian trade delegation's last-minute postponement of trip to Washington to finalise an Interim Agreement with the U.S., and the U.S. Supreme Court's order on tariffs both have implications for India's imports from Russia as well as the U.S.

The Indian delegation was to be in the U.S. on February 23-25 to finalise the Interim Agreement, which Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said could be implemented between mid-March and early April. However, sources in the Commerce Ministry on February 22 said that the meeting will be rescheduled "at a mutually convenient date".

"The two sides are of the view that the proposed visit of the Indian chief negotiator and the team be scheduled after each side has had the time to evaluate the latest developments and its implications," the official said.

Mr. Goyal had earlier said India would be able to remove or lower tariffs for American imports only after a deal is signed. The U.S., on the other hand, could so far modify tariffs through executive orders.

Pressure tactics: The value of India's Russian oil imports fell to a 38-month low in December 2025. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

No Russian oil threats

Trade and legal experts, said U.S. SC order meant President Trump no longer had any law enabling him to levy tariffs on India if it continues buying Russian oil in large quantities.

Without the tariff threat, India can once again reduce its purchase of the relatively expensive American oil and sour Venezuelan oil.

"With reciprocal tariffs gone, the U.S. now does not have any law under which it can penalise India for buying Russian oil," Ajay Srivastava, founder of the Global Trade Research Initiative and former Director General of Foreign Trade said. "Even if we were to continue our oil imports from the U.S., which have nearly doubled in the last few months, we should refrain from buying oil from Venezuela."

It is important to note Mr. Trump had, on February 6 itself, removed the tariffs linked to India's import of Russian oil. As per Ramesh K. Vaidyanathan, managing partner at law firm BTG Advaya, tariffs could theoretically return, but they would need the backing of U.S. Congress.

Multiple mechanisms

"There are multiple legal mechanisms under which he can do this, but I think what is coming to the fore is that he cannot do these through executive orders and will have to do it under legislative backing for the purpose for which they are designed." In other words, if Mr. Trump can convince the U.S. Congress that tariffs linked to Russian oil imports are necessary, then they could return.

An analysis by *The Hindu* found the value of India's crude oil imports from Russia fell to a 38-month low in December 2025 with Russia's share falling to less than a quarter from 34% a month ago. However, oil imports from the U.S. rose almost 31% over December 2024.

The analysis showed India imported oil from the U.S. at an average price of $506.7 per tonne in December 2025 or almost 8% higher than the average price of Russian oil imported that month.

Uncertainty over deal

"India should follow a wait-and-watch approach and should see how other countries that have signed deals with the U.S. are reacting," said Pankaj Chadha, chairman of exporter body EEPC India.

Mr. Srivastava says the decision to postpone the Indian team's visit to Washington could simply be an "administrative delay".

"There is a possibility that this delay in the Indian team's visit to the U.S. could have been at the request of the U.S. since their officials would be under fire trying to figure out the way forward."

Impact on imports

A delayed Interim Agreement will also push back the date from which India will have to reduce tariffs for imports from the U.S. This can have a dual effect.

On the one hand, local manufacturers can breathe a bit easier since they will not have to compete with duty-free U.S. imports.

On the other several items India imports will continue to face import tariffs, thereby making them more expensive than they would have been had the deal gone through.

Mr. Goyal had previously told *The Hindu* there were several items such as oil, LPG, LNG, aircraft and parts, parts for data centres and quantum computing that India needs but does not manufacture, and so would need to import.

India's imports of electronic parts grew 117% year-on-year to about $2.1 billion in April-December 2025. Similarly, the import of telecom instruments rose 25% and organic chemicals by almost 34%.

A joint statement said India intends to import $500 billion worth of energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal from the U.S. over the next 5 years.

The European Union (EU) also said the U.S. must provide more clarity before EU Parliament can ratify the U.S.-EU deal.

Meanwhile, Japanese officials said they won't immediately be revisiting the deal adding, the crux of Japan's deal with U.S. was on lowering auto-related tariffs, which stay unaffected by the U.S. SC decision.

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(A Government of Andhra Pradesh Undertaking & an ISO 27001-2022 Certified Company)
VIDYUTH SOUDHA, VIJAYAWADA-520004.

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

The APTRANSCO invites bids online for **Spec No.PMM31-e-17/2026. Nature of Work:** Procurement for Supply of various C&R Panels with BCUs required for BESS I&II, Augmentation of PTRs, RMI 2024-25 & O&M 2025-26 Works Date & Time of availability of Tenders: **23.02.2026 at 05:00 PM.** Web: **https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in**

RO. No : GMCC/APTRANSCO/55/26 **Sd/- Chief Engineer/Transmission**

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DURGAPURA, JAIPUR

NOTICE INVITING BIDS (NIB No:- SKN2526A0437) **Date: 17.02.2026**
Unique Bid Number (UBN): SKN2526WLOB00472
Sealed E-Bids are invited on behalf of **Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute, Durgapura, Jaipur (Rajasthan)** for the procurement of E-Tender for **Construction of Plant Tissue Culture Lab and Protected Structures with Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Laboratory Equipment's on Turnkey Basis upto 09.03.2026, 02:00 PM.**

S. No.	Name of Article	Specifications	Qty	Estimated Price (Rupees)	Price of Bidding Document (Rupees)	RISL Fee (Rs.)	Amount of Bid Security (Rupees)
1	E-Tender for Construction of Plant Tissue Culture Lab and Protected Structures with Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Laboratory Equipment's on Turnkey Basis			1500.00 Lakh (15 Cr.)	10000/-	2500/-	Rs. 30,00,000/-

Details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or on the website of the State Public Procurement Portal http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in or our website www.sknau.ac.in and may be downloaded from there or obtained from our office on payment of its Banker Cheque/ demand draft.

Raj.Samwad/C/25/21007 **Director**

Karnataka Soaps & Detergents Limited
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Sandal City: P.B. No. 5531, Bengaluru-Pune Highway, Bengaluru - 560 055.
Ph: 080-22164879, 22164886, Website: www.mysoresandal.org e-mail: **ksdl.dgmmtls@gmail.com**
An ISO-9001:2015 & 14001:2015 Company
Date: 23.02.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tenders are invited by **KS&DL** in two cover system through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal (Website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/)** with respect to supply of following Goods/Services/Works.

Sl. No.	Tender Number	Tender Name	Tender Quantity	Published date	Last Date of Submission
1	KSDL/2025-26/IND0979	Procurement of Mysore Carbolic Soap 150g Cartons	1765833 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
2	KSDL/2025-26/IND0980	Procurement of Mysore Carbolic Soap-150g Corrugated Boxes	16331 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
3	KSDL/2025-26/IND0981	Procurement of Herbal Care Soap 100g Cartons	942500 Nos	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
4	KSDL/2025-26/IND0982	Procurement of Herbal Care 100g Corrugated Boxes	6533 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
5	KSDL/2025-26/IND0983	Procurement of Shrink Sleeves for Hand Wash Bottle top cover	1268717 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
6	KSDL/2025-26/IND0984	Procurement of Cellophane Paper Wrapper Reams	227500 Ream	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
7	KSDL/2025-26/IND0985	Procurement of Gift Pack Cartons	118083 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
8	KSDL/2025-26/IND0986	Procurement of Gift Pack Plastic Container	118083 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
9	KSDL/2025-26/IND0987	Procurement of Gift Pack Corrugated Boxes	9799 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
10	KSDL/2025-26/IND0988	Procurement of Ethylene Vinyl Acetate (EVA) based hot melt adhesive	8667 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
11	KSDL/2025-26/IND0989	Procurement of Mysore Sandal Kleenol 5ltr PET bottle / Can with inner lid and cap	81656 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
12	KSDL/2025-26/IND0990	Procurement of Mysore Sandal Kleenol 5 ltr. Corrugated Boxes with Partition and Top plate	16331 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
13	KSDL/2025-26/IND0991	Procurement of Mysore Sandal Kleenol 5 ltr. Sticker (Front & Back)	82469 Nos.	21-02-2026	04-03-2026
14	KSDL/2025-26/IND0992	Procurement of Mysore Sandal Gold (125g x 3 Nos.) Cartons	261083 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
15	KSDL/2025-26/IND0993	Procurement of Mysore Sandal Gold (125gX3 Nos.) Corrugated Boxes	8710 Nos.	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
16	KSDL/2025-26/IND1002	Procurement of Tetramethyl perhydronaptho furan Ambroxan	900 Kgs	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
17	KSDL/2025-26/IND1003	Procurement of Coumarin crystals	29500 Kgs	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
18	KSDL/2025-26/IND1004	Procurement of Clove Leaf Oil	45900 Kgs	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
19	KSDL/2025-26/IND1005	Procurement of Habanolide/Globalide	8300 Kgs	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
20	KSDL/2025-26/IND1006	Procurement of Citronellol	25700 Kgs	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
21	KSDL/2025-26/IND1007	Procurement of Geranium oil	8500 Kgs	21-02-2026	26-03-2026
22	KSDL/2025-26/IND1010	Procurement of Kathon CG	7700 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
23	KSDL/2025-26/IND1011	Procurement of Almond oil	13600 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
24	KSDL/2025-26/IND1012	Procurement of Cocamidopropyl Betaine (CAPB)	40 MT	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
25	KSDL/2025-26/IND1013	Procurement of Cos Oil Yellow 4G (D & C YELLOW No. 11) CI No. 47000	7000 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
26	KSDL/2025-26/IND1014	Procurement of Emulsifier	34000 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
27	KSDL/2025-26/IND1015	Procurement of Carbopol Aqua SF-1	2100 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
28	KSDL/2025-26/IND1016	Procurement of Caustic Soda Lye (on 100 percent basis)	70 MT	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
29	KSDL/2025-26/IND1017	Procurement of Amisoft	3600 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
30	KSDL/2025-26/IND1018	Procurement of Tetra sodium salt of etidronic acid/Aqua acid - 1054 CG	6500 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
31	KSDL/2025-26/IND1019	Procurement of LIQUID PARAFFIN LIGHT	11000 Kgs	21-02-2026	09-03-2026
32	KSDL/2025-26/IND1020	Procurement of EDTA Liquid	110 MT	21-02-2026	09-03-2026

For any further queries/clarifications please contact the undersigned.

Sd/- Asst. General Manager (Materials)

KYIV

Three killed in Russian air strikes on eve of Ukraine war anniversary

REUTERS

Russian strikes killed three people and wounded several others overnight, regional authorities said on Monday, as Moscow continued its assaults on the eve of the war's four-year anniversary. Two people were killed in the Odesa region and one person died in Zaporizhzhia following Russian drone attacks. AFP

LONDON

Peter Mandelson, ex-U.K. envoy to Washington, held in Epstein case

AP

U.K. police on Monday arrested Peter Mandelson, former envoy to the U.S., amid allegations over his ties to disgraced U.S. financier Jeffrey Epstein. Mr. Mandelson was sacked by Prime Minister Keir Starmer as envoy last year when an earlier release of documents linked to Epstein showed the extent of their friendship. AFP

DAMASCUS

U.S. begins withdrawing its forces from key military garrison in Syria

REUTERS

U.S. forces began pulling out of their largest base in Syria on Monday, Syrian military and security sources said, part of a wider departure as the U.S.-allied government in Damascus consolidates control. A military official said the pullout from Qasrak base in Hasakeh was expected to take about a month. REUTERS

GENEVA

UN chief decries 'rule of force', says human rights under attack globally

AP

United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres warned on Monday that "the rule of force" was spreading, as the powerful trample on international law. "Human rights are under a full-scale attack around the world," Mr. Guterres told the opening of the UN Human Rights Council's annual session in Geneva. AFP

Kim retains leadership of North Korea's ruling party

Associated Press
SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was re-elected to the top post of the ruling Workers' Party, with delegates crediting him for bolstering the country's nuclear arsenal and strengthening its regional standing, state media reported on Monday.

The report from the party congress, which began last Thursday, where Mr. Kim is expected to outline his political and military goals for the next five years, suggests he will double down on accelerating a nuclear arsenal already equipped with missiles capable of threatening Asian U.S. allies and the American mainland.

The party also released a new roster for its powerful 138-member central committee.

Under party rules, the congress, which Mr. Kim has held every five years since 2016, elects the general secretary to serve as the party's top representative and leader. Mr. Kim, 42, has held the party's top post throughout his rule.

Witkoff reiterates red lines; Iran says U.S. talks yielded encouraging signals

Tehran is committed to peace and stability in the region, says President Pezeshkian, adding that recent talks with the U.S. involved the exchange of practical proposals; U.S. envoy says Trump's red lines include 'zero uranium enrichment' for Iran

Stanly Johny

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian on Sunday expressed cautious optimism about talks with Washington, saying the discussions involved exchange of "practical proposals", while Steve Witkoff, the U.S. special envoy for West Asia, said President Donald Trump had set clear red lines regarding Iran's nuclear programme.

"Iran is committed to peace and stability in the region. Recent negotiations involved the exchange of practical proposals and yielded encouraging signals," Mr. Pezeshkian wrote in a social media post. "However, we continue to closely monitor U.S. actions and have made all necessary preparations for any potential scenario," he added.

Mr. Pezeshkian's comment came immediately after Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said a third round of talks between the U.S. and Iran would take place on February 26 in Geneva. "Pleased to confirm U.S.-Iran negotiations are now set for Geneva this Thursday with a positive push to go the extra mile towards finalising the deal," Mr. Albusaidi wrote in a post.

Treading the line: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting in Tehran on Saturday. REUTERS

Oman mediated the first round of the talks in Muscat on February 6 and the second round in Geneva on February 17. While Iran claimed "guiding principles" of future talks were agreed between the two sides on February 17, the U.S. side was less optimistic and said gaps remained.

Trump 'curious'

Mr. Witkoff, the chief U.S. negotiator with Iran, said in an interview on Sunday, the President was "curious" on why Iran had not capitulated under American pressure. "The President asked me that this morning, and he's – I don't wanna use the word frustrated... because he understands he's got plenty of alternatives, but... he's curious as to why they haven't, I don't wanna use the word capitulated, but why they haven't capitulated," Mr. Witkoff told Lara Trump, the President's daughter-in-law, on *Fox News*.

He added that Mr. Trump is wondering "why, under this pressure, with the amount of sea power and naval power over there, why haven't they come to us and said, 'we profess we don't want a weapon, so here's what we're prepared to do?'"

The U.S. has deployed dozens of fighter jets, warships, two aircraft carriers, missile defence shields and fuel tankers to the region, with the President threatening to use force if Iran failed to make a deal. Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned that any attack on the Islamic Republic would trigger a regional war.

Mr. Witkoff added that Mr. Trump gave him and Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law, who is also part of the negotiating team, the administration's red lines. "Zero, zero enrichment; we have to get the material back," he said, referring to Iran's nuclear enrichment capability and its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. After the June 2025 attack by Israel and the U.S. on Iran's nuclear facilities, Mr. Trump had claimed that the U.S. had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear programme. But Mr. Witkoff indicated on Sunday that Iran still possessed highly enriched uranium.

"They say it's all about a civilian programme, yet they've been enriching far beyond what's needed for civil nuclear use, up to 60%. They're probably a week away from having industrial-grade, bomb-making material. That's extremely dangerous, and I can't accept that," Mr. Witkoff said.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told *CBS* that there was still a "good chance" for a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue. "One fact is there, that if they (the U.S.) want to find a resolution for Iran's peaceful nuclear program, the only way is diplomacy," he said.

Yunus did not follow the Constitution, says Bangladesh President

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin slammed Muhammad Yunus, who headed the country's interim administration after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August 2024 till the February election, saying he "did not follow the country's Constitution".

In an interview to Bangladesh newspaper *Kaaler Kantho*, Mr. Shahabuddin revealed a stark picture of the chaos that unfolded in the country during the interim government's rule saying that the Yunus administration did not brief him about important decisions, including the trade agreement between Bangladesh and the United States that was announced a few days before the election.

Mr. Shahabuddin recalled the 18 months of the Yunus administration and said that there were attempts to "destroy the law and order situation in the country and create a constitutional crisis".

"The Constitution says that the chief advisor has to brief me after every foreign trip. But Dr. Yunus did not update me. He went abroad some 14 or 15 times, but he never met me after those trips," he said.

The President said Mr. Yunus did not take him into confidence even when the U.S.-Bangladesh deal was signed. "I should have been briefed when the deal was signed... It is a constitutional mandate. But he (Mr. Yunus) did not do that, neither verbally nor in writing."

On August 8, 2024, Mr. Shahabuddin administered Mr. Yunus, a Nobel laureate, the oath of office as the interim government's chief advisor. "I took the initiative to form the interim government. But there was no coordination from the chief advisor's side after that. He never came to meet me, and kept me in the dark," he said.

The President also alleged that the Yunus administration deliberately kept him on the sidelines and stopped him from travelling abroad on two occasions.

In the limelight: Director Paul Thomas Anderson with the cast and crew of 'One Battle After Another' at the 79th British Academy Film Awards in London on Sunday. AP

One Battle After Another wins best film at BAFTAs

Associated Press
LONDON

Paul Thomas Anderson's politically charged thriller *One Battle After Another* won six prizes, including best picture, at the British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, building momentum ahead of Hollywood's Academy Awards next month.

Blues-steeped vampire epic *Sinners* and gothic horror story *Frankenstein* won three awards each, while Shakespearean family tragedy *Hamnet* won two including best British film.

Mr. Anderson's explosive film about a group of revolutionaries in chaotic conflict with the state, won awards for directing, adapted screenplay, cinematography and editing, as well as for Sean Penn's supporting performance as an obsessed military officer.

Bookies' favourite Jessie Buckley won the best actress prize for playing grieving mother Agnes Hathaway, wife of William Shakespeare, in *Hamnet*. Ms. Buckley, 36, is the first Irish performer to win a best actress prize at the awards.

Wunmi Mosaku's performance as herbalist and healer Annie in *Sinners* got her the supporting actress award.

In a major upset, Robert Aramayo won the best actor category for his performance in *I Swear*, a fact-based British indie drama about a campaigner for people with Tourette syndrome. The Rising Star award, which is decided by public vote, also went to Mr. Aramayo.

The 33-year-old British actor called the victory over Ethan Hawke, Michael B. Jordan, Leonardo DiCaprio and Timothee Chalamet "absolutely mad."

Hollywood stars and British celebrities, from Paddington Bear to the Prince and Princess of Wales, gathered at London's Royal Festival Hall for the awards.

Sentimental Value won the prize for the best film not in English.

The best-documentary prize went to *Mr. Nobody Against Putin*, about a Russian teacher who documented the propaganda imposed on Russian schools after the invasion of Ukraine.

Donna Langley, the U.K.-born chairwoman of NBC Universal Entertainment, was awarded the Academy's highest honour, the BAFTA fellowship.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER,
CENTRAL (R&B) CIRCLE , BHUBANESWAR.
Mail i.d. : seccbbsr@gmail.com

E-procurement Tender Call Notice No.27 of 2025-26

No.955 (Estg.) Bhubaneswar the 21st February-2026

The Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for one number building work to be received in online bidding, double cover system for Improvement works as detailed in :https://tendersodisha.gov.in. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website **from 5.00 P.M. of 25.02.2026 to 5.00 P.M of 06.03.2026**. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened **at 5.30 P.M of 06.03.2026** in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in. Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/- Er.M.K.Mahananda
Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar.

34001/116/2526 OIPR-34001/34156/1/25-26/0008

Odisha Police
Office of the D.G & I.G. of Police, Odisha, Cuttack
Tel. : 0671-2304001, Website :www.odishapolice.gov.in , Email : dirsfsl.orpol@nic.in

RFP No. 40-RFP-Biological Comparison Microscope - 2025-2026 Date : 21.02.2026

Online Bids through e-Tender Portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in are invited from the eligible bidders for Supply of **Biological Comparison Microscope with Photography attachment & imaging software** for Odisha Police, Odisha, Cuttack, during the current financial year 2025-26 as per the schedule mentioned below.

Sl.No.	Name of Item	Approximate quantity
1.	40-RFP-Biological Comparison Microscope -2025-2026	01 No

Events	Date
RFP Issue Date	21.02.2026
RFP Submission Due Date and time	02.03.2026 at 10.00 AM
Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bids	02.03.2026 at 04.00 PM
Bid to RA enabled	Yes
Tender Document fee **{(Non-refundable Rs.590/-{Rs.500/-+ 18% GST (Rs. 90/-)}**	In favour of A.I.G. of Police (Prov.), Odisha, Cuttack payable at Cuttack. (Demand Draft)
EMD (Earnest Money Deposit) **Rs: 60,000/- (Sixty thousand only)**	In favour of A.I.G. of Police (Prov.), Odisha, Cuttack payable at Cuttack. (Demand Draft)

The bid document with all information relating to the bidding process including cost of bid document, Prequalification criteria and terms & conditions are available in the websites : https://tendersodisha.gov.in . The Authority reserves the right to accept / reject any part thereof or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof.

A.I.G. of Police (Provisioning), Odisha, Cuttack.
(Tender Calling Authority)

12001/25/2526 OIPR-12001/12018/1/25-26/0002

Odisha Police
Office of the D.G & I.G. of Police, Odisha, Cuttack
Tel. : 0671-2304001, Website :www.odishapolice.gov.in , Email: igops.orpol@od.gov.in

RFP No. 39-RFP-Digital Hand Held Equipment-2025-2026 Date :19.02.2026

Online Bids through e-Tender Portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in are invited from the eligible bidders for **Supply of Digital Hand Held Equipment for Odisha Police, Odisha, Cuttack**, during the current financial year 2025-26 as per the schedule mentioned below.

Sl.No.	Name of Item	Approximate quantity
1.	39-RFP- Digital Hand Held Equipment -2025-2026	60 Nos

Events	Date
RFP Issue Date	19.02.2026
RFP Submission Due Date and time	27.02.2026 at 11.00 AM
Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bids	27.02.2026 at 03.00 PM
Bid to RA enabled	Yes
Tender Document fee **{(Non-refundable Rs.590/-{Rs.500/-+ 18% GST (Rs. 90/-)}**	In favour of A.I.G. of Police (Prov.), Odisha, Cuttack payable at Cuttack. (Demand Draft)
EMD (Earnest Money Deposit) **Rs: 51,000/- (Fiftyone thousand only)**	In favour of A.I.G. of Police (Prov.), Odisha, Cuttack payable at Cuttack. (Demand Draft)

The bid document with all information relating to the bidding process including cost of bid document, Prequalification criteria and terms & conditions are available in the websites: https://tendersodisha.gov.in . The Authority reserves the right to accept / reject any part thereof or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof.

A.I.G. of Police (Provisioning), Odisha, Cuttack.
(Tender Calling Authority)

12001/24/2526 OIPR-12001/12018/1/25-26/0001

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVT. OF KERALA)
Head Office : Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-14,
(Telephone No. 0471-2945600, 2945646
E-mail : edrugs.kmscl@kerala.gov.in,
website : www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616

No.KMSCL/ED/32/2025 Date :21.02.2026

RE-TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited from manufacturers/direct importers / loan licensees on behalf of Department of Health, Govt of Kerala for the procurement insecticides for Surveillance and Control of Communicable Disease under Plan Fund 2025-26.

Sl. No.	Tender No. and Date	No. of items
1.	KMSCL/ED/INS-PLAN/RT/2026/04 dtd. 21/02/2026	4

The last date and time of online uploading of tenders will be 09.03.2026, 5.00 pm. The date and time of opening of Technical bid will be 11.03.2026 11.30 am. Tenders shall be downloaded and submitted online through the e-tender portal **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**.

(Sd/-) MANAGING DIRECTOR (Tender Inviting Authority)

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER (Only Through KPP Portal)

BWSSB invites Tenders from Registered Contractors for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (UWP), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009

Sl No.	Name of the Works	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount
IFT No:BWSSB/CE(UWP)/ACE(WWM-VV-W/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-2/748/2025-26 Date: 23-02-2026		
1.	Work of Providing and Laying 800mm dia RCC/DWC pipe line from Kaveripura Ground to existing 800mm dia pipeline at Baleyanakere, Kamakshipalya, Bengaluru (4th Call)	₹ 395.69 Lakhs / ₹ 5.94 Lakhs
IFT No:BWSSB/CE(UWP)/ACE(WWM-VV-W/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-2/750/2025-26 Date: 23-02-2026		
2.	Work of Providing and Laying 400mm dia DWC SN-8 Class pipe line from 3rd Cross Malleshwaram to Sheshadripuram Main Road Kumara Park West of Drain No.V-110, Coming under AEE(WWM-V.V)-1-1 sub division, Bengaluru (2nd Call)	₹ 133.26 Lakhs / ₹ 2.00 Lakhs

For all the above Works, last date and time for Receipt of tenders **:05-03-2026** at **17:00** hrs. The Technical bids will be Opened on **06-03-2026** at **17:30** hrs.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (UWP)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/SI/5830/2025-26

BAG OF TRICKS

Motie's wrist spin has been beneficial for us, says Hope

EMMANUAL YOGINI

Motie has been one of our best bowlers, and it is great to see him come back having used that time (away from the game) wisely. He has clearly worked on his skills and added something extra with his wrist spin, which has been very beneficial for us — West Indies captain Shai Hope on left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie.

BANG BANG

West Indies-Zimbabwe match sees 31 maximums, a T20 WC record

EMMANUAL YOGINI

The combined tally of 31 sixes in the Super Eight clash between West Indies (19 maximums) and Zimbabwe (12) in Mumbai on Monday is the highest in a T20 World Cup game. The previous record was the 30 maximums smacked in the Ireland-Netherlands game from the 2014 showpiece.

INVALUABLE ADVICE

Learnt slower balls from Bravo during my time at CSK: Ngidi

FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

South Africa pacer Lungi Ngidi revealed that he learnt the art of bowling slower deliveries from Dwayne Bravo during his time at Chennai Super Kings in 2018. "I was with Bravo... the entire IPL, that is all I worked on. I was not playing (much), so I got time to practice it. When I got back to South Africa, I tried to perfect that ball".

TALISMAN

It is good that teams are preparing for Tariq, says Pakistan's Farhan

AFP

If you give 20-24 runs in a T20 match, that is a big deal. At times, Usman has gone for less than that. It is good that teams are preparing for him. They are worried about him and his bowling action. I think it is good for Pakistan's confidence — Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan on spinner Usman Tariq.

Hetmyer, Powell lead Caribbean carnival at the Wankhede

The two batters smash 122 off just 52 balls for the third wicket as the West Indies amasses 254 for six, the second-highest total in the history of the tournament; left-arm spin twins Motie and Hosein combine to shoot out Zimbabwe for 147

T20 WORLD CUP

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Shimron Hetmyer was searing. Rovman Powell was remorseless. And when the all-rounders muscled in, West Indies turned the Super Eight Group 1 clash into a carnival of Caribbean carnage, clubbing Zimbabwe into submission at the Wankhede Stadium on a manic Monday night.

Powered by a 122-run partnership off just 52 balls between Hetmyer (85, 34b, 7x4, 7x6) and Powell (59, 35b, 4x4, 4x6), West Indies racked up a gargantuan 254 for six – the second-highest total in Men's T20 World Cup history. Zimbabwe, burdened by the asking rate and the occasion, wilted in reply and was bundled out for 147 in 17.4 overs. The two-time champion won by 107 runs even as Brad Evans waged a lone battle with a 21-ball 43.

When Sikandar Raza opted to chase, he would have hoped the in-form Blessing Muzarabani and the returning Richard Ngarava would exploit the evening sea breeze. And there was an early opening. Had Tashinga Musekiwa held on to a chance at deep square-leg in the fourth over off Muzarabani, Hetmyer's evening would have been cut short.

Making a statement: Hetmyer and Powell carted the Zimbabwean bowlers to all parts of the ground. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Instead, the left-hander unleashed mayhem.

Hetmyer transformed the middle overs into a highlight reel of leg-side brutality, his 108-metre six off Raza – which clattered into the North Stand's top tier railing – the standout strike of the night. Powell, patient for his first 20 deliveries, then joined the range-hitting revelry with ruthless precision.

West Indies plundered 19 sixes and 16 fours. Only three overs – the first two and the 11th – passed without a boundary. If the first 10 overs yielded 115 runs, the last 10 produced a whopping 139.

With scoreboard pressure sky-high, Zimbabwe unravelled. Left-arm spin twins Akeal Hosein and Gudakesh Motie methodically dismantled the chase. For Zimbabwe, it was a harsh initiation into the Super Eight, while for the West Indies, it was a statement steeped in swagger.

The scores: West Indies 254/6 in 20 overs (Shimron Hetmyer 85, Rovman Powell 59, Sherfane Rutherford 31 n.o., Richard Ngarava 2/47, Blessing Muzarabani 2/42) bt Zimbabwe 147 in 17.4 overs (Brad Evans 43, Akeal Hosein 3/28, Matthew Forde 2/27, Gudakesh Motie 4/28).
Toss: Zimbabwe.
PoM: Hetmyer.

India should turn smarter after Proteas reality check

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
AHMEDABAD

If the opening match against the United States of America was seen as a muffled wake-up call, the encounter involving South Africa was a rude jolt. India's winning streak in the ICC Twenty20 World Cup was finally snapped as the Proteas flourished at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday.

The Men in Blue had their rivals hobbling at 20 for three but the middle overs choke never happened. David Miller and Dewald Brevis stitched a kinetic 97-run partnership. And Varun Chakaravarthy's mystery element was snuffed out as the left-right combine of Miller and Brevis remained busy.

Need of the hour: The Men in Blue have to pull up their socks and put in a much better display from here on. VIJAY SONEJI

Lack of discipline

A lack of discipline was evident, too, as India conceded 11 extras. Even if in the death, the splendid Jasprit Bumrah pegged back the visitors, South Africa's 187 for seven was a competitive score. The fans, tipping over 80,000, were in good cheer before it all went downhill for the defending champion.

Through this championship, India has tended to lose its opening wicket with hardly anything on the scoreboard. The highest first-wicket partnership so far has been the 25 between Ishan Kishan and Sanju Samson against Namibia. Otherwise, it has always been a case of a single digit and an instant breach.

Abhishek Sharma's sudden dip in form, evident in three zeros and a brief 15, has meant that the middle-order is often forced to salvage the innings. In a fickle arena that the T20Is are, Abhishek should be able to turn it around, but still, in a global tournament, there is not much elbow room.

Suryakumar Yadav has resigned himself to be the binding glue instead of being the force-multiplier that the captain usually is. It is a direct reflection of the muddled top-order in which Tilak Varma is yet to fully get into his groove.

This young Indian outfit is obviously part of the selector's long-term plan. Still, men like K.L. Rahul, Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant have been kept out.

Add to that the retirements of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, and it is imperative for Suryakumar's men to get past these massive vacant shoes.

Looking ahead, the think-tank has to figure out if it is prudent to bench vice-captain Axar Patel. The games against Zimbabwe and the West Indies are 'must-win' ones, especially after India's Net Run Rate plunged to -3.8. This still remains a good team, but some operational rust has to be quickly sandpapered away.

Buoyant England takes on Pakistan

Abhishek Saini
PALLEKELE

England will be keen on extending its winning momentum and securing a semifinal berth when it faces Pakistan in their T20 World Cup Super Eight match at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium here on Tuesday.

Having breezed past Sri Lanka in its opener, a second win in Group 2 will assure Harry Brook's side of a place in the top four. But a straightforward route will emerge for England only after it clears Pakistan's spin hurdle.

The English batters were made to sweat by Sri Lanka's Dunith Wellalage and Maheesh Theekshana, who combined for five for 47 in eight overs on Sunday.

Pakistan's spinners – greater in number and variety – can put England under an even sterner examination. Skipper Salman Agha is likely to deploy the tweakers for at least three-fourths of the innings, including the death phase (16-20), where Usman Tariq has nabbed seven batters at an economy of just 6.27.

Nippy customer: Archer will pose a stiff challenge to Pakistan. AFP

England's batting problems are exacerbated by the lean run of Jos Buttler, who has single-digit scores in his last three outings.

But some batting reinforcement might come its way on Tuesday, given the fresh pitch in use and dry conditions before the contest.

For all the spin at its disposal, Pakistan would not mind a slightly easier surface if it can spark its dormant batting order to life. After a washout against New Zealand in Colombo, Pakistan needs a win to keep its fate in its own hands, which means there is little room for errors.

Sahibzada Farhan has been the silver lining for Pakistan's batting this tournament but would be on his toes against Jofra Archer's nip and pace.

England's spinners, led by Will Jacks' three for 22, tore through Sri Lanka's top-order in the last match. And if offered conducive conditions, would be waiting to show they are no less than their Pakistan counterparts.

SUPER EIGHT

Today's match

England VS Pakistan

Pallekele, 7 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: **31**

England **21** | Pakistan **9** | NR **1**

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR

Farhan wants Pakistan's batting unit to shoulder collective responsibility

Abhishek Saini
PALLEKELE

Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan on Monday backed the side's misfiring batting unit to step up against England in their T20 World Cup Super Eight match here.

Area of concern

"We have collapsed in our batting. We are doing well with our bowling, the spinners particularly. But we will have to think about batting because if you look at T20 cricket, your top three or four should be able to score more runs. We have not been able to do that.

Unpredictability

"Sometimes the top-order gives you a good partnership, sometimes it's the middle-order. T20 is such that it doesn't depend on one person. I think this is a team game and everyone should take responsibility," Farhan said.

Having a ball: Farhan has been the highest run-scorer so far in this tournament. AFP

With 220 runs from four innings, Farhan is the highest run-scorer this tournament. Against England, Farhan is likely to be tested by Jofra Archer up front. But the 29-year-old is ready for the challenge.

"It is no big deal to face Archer. We have faced him earlier too. We also have good wickets back home and bowlers who can bowl at 145 (kmph). He must have planned how to bowl against me. But I have also planned. Hopefully, we will have a good contest," Farhan said.

Giant-killer J & K up against a classy Karnataka in maiden final

The two have been the most well-rounded sides this season; the summit clash is set to feature this edition's highest run-getter Smaran, and the second and third-best wicket-takers Nabi and Shreyas; pitch has a green look on match eve

RANJI TROPHY

N. Sudarshan
HUBBALLI

Kashmir to Kanyakumari is a slogan that is often invoked to epitomise the geographical grandeur, vision and diversity of India. In sport, few tournaments symbolise this quite like the Ranji Trophy, the nation's prestigious domestic cricket competition.

As many as 38 teams take part, and matches are held in every nook and corner – in foothills of the Himalayas, the fertile Deccan Plateau, against the backdrop of the tea gardens of the North East and near the Great Rann of Kutch.

From Tuesday, this premier tournament will get a final befitting its stature when Karnataka takes on Jammu & Kashmir at the KSCA Rajnagar Stadium here.

Karnataka is not quite Kanyakumari but they are close enough, and there hasn't been a Ranji final between two regions in Independent India that are as topographically distant.

In terms of cricketing excellence this season, they are joined at the hip.

Karnataka and J & K are the most well-rounded sides and the summit clash is set to feature this edition's highest run-scorer R. Smaran (950), and the second and third-best wicket-takers in Auqib Nabi (55) and Shreyas Gopal (46).

Karnataka is pedigreed, having won the coveted trophy eight times. It has a star-studded team with Test players like K.L. Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, Karun Nair and Prasidh Krishna. As many as four – Rahul, Karun, Shreyas and Mayank – were part of the southern powerhouse's last Ranji-winning squad in 2014-15.

Face-off: Opener Rahul and pace spearhead Nabi could prove crucial to the fortunes of their respective sides. K. MURALI KUMAR

J & K is an upstart turned top dog, looking for its maiden red-ball crown in its first-ever final. It has momentum, having felled fancied outfits like Madhya Pradesh and Bengal away from home in the knockouts.

And there is both hunger and belief, qualities best exemplified in the success of pacer Nabi (99 wickets in two seasons) and the transcendence of captain Paras Dogra (only the second batter after Wasim Jaffer to score more than 10,000 runs in the Ranji Trophy).

Fitness worries

However, for these two line-ups to bring their A-games, it is not just about form but also fitness. While skipper Padikkal expressed happiness with his recovery from the finger injury, J & K had a scare on Monday when all-rounder Vanshaj Sharma limped out of training and opener Shubham Khajuria was stretchered off with a back strain.

Conditions will be testing as well, for day-time temperatures are set to hover in the mid-30s.

The pitch wore a green look on match eve and was being watered. If it holds up for five days, Karnataka's first home final since Mysuru 2010 could be a cracking affair.

The teams (from): Karnataka: Devdutt Padikkal (Capt.), K.L. Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Karun Nair, R. Smaran, Kruthik Krishna, Shreyas Gopal, Vidyadhar Patil, Prasidh Krishna, V. Vyshak, Shikhar Shetty, Mohsin Khan, K.V. Aneesh, K.L. Shrijith & Vidwath Kaverappa.

Jammu & Kashmir: Paras Dogra (Capt.), Shubham Khajuria, Yawer Hassan, Shubham Pundir, Abdul Samad, Kanhaiya Wadhawan, Abid Mushtaq, Auqib Nabi, Yudhvir Singh, Vanshaj Sharma, Sunil Kumar, Kawal Preet Singh, Sahil Lotra, Dikshant Kundal & Umar Nazir.

In-form batting line-up gives freedom to the bowlers, says Padikkal

N. Sudarshan
HUBBALLI

Karnataka may not have had as sensational a victory as Jammu & Kashmir in its Ranji Trophy semifinal, but captain Devdutt Padikkal said that overcoming Uttarakhand – by virtue of the first-innings lead – will hold his side in good stead ahead of Tuesday's final.

Run-fest

The eight-time champion totalled as many as 1,059 runs to drown Uttarakhand, with the captain himself notching up his highest First Class score of 232.

"Scoring over 1,000 runs is definitely a big confidence boost," the 25-year-old said on Monday. "Not just the batters but for the bowlers too. Knowing that the batting line-up is able to put on a show like that gives them confidence and the freedom to really enjoy themselves with the ball."

Glory beckons: Dogra and Padikkal will be keen to land the big prize. K. MURALI KUMAR

Padikkal expressed hope that the Hubballi wicket will be as run-filled. In its last four visits to the crease here across three matches, Karnataka has scored in excess of 500 thrice.

Two of those contests have ended in victories and it has taken the first-innings lead in the other.

The home team also has a 4-0 win-loss record against J & K in the Ranji Trophy. "Looks like a good pitch," Padikkal observed.

"We have always enjoyed playing in Hubballi. It is a beautiful city to play cricket in. Hopefully, it will be good for us".

We will be sticking to the basics like we have done before: Dogra

N. Sudarshan
HUBBALLI

The first six questions in Monday's captains' media briefing ahead of the Ranji Trophy final between Karnataka and Jammu & Kashmir were all addressed to the home skipper Devdutt Padikkal.

J & K captain Paras Dogra sat quietly but all the time displaying a quiet confidence. In a way, it was representative of his outfit's season – unfancied, unheralded but with a proud seat at Indian cricket's high table.

"We are relaxed and there is not too much tension," the 41-year-old declared on the eve of his side's maiden Ranji summit clash.

"It is a very big thing to play the final and we are trying to be calm and composed.

"We will be sticking to the basics like we have done before."

One of the stand-out features of J & K's journey this edition has been the outright victories it has registered against five former champions in Delhi, Hyderabad, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Bengal.

Facing another big team, replete with stars, doesn't appear to faze its players.

"We have beaten sides in their homes [Delhi, MP and Bengal] and that gives us a big boost," Dogra said.

"We have played star-studded teams before. We have good skill level and a good batting line-up. So, we are confident."

Indian women hope to continue momentum, Aussies eye revenge

Press Trust of India
BRISBANE

Having secured a stunning T20I series triumph, reigning world champion Indian women will have the psychological edge when it takes on Australia in the first ODI here on Tuesday.

What makes the series even more significant is the fact that one of Australia's greatest players, Alyssa Healy, will be making her swansong ODI appearance in the three-match rubber. She will be ending her illustrious career after the one-off Test against India starting on March 6 in Perth. For India, Kashvee Gautam, Harleen Deol and Pratika Rawal will replace Arundhati Reddy, Bharti Fulmali, and Shreyanka Patil. Star opener and India's batting mainstay Smriti Mandhana is in fine form after her match-winning 82 in the third T20I.

In full flow: India's batting mainstay Smriti has been among the runs. X@BCCIWOMEN

The teams (from): Australia: Alyssa Healy (Capt.), Sophie Molineux (Vice-capt.), Darcie Brown, Nicola Carey, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Beth Mooney, Tahlia McGrath, Ellyse Perry, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Voll, Georgia Wareham.

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana (Vice-capt.), Shafali Verma, Renuka Thakur, Shree Charani, Vaishnavi Sharma, Kranti Gaud, Sneh Rana, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Amanjot Kaur, Jemimah Rodrigues, Kashvee Gautam, Harleen Deol, Pratika Rawal.

Match starts at 9.20 a.m. IST

Arsenal lords it over rival Tottenham; Barcelona gets back to winning ways

EURO LEAGUES

Associated Press
LONDON

Eberechi Eze reignited Arsenal's title ambitions in the Premier League by being the scourge of Tottenham once again. Three months after scoring a hat trick against Spurs, the England midfielder netted two more goals in a 4-1 away win on Sunday. Viktor Gyokeres also scored twice for the leader.

The Gunners regained their five-point lead, but Manchester City has a game in hand and still has to host Mikel Arteta's team in the league in mid-April.

Heroic: Eze tormented Spurs once again. REUTERS

In LaLiga, Barcelona took advantage of Real Madrid's stumble and regained the lead with a 3-0 win over relegation-threatened Levante.

Barcelona moved one point ahead of Madrid, which had won eight in a row in the league before losing to Osasuna.

In Serie A, AC Milan lost more ground to city rival Inter Milan after a 0-1 loss to Parma at home in a match which saw Milan midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek hospitalised after a collision with the Parma goalkeeper.

Top results: Premier League: Tottenham 1 (Kolo Muani 34) lost to Arsenal 4 (Eze 32, 61, Gyokeres 47, 90+4).

LaLiga: Barcelona 3 (Bernal 4, De Jong 32, Lopez 81) bt Levante 0; Celta Vigo 2 (Aspas 85-pen, 90+5) bt Real Mallorca 0; Villarreal 2 (Comesana 31, Gueye 45+6-pen) bt Valencia 1 (Ramazani 27-pen).

Serie A: AC Milan 0 lost to Parma 1 (Troilo 80); Roma 3 (Cristante 59, Ndicka 77, Pisilli 86) bt Cremonese 0.

Bundesliga: Heidenheim 3 (Dinkci 20, Ibrahimovic 34-pen, Conteh 82) drew with Stuttgart 3 (Fuehrich 5, Mittelstaedt 44-pen, Undav 88).

AROUND THE CITY

All smiles: The Mumbai team, which won the TNCA-Tagore Sports u-14 boys' quadrangular tournament title.

Proud moment: The winners of the first Carlsen State-level children's and open chess tournament.

Vignesh, Sachin star as TN gains lead

Left-arm spinners P. Vignesh and Sachin Rathi scalped four wickets each and helped Tamil Nadu take a crucial 69-run first-innings lead against Punjab on day three of the C.K. Nayudu Trophy (under-23) quarterfinal at New Chandigarh on Monday.

The scores: TNadu 399 & 25/2 in 10 overs vs. Punjab 330 in 137 overs (Harnoor Singh 46, Yuvi Goyal 41, Mayank Gupta 58, Eish Rao 50, Harshdeep Singh 74 n.o., P. Vignesh 4/84, Sachin Rathi 4/70).

Ashwin, Shanmathi emerge champions

Ashwin Sairam and S. Shanmathi Sree won the u-19 boys' and girls' titles, respectively, in the Chennai District Chess Association selection championship at the Jawaharlal Nehru stadium. The top-four in the open, u-15, and u-19 categories, along with the top-two in the remaining categories, will represent Chennai in the State championship.

Other winners: open: S. Haridev. **Boys: u-7:** Kavin Krishna; **u-11:** Siddharth Anuj; **u-15:** Pranav Ganeshprabhu. **Girls: u-7:** Ravanika Shivaram; **u-11:** R. Thigazhini; **u-15:** J. Priyankka.

Triumphant lot: The winners of the Chennai District Chess Association selection championship.

Arnav comes up trumps

Arnav Maheshwari finished with 5.5 points from six rounds to become the open category champion of the first Carlsen State-level children's and open chess tournament.

Other winners: Boys: u-8: S. Jeshvik (6/6); **u-11:** K. Shivin (6.5/7); **u-14:** P. Vishnuvel (7/7); **u-25:** T. Santhosh (5.5/6). **Girls: u-8:** M. Aditi Bai (5/6); **u-11:** J.B. Varnika (5.5/6); **u-14:** P. Kashika (5.5/6); **u-25:** V. Saganapriya (6/6).

Nishad's five-for helps Mumbai claim title

Left-arm spinner Nishad Parab took five for 51 as Mumbai secured a 113-run first-innings lead on day two of the final to win the TNCA-Tagore Sports u-14 boys' quadrangular invitational tournament title at the Gojan-A ground on Monday.

The scores (final): Mumbai 246 & 13 for no loss decl. in 6 overs drew with Andhra 133 in 66.2 overs (Ch. Akshith Reddy 37, Nishad Parab 5/51, Rajveer Lad 3/40). **Special award: Player-of-the-Tournament:** Shardul Fagare (Mumbai).

State-level chess tournament

Mount Chess Academy will conduct the Casagrand fourth State-level children's chess for boys and girls on March 1 (Sunday) at the Casagrand International School in Kandigai. Competitions will be held in u-8, u-10, u-12 and u-17 categories. Call R. Yamuna at 90436 90467 or H. Santhanam at 98405 83157.

ENGAGEMENTS

Cricket: G.R. CA XL1 Super Sports u-14 inter-school tournament, Reddy's Sumangali-B (turf), 7 a.m.

Football: IA&AD (South Zone) tournament, inauguration, guest of honour, Narmadha IA&AS, Principal Director - Regional Capacity Building and Knowledge Institute, JN indoor stadium-B, 9.30 a.m.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy (final): Star Sports Khel & JioHotstar, 9.20 a.m.

Australia Women vs India Women: 1st ODI, Star Sports 3 & JioHotstar, 9.30 a.m.

Men's T20 World Cup: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7 p.m.

ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.

Champions League play-offs: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 & LIV, 11.15 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

Ray of hope: Vaishnavi's performances are a shot in the arm for Indian women's tennis.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Vaishnavi keen to build on her impressive run

The excellent results in the W100 ITF tournament earn her 65 ranking points; the 21-year-old is currently India's No. 2 behind Sahaja

TENNIS

Nihit Sachdeva
CHENNAI

Vaishnavi Adkar may have been on the receiving end of a 6-0, 6-1 loss to Belgium's Hanne Vandewinkel, World No. 124, in just 56 minutes in the W100 ITF Bengaluru final on Sunday but her mere presence had ended a 17-year wait for Indian women's tennis.

No Indian woman had reached the summit clash of a tournament at a W100 or higher level since Sania Mirza's runner-up finish at the Pattaya Open, a WTA 250 event, in 2009. With a series of stunning performances on the KSLTA courts, the 21-year-old Vaishnavi, who hails from Pune, added her name to the mix as the country's search for a new female singles star.

Ranked 690 in the world, Vaishnavi needed a wildcard to enter the tournament. In the opening round, she took down fellow wildcard and 19-year-old Shruti Ahlawat. What followed was a streak of career-best wins over Japan's Mai Hontama (World No. 220), Australia's Taylah Preston (148) and Thailand's Lanlana Tararudee (126).

Her run in the Garden City came courtesy of a steady improvement in her first-serve percentage with every round and some fearless ball-striking, especially from the backhand wing.

"Serve is something that I've been working on a lot because I don't really have a big serve, but it has gotten better. It's helped me in getting more points. Backhand is something that comes very naturally to me since I started playing tennis. It is one of my favourite shots," said the 5'6" tall Vaishnavi, who recently joined the Rohan Bopanna Tennis Academy after training under Kedar Shah in Pune from 2014 to 2025.

World University Games bronze medallist Vaishnavi gained 65 ranking points, rising to 466 in the WTA Rankings and becoming India's No. 2 behind Sahaja Yamalapalli (397).

It also puts the reigning National Champion in contention for a spot in the Indian team for the Billie Jean King Cup Asia-Oceania tournament set to be held in April in New Delhi.

Mohun Bagan eases past Chennaiyin

ISL

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

Mohun Bagan Super Giant continued its winning run in the Indian Super League with a comfortable 2-0 victory over Chennaiyin FC at the Salt Lake Stadium on Monday. Australian striker Jamie Maclaren opened the scoring late in the first half, while compatriot Dimitri Petratos sealed the win midway through the second period.

Mohun Bagan gradually built up momentum, consistently attacking through the flanks, with Liston Colaco and Brazilian Robson Robinho delivering repeated crosses into the Chennaiyin box. Despite sustained pressure, the visitors' defence held firm and denied any clear chances to Petratos and Maclaren.

The breakthrough came when Anirudh Thapa delivered a precise through-pass that split the CFC defence and found Maclaren, who calmly slotted the ball past substitute goalkeeper Samik Mitra. Chennaiyin had earlier been forced into a change after first-choice 'keeper Mohammad Nawaz was injured in a goalmouth collision around the half-hour mark.

After the restart, the home team pressed for a second goal to secure the contest. The insurance strike arrived in the 65th minute. Left-back Subhasish Bose whipped in a pinpoint cross to the far post, where Petratos met it with a powerful volley. Although Mitra managed to get a hand to the ball, he could not prevent it from bulging the net.

The result marked Mohun Bagan's second consecutive win of the campaign, which took its tally to six points from two outings. Chennaiyin suffered its second successive loss.

The result: Mohun Bagan Super Giant 2 (Jamie Maclaren 45+3, Dimitri Petratos 65) bt Chennaiyin FC 0.

On the prowl: Petratos' second-half goal sealed Bagan's win.
DEBASISH BHADURI

Gill, Abhishek, Nain, Rishabh and Samrat in the fray

SPORTSTAR ACES 2026 #IndiaTriumphs

Sports Bureau

Taking on the leadership challenge head-on, Shubman Gill displayed the best of his batting ability during the Test series in England, and has also assumed charge of India's ODI team ahead of the next World Cup cycle. Gill's opening partner for Punjab, Abhishek Sharma, took the T20 world by storm, adding a new gear at the top of the order with his belligerent batting.

Forward Abhishek Nain shone brightest as Indian hockey had a subdued 2025, banging in goals in the FIH Pro League and the Asia Cup. Joining him in the shortlist is compound archer Rishabh Yadav, who enjoyed a breakthrough year, winning medals in the World Archery Championships. Samrat Rana became the first Indian pistol shooter to win a senior World Championships title in an Olympic discipline.

All these performers have been nominated for the coveted Sportstar of the Year (Male) honour in the eighth edition of the *Sportstar* Aces Awards. Vote for your favourite star by scanning the QR code until February 28.

Additionally, there are 19 Jury Awards, which will be deliberated on by an elite panel headed by legendary Indian cricketer Sunil Gavaskar.

Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra, former India hockey captain M. M. Somaya, chess great Viswanathan Anand, and Olympians Anjali Bhagwat and Aparna Popat complete the jury.

There will also be a separate Chairperson's Award for Sports for Social Good, which will honour individuals or organisations that have used the power of sports to make our world a better place.

Bindra's tenure as IOC athletes' commission vice-chair ends

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Indian shooting legend Abhinav Bindra on Monday announced the end of his eight-year tenure as the vice-chair of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) athletes' commission.

The 43-year-old Bindra, who became India's first individual Olympic gold medallist at the 2008 Beijing Games, has been replaced by Kenyan rugby player Humphrey Kayange in the panel that was rejigged at the Winter Olympics in Italy.

"Serving athletes from across the world has been one of the most meaningful chapters of my journey in sport. To be entrusted with their voices, their concerns, their hopes and their dreams is a responsibility I have never taken lightly," Bindra wrote on social media.

Bindra. FILE PHOTO

"Every conversation, every decision, every moment at the table was guided by one simple belief that athletes must always remain at the centre of the Olympic Movement."

Describing his colleagues as extraordinary, Bindra said that each one of them tried to strengthen athlete representation and ensured their voices were heard and respected.

"I leave this role with deep pride in what we have built and with optimism for what lies ahead. The future of athlete representation is strong because it is driven by courageous, thoughtful and passionate individuals who believe in something larger than themselves," Bindra said.

WESTERN RAILWAY
CONSTRUCTION WORKS
Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction)-I, Western Railway, Indore (MP) invites **Tender No: IND/UJN/SIMHASTHA/02. Name of Work:** Earthwork & Blanketing in embankment /cutting in formation of BG line including yards, bridge approaches etc., Construction of bridge work (Major/ Minor/Road Under Bridges, sub structure and super structure) as per Railway's approved Design and Drawing, construction of Retaining/Toe wall/Diversion Drain, Construction of passenger amenities, Foot Over Bridge, yard drain, Supply & spreading of machine crushed stone ballast, Laying and linking of BG track for Main line, loop lines and Points & Crossing etc. in section/ yards, Transportation of P.Way materials, Welding of Rails, and other incidental miscellaneous works etc. between Naikheri station (Excluding) – Chintaman Ganesh in connection with new Ujjain Bypass line for Simhastha-2028. **Approx. Cost:** ₹ 87,93,03,376.92. **EMD:** ₹ 45,46,500/-. **Date & Time of Submission of Tender:** Upto 15:00 Hrs., 17.03.2026. **Date of Opening of Tender:** On 17.03.2026 at 15:30 Hrs. Complete details of tender including eligibility criteria are available on E-Tender portal **www.ireps.gov.in** and at the Notice Board in the office of Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction)-I, Western Railway, Indore, opposite Platform No. 1, Indore. 1141
Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly

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KIADB Industrial Estate, Devanahalli, Bengaluru
2 DAYS GOVERNMENT CERTIFICATION ON
YOUTUBE BUSINESS TRAINING
How to Start YouTube Business
Course Duration 2 Days (ONLINE) Date: 28 Feb & 01 March 2026 Time : 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM
Course Content: **Professional YouTube channel Setup**, YouTube videos, Reels & Shorts, Video Shoop, Equipments Handling, **Video Editing, Voice Dubbing**, Title Animation, Content Creation, Audience Targeting, YouTube monetization, Subscribers Increasing tips, YouTube business Type, Analytics, Page Branding, Earning Money, Attracting Viewers, Investment Cost, **Video creation platform**, How to create a video, Thumbnail designing, youtube script Writing, **How to Promote your Business/Yourself in youtube using AI & Chatgpt** more topics
Fees : Rs.3,000/- (Study material in soft copy shall be provided)
Coordinator: 9818676612, 9818528498, 9686564246
Government of India certificate will be awarded

TAMILNADU INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED (TIDCO)
19-A, Rukmini Lakshmipathi Road, Egmore, Chennai – 600 008
CIN-U65993TN1965SGC005327
e-TENDER NOTICE
Notice No. TIDCO/HR/Manpower/2025-26/1 Date: 24.02.2026
Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (TIDCO), a Government of Tamil Nadu Enterprise requires manpower for its Registered Office at 19-A, Rukmini Lakshmipathy Road, Egmore, Chennai – 600 008 and its various projects in the State. In this context, TIDCO invites Manpower Agencies to submit proposals for undertaking the services described in the Tender document.
Interested firms can download the tender from the website **https://tidco.com** and **https://tntenders.gov.in** at free of cost.
The Schedule for bidding process is as follows:-
1. The last date for submission of Proposals/Bids is at or before 15.00 Hours IST on 25.03.2026, through **https://tntenders.gov.in.**
2. The Technical Proposals/ Bids will be opened at 16.00 Hours IST on 25.03.2026.
The Managing Director
Tamilnadu Industrial Development Corporation Limited
19-A, Rukmini Lakshmipathi Road,
Egmore, Chennai – 600 008.
E-mail: cmd@tidco.com , Website: https://tidco.com
DIPR/1320/TENDER/2026

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER
Tender Notice No. SnT_e_Tender_ADA_ 25_26_20. On behalf of President of India, Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, S. E. Railway, Adra, Pin-723121, West Bengal invites following e-tender for the following works: **Name of the work**: Installation and commissioning of new EI at Chandrakona Road in connection with eliminating the facility of DN main cum UP loop by provision of UP loop line and Passenger Platform of Adra Division. **Tender Value:** ₹ 8,98,30,907.62. **Closing date & time of tender** is 10.03.2026, 11:00 hrs. Details are available at website: **www.ireps.gov.in** (PR-1223)

TAMIL NADU WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
INVITATION OF BIDS – TWO COVER – ITEMWAR TENDER SYSTEM (E-Submission)

IFB No.	40/ F.W.S to Olaikuda/DO I/ CW /2026/Dt.19.02.2026
Funding Pattern	Deposit Work
Eligibility	Registered Class I Contractors (Civil)
Tender Invitee	The Chief Engineer, TWAD Board, Madurai – 625 007
Downloading Period	**26.02.2026 to 12.03.2026** upto **15.00** hours
EMD Payable	Online Mode or eBG through E-Tendering website **"https://tntenders.gov.in"**
Pre Bid meeting	**05.03.2026** at **11.00** hours at the office of the Tender Invitee
Bid Submission	**12.03.2026** before **15.00** hours at the office of the Tender Invitee. Digitally signed encrypted Tenders through E-Tendering website **"https://tntenders.gov.in"**
Bid opening	**13.03.2026** at **15.30** hours at the office of Tender Invitee E-Tendering website **"https://tntenders.gov.in"**

Name of work	Appx. value (including 18% GST)	Bid Security
Providing 100 KLD of Water Supply to Indian Navy 4N Detachment at Olaikuda, Rameswaram in Ramanathapuram District from Ramnad CWSS under Deposit work (Construction Period : 6 months and Trial run 3 months and Paid maintenance 12 months)	Rs.2.04 crore	Rs. 1.53 lakh

DIPR/ 1326 /TENDER/2026
Chief Engineer (i/c), TWAD Board, Madurai.
SAVE WATER, CONSERVE WATER, EVERY DROP COUNTS

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

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Commissionerate of Agriculture,
Seshadri Road, Bengaluru – 560001
No.: DDA(F&M)/MNR/INM/e-RfP/2026-27 Date: 23.02.2026
e-REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RfP) NOTIFICATION
Technical and Financial Proposals are invited through GoK e-procurement portal from the registered Manufacturers/ Authorized distributors for Carrier based Bio-fertilizers, Liquid based Bio-fertilizers, VAM-Biofertilizer, Green Manure seeds (Diancha, Sunhemp & Pillipesara *(Phaseolus trilobus))*, Zinc sulphate (21% & 33%), Borax (10.5% & 14.5%), Ferrous sulphate (19%), Magnesium sulphate (9.5%), Micronutrient Mixtures, Gypsum, Agricultural Lime, Dolomite, Vermicompost, Organic Manure, Phosphate Rich Organic Manure, Potash Derived From Rhodophytes, Non-edible de-oiled Neem Cake and City Compost (Bulk & Packed Supply) required for various Departmental programmes for the year 2026-27. These Agricultural inputs are required for supply to farmers under different schemes of the Department.
REQUEST for PROPOSAL(RfP) document is available in the e-Procurement website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. Suppliers must be accompanied by a Common Earnest Money Deposit (CEMD) for an amount of Rs.50,000/- which should be paid online through e-Procurement portal using any of the following payment modes: Credit Card-Visa or Master card, Debit card-Visa or Master card, Internet banking, and offline payments through Remittance at the Bank counter using challan, National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT/RTGS). The Applicant has to further submit a Performance Bank Guarantee as per the Technical Proposals submitted along with the Copy of the documents uploaded, one day before or on the day of opening of technical proposal to "Deputy Director of Agriculture (Fertilizer and Manure), Commissionerate of Agriculture, Sheshadri Road, Bengaluru".
Suppliers should upload the documents through e-Procurement website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or before 24.03.2026 within 05:00 P.M. The hard copies of the documents which are not uploaded online through e-procurement portal will not be accepted. The Proposal Scrutinizing Committee will open the Technical Proposal on 26.03.2026 at 11:00 A.M. at Samruddhi Conference Hall, Department of Agriculture, Sheshadri Road, Bengaluru – 560 001. The date of Financial Proposal opening will be communicated later. Estimated value of the RfP is approximately Rs. 9.02 Crore.
DIPR/CP/LC/5832/2025-26 **Sd/-, Director of Agriculture**

THE HINDU IN SCHOOL PRESENTS SCHOOL BUZZ
A Newspaper exclusively curated for School Students

SDG EXPO HOSTED

Pon Vidyashram Senior Secondary School, Valasaravakkam hosted their SDG Expo 2030, "Sustainova 2030", transforming the campus into a vibrant space of innovation and sustainable thinking. Students from all grades presented research-based projects and models aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, covering clean energy, water conservation, waste management, and inclusive growth. Parents appreciated the confidence and clarity of the young presenters. The Management commended the students and staff for their purposeful efforts. The expo concluded on an inspiring note, reinforcing the school's commitment to nurturing responsible, future-ready citizens.

DECENNIAL CELEBRATIONS HELD

Union Christian Public School (CBSE), Chetpet marked their Decennial Year at the Union Christian Association Auditorium, celebrating ten years of academic and holistic growth. The event was graced by Mr. Ajit Issac, members of the Union Christian Association, Principals and Vice Principals of neighbouring schools, former Correspondents, Principals, Clergy, and Sisters. Former Correspondents, the Principal, and Mentors were felicitated for their leadership. Cultural performances and a special video highlighting the school's journey added vibrancy. The institution expressed gratitude to their founders and looked ahead with confidence.

PROUD ACHIEVEMENT

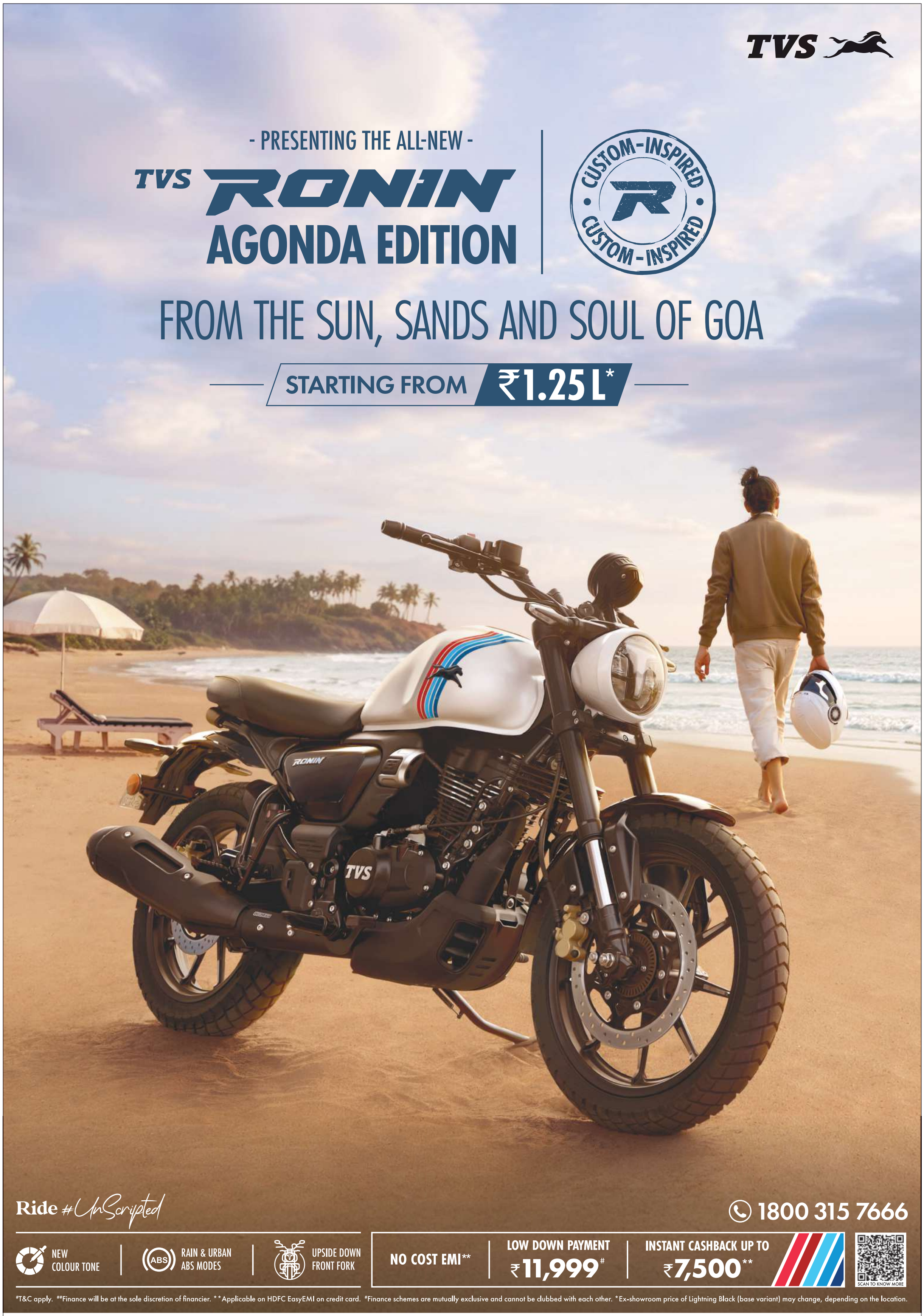
Zion International Public School celebrated the success of Rekha V., a Class VIII student, who excelled at the Invitational Boxing Tournament conducted by the Blue World Boxing Association at Bolarum. The event featured Cub, Under-Junior, Sub-Junior, Junior, and Youth categories, with 155 participants from several states. Representing Tamil Nadu, Rekha V. won the gold medal in the 46–49 kg category and received the Overall Champion Trophy. The Dean, the Principal, and Dr. N. Vijayan, Chairman of the Zion and Alwin Group of Schools, congratulated her on this remarkable achievement.

For Subscription related queries, please contact Subramaniam P: Handphone:+91 98408 98088 | Email: subramaniam.p@thehindu.co.in

Government of India
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
(DEPARTMENT OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS)
NEW DELHI
NOTIFICATION
R.C.No.L.A/NH-45/A1/533/2025 **DATED: 20.02.2026**
Notification under sub section 3D and 3G(3) of the National Highways Act 1956
Whereas the Central Government declared that the lands situated in Pappanappattu Village in Vikravandi Taluk of Villupuram District specified in the schedule annexed, for the public purpose i.e., building (Bypass / widening / four-laning, etc.) maintenance management and operation of the National Highways No. 45 (Tindivanam to Ulundurpet Section) Km. 121.000 to Km. 214.300 in Villupuram District in State of Tamil Nadu should be acquired, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub section (1) of section 3D of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) and published in the Government of India, Gazette extraordinary No. 790 Part. II Section 3 sub section (ii) S.O.828 (E) dated. 16.02.2026 from Page numbers 1 to 3 and in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declared that the lands specified in the said schedule annexed hereto, shall vest absolutely in the Central Government free from all encumbrances.
All the persons interested (owner of the land and other interested person(s)) in the lands specified in the schedule appear in person or by agent or by legal practitioner, before the Competent Authority and Special District Revenue Officer (Land Acquisition), National Highways, Villupuram at the following venue on the date and time specified below and submit claims and state the nature of the respective interests in such lands with relevant records.
SCHEDULE

DISTRICT : VILLUPURAM				TALUK: VIKRAVANDI
Sl.No	Village	Date	Time	Venue
1	143. Pappanappattu	05.03.2026	From 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM	Competent Authority and Special District Revenue Officer, Land Acquisition, National Highways Office, Collectorate Office, Villupuram.

File Number : Spl.Dro.Vpm.L.A/NH-45/A1/533/2025.
District: Viluppuram
https://egazette.gov.in
Publication Date: 16th February, 2026
COMPETENT AUTHORITY AND SPECIAL DISTRICT REVENUE OFFICER [L.A] NATIONAL HIGHWAYS, VILUPPURAM



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The Axar conundrum — to be or not to be

He is a no-fuss individual with a ready smile, willing and able to perform any task he is asked to undertake; expectations were that he would take his appointed place for the Super Eight fixture against South Africa but the jinx of the vice-captaincy seemed to take him down as well

R. Kaushik
AHMEDABAD

There was a phase in the 1980s when the vice-captaincy of the Australian Test side was the least coveted position. Technically, the vice-captain is a bit of a ceremonial appointment until the designated leader is ruled out due to injury. In so many ways, the deputy is the conduit between the captain and the boys, the via medium that is a seasoned player but is still approachable for the young guns who might harbour inhibitions about going straight to the skipper for one reason or the other.

Andrew Hilditch, Ray Bright and David Hookes were all vice-captains who lost their places in the Test squad not too long into their roles. Things came to such a pass that the vice-captaincy was looked at askance; players were happy not to be considered for that position, though clearly, things have come a long way since then.

It would seem as if the vice-captaincy of the Indian Twenty20 International side currently mirrors what used to be in Australia some four decades ago. Towards the middle of last year, India's selectors pulled Shubman Gill out of 20-over hibernation and appointed him Suryakumar Yadav's deputy. The then 25-year-old hadn't featured in a T20I for more than 13 months but taken in by his glorious run in England last summer when he amassed 754 runs in his first Test series as captain and perhaps looking at him as a future all-format skipper, they brought him back into the mix for the T20 Asia Cup in the UAE, ostensibly waiting for the ongoing World Cup to end before naming him Suryakumar's replacement in the hot seat.

That experiment went horribly wrong. Gill couldn't slot back into the T20 squad with any degree of comfort or consistency. The rejig that his return to the top of the order necessitated eventually cost Sanju Samson his place in the XI, while Gill himself floundered and stuttered. Fifteen innings between September and December yielded two 40s and a third knock in the 30s, but his inconsistencies and the inability to adhere to the team plans that revolved around making the most of the PowerPlay compelled the decision-makers to, belatedly, beat a hasty retreat and dump him from their World Cup plans.

Double-edged sword

The double-edged vice-captaincy sword was then passed on to Axar Patel, who had performed that role previously too. Axar has been around for a long time, is well-liked and, beneath that gentle exterior, possesses an astute cricket brain and a steely resolve that has helped him tide over many a crisis. His captaincy chops have been honed at Delhi Capitals, whom he has led with aplomb if not the greatest success, while his uncomplicated approach to batting and bowling, allied with his deceptive and underrated fielding, make him a dream pick in any T20 team.

Axar is a no-fuss individual with a ready smile, willing and able to perform any task he is asked to undertake. Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid used him as a

Against South Africa, there was a pressing need to bring Axar back into the mix, given the magnitude of the occasion and his immense experience

floater at the corresponding tournament in 2024, and Axar's value with the bat manifested itself gloriously in the final when he was pushed up to No. 5 to partner Virat Kohli after India lost Rohit, Rishabh Pant and Suryakumar with not many on the board.

Kohli took his time, maybe a little too much time, to hit his straps after a promising start devolved into a middle-overs struggle, while Axar got on the bike and sped away to ensure that there was no tangible loss of momentum. Using his smarts and his mastery of spin, he picked off four sixes, including a magnificent straight hit off Kagiso Rabada, on his way to 47 off 31 deliveries. His innings was cut short in full flow by a run-out, but he had provided the cushion when Kohli was anchoring the innings, upon which Shivam Dube and Kohli himself, finally, built to take India to what eventually turned out to be a title-winning total.

Axar's left-handed batting pyrotechnics were complemented by his left-arm spin, seemingly innocuous and unthreatening but always a potent weapon simply because he seldom leaves the stumps. Axar has no pretensions to being a prodigious turner of the ball; he does just enough to catch the outside edge or beat the inside half, and what he doesn't have by way of turn is more than compensated for with his accuracy, his variations of pace and his clever, subtle changes of release points. Sometimes, he goes round-arm to get skid, at other times, he tosses the ball up that much more to procure a modicum of turn.

At the last World Cup, he was an absolute bank with the ball. Coming into the final, he had eight wickets in seven matches and an economy of 6.89 from 18 overs. In the title round, he bowled three tidy overs for 25 until Heinrich Klaasen got stuck into him in his last over, the 15th of the South African run chase which went for 24 and brought the equation down to 30 off 30 deliveries. The rest of the cricketing world might have forgotten what Axar had done till then, but his teammates clearly hadn't. The moment he completed that over and took his cap back from the umpire, everyone from Pant to Bumrah made a beeline to offer words of encouragement and to assure him that all was well. It was heartwarming to see so many seek out the ultimate team man in a high-pressure situation, reiterating just how highly Axar is regarded by his colleagues.

When he was appointed Gill's successor, no one had any misgivings. If it came to the crunch and Suryakumar was forced to miss a game or two due to injury, everyone knew what to expect from Axar the captain. He brought wickets aplenty to the World Cup, having held his own in his limited opportunities on batter-friendly tracks at home against South Africa and New Zealand, and fell into his metronomic rhythm when he took two wickets apiece in India's first three games while conceding just 73 runs in 11 overs.

Washington Sundar replacing him in Ahmedabad for India's final Group A league tie against the Netherlands last Wednesday hardly raised an eyebrow. For one thing, it was a 'dead' rubber inasmuch as there is any such thing in 20-over cricket. India had already secured qualification to the next stage, the Dutch were out of the competition, and the outcome wouldn't alter anything tangible. Washington was just coming off a long injury layoff and needed some game-time, so it was understandable for the think-tank to want him to shed residual rust and be prepared for future battles, if the need arose.

The Tamil Nadu all-rounder had a passable outing on his comeback, but he didn't do anything to set the Sabarmati afire. Expectations were that Axar would take his appointed place for the first Super Eight fixture against South Africa but the jinx of the vice-captaincy seemed to take him down as well, with Washington the preferred choice on the basis of 'match-ups' when the easier, more obvious option stared everyone in the face.

Hard to dispute

The logic behind Washington's inclusion is hard to dispute. South Africa have three left-handers in their top five - Quinton de Kock, Ryan Rickelton and David Miller - and India's plans revolved around getting Washington to bowl potentially two overs of off-spin in the PowerPlay against these left-handers. The leadership group, however, seemed not to have factored in Bumrah's genius. In his two-over first spell, he packed off de Kock and Rickelton, which meant Suryakumar was compelled to hold Washington back until the field spread out.

However, by the time he was brought on, Miller and Dewald Brevis were in the middle of a wonderful fourth-wicket alliance; Washington was reduced to just two overs which went for 17, and his lack of match practice was evident when he scratched around for 11 deliveries at No. 5 whilst making 11. Even before Washington's night mirrored that of India's and quickly became one to forget, the wisdom of going with the less experienced and more undercooked off-spinner at the expense of the seasoned pro that Axar is was being discussed threadbare. India's 76-run drubbing and a relatively anonymous night at the office for Washington merely exacerbated the dubious nature of the selection call, forcing the management group to resort to troubleshooting measures that seemed inadequate under the circumstances.

Whether a decision becomes a masterstroke or is pilloried for being ill thought out and counter-productive depends on whether it comes off or falls flat on its face. In this instance, however, there was a pressing need for India to bring Axar back into the mix, given the magnitude of the occasion and his immense experience and presence. If India did feel the need to have a right-arm finger spinner, then Washington could have kept his place in the XI ahead of Rinku Singh, who seems a little wasted at No. 7.

On the two occasions when he had

Axar has no pretensions to being a prodigious turner of the ball; he does just enough to catch the outside edge or beat the inside half

time and the opportunity to make a difference - against US in Mumbai in the opener when Suryakumar was at the other end, and on Sunday against the Proteas with Shivam Dube for company - Rinku has failed to come good. Maybe in Chennai, Washington's home ground, India will field both the local lad and Axar to give themselves more bowling options against Sikandar Raza's Zimbabwe on Thursday without losing too much by way of batting depth. It might appear a little extreme, but India have pushed themselves to the brink after their no-show in Ahmedabad and must now start fixing problem areas if they are not to rain on their own parade.

The hammering at the hands of South Africa has left India with no option but to win their two remaining games, by big margins if possible but not necessarily a must because they are so far back on the net run-rate count, and then hope for South Africa to come to their rescue by finishing with an all-win record. The first step towards that will be to get their collective heads out of the sand and start to accept that course-correction is inevitable. Axar getting back into the XI ought to be primary in that endeavour.

AFP & PTI

THE GIST

Axar has been around for a long time, is well-liked and, beneath that gentle exterior, possesses an astute cricket brain and a steely resolve

His captaincy chops have been honed at Delhi Capitals, whom he has led with aplomb if not the greatest success

Whether a decision becomes a masterstroke or is pilloried for being ill thought out and counter-productive depends on whether it comes off or falls flat on its face

Unusual ancient gene governs sex of ant, bee, wasp newborns

Research has found that in ants, bees, and wasps, the sex can depend on whether or not an embryo inherits two different copies of one DNA patch; the findings point to a practical way to check genetic variety and reduce the risk of these sterile males in breeding and conservation

D.P. Kasbekar

In many animals, sex is decided by obvious physical differences in the chromosomes. But in ants, bees, and wasps, sex is often decided in a more unusual way: by whether an embryo carries two different versions of a specific DNA region or two matching ones.

Two studies, one in *Science Advances* in 2024 and the other in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in January 2026, have shown that this rule is controlled by a stretch of DNA that doesn't even make a protein – and that the same basic setup has persisted across an unusually large span of evolutionary time.

The finding could be used to more closely monitor the diversity of these insects.

Genetic switch

The 2024 study focused on the Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*), an invasive species. The researchers were motivated by a gap in what biologists know about sex determination in most insects: they understand some famous examples, like fruit flies, but many economically and ecologically important insects, including the 1.2 lakh species of ants, bees, and wasps, use methods whose core molecular triggers have been hard to pin down.

In these insects, females usually develop from fertilised eggs and have two chromosome sets while males usually develop from unfertilised eggs and have one.

Sometimes, however, fertilised eggs produce diploid males, males with two chromosome sets, and they are typically sterile. This is bad news for colonies and for species that are bred commercially or are trying to survive in the wild.

To find the genetic switch behind this method, the 2024 team compared DNA patterns in female ants and diploid males produced by inbreeding. They found a single small region in the genome where females were consistently 'mixed', i.e. carried two different versions, while diploid males were consistently 'matched', carrying two copies of the same version. In other words: being 'mixed' at this spot reliably predicted female development and being 'matched' predicted male development.

Remarkable findings

When the researchers looked closely at this sex-determining region, they made two remarkable observations. First, the region was extremely diverse. In the invasive European populations they sampled, the team could distinguish seven different versions, or alleles, of the region and the diversity around it was the highest they detected anywhere in the genome.

Second, and more surprising, the region did not contain any protein-coding gene that could work like a classic master switch. Instead the main gene overlapping the region produced a long noncoding RNA, which is an RNA molecule that is made from DNA but which is not translated into a protein.

A potter wasp builds a mud nest in France, August 2012. IAN ALEXANDER (CC BY-SA)

The team called this gene *ANTSR*. The evidence suggested the main issue wasn't which protein *ANTSR* makes – it makes none – but how strongly *ANTSR* is turned on. In embryos that were 'mixed' at the sex locus, *ANTSR* expression was higher. In embryos that were 'matched', *ANTSR* expression was lower.

Then the team connected *ANTSR* to a well-known downstream part of insect sex development, a gene called *tra*, which helps steer development towards male or female forms.

Argentine ants are not easy to genetically engineer, so the researchers used a technique called RNA interference. They injected embryos with double-stranded RNA designed to knock down *ANTSR*, lowering its activity. When they did this in embryos that were genetically destined to be female, about 10% switched to showing the male-type *tra* splicing pattern while the control embryos did not. In the paper's wording, the knockdown results supported the idea that *ANTSR* sits upstream of *tra* and helps instruct female development.

So the 2024 conclusion was both specific and broad. In Argentine ants, the main readout of the sex locus seems to be whether *ANTSR* is strongly expressed and that *ANTSR* helps push the embryo into the female developmental pathway. More broadly, the study suggested a new kind of regulatory logic: instead of different protein keys fitting different protein locks, the signal may actually come from how two noncoding alleles interact to boost or fail to boost gene activity.

The sex-determining region in Argentine ants did not contain any protein-coding gene; instead the main gene overlapping the region produced a long noncoding RNA, which is an RNA molecule that is made from DNA but not translated into a protein

Conserved block

The second and more recent study, published on January 5, started from a bigger evolutionary mystery raised by the first. The 2024 paper found that *ANTSR* itself changes quickly at the sequence level. Yet the genomic neighbourhood around *ANTSR* looked similar across ants, bees, and stinging wasps.

Specifically, *ANTSR* sits in a conserved block between two protein-coding genes called *CRELD2* and *THUMPD3*. The 2026 team checked if this was a coincidence by combining two approaches.

First, the researchers performed comparative genomics across dozens of bee, wasp, and ant genomes looking for matching gene order. This test would show whether *CRELD2* and *THUMPD3* flank an 'empty' interval where a noncoding locus could sit.

Second, they genetically mapped two lineages far from ants: bumblebees and hornets. The logic was that if a complementary sex-determining locus was operating, females should be 'mixed' at that locus while diploid males should be 'matched'.

A similar pattern

In bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*), the researchers had brothers and sisters mate and collected the early males. Genome sequencing showed that most of these early males were diploid. When the team compared their genomes, they found a single region that was consistently heterozygous in females and homozygous in diploid males. And that region included the candidate *ANTSR* locus.

They found a similar pattern in hornets: a single interval was consistently heterozygous in females but homozygous in diploid males, again overlapping the candidate *ANTSR* region.

They also looked for a distinctive genomic signature that such loci should leave behind. Complementary sex determination tends to maintain many alleles in a population because 'matching' at the locus produces sterile diploid males, which evolution doesn't like to perpetuate.

This means in a species using such a system, that locus should be unusually diverse. The 2026 team reported that, across resequencing data from females of 17 species, most showed a sharp heterozygosity peak in the interval between *CRELD2* and *THUMPD3*, consistent with a shared, rather than diverse, complementary sex-determining locus.

Practical implications

The findings challenge the standard expectation that insect sex-determining master switches turn over rapidly. The *ANTSR* locus looks like an exception: an ancient primary signal conserved for more than 150 million years, but in function and position rather than in its sequence. In other words, evolution may preserve what a DNA region does even when changing what it looks like.

The studies also have practical implications. Diploid male production is a real problem for many hymenopterans, including important pollinators and biological control insects. If the same genomic region can be tracked across many species, breeders and conservation biologists could measure how much diversity exists at the sex locus and manage matings or populations to reduce the chances of producing sterile males. The 2026 paper explicitly pointed to this use to monitor diversity of insects of the order Aculeata.

The studies together also offer a broader lesson about genomes: biologists often search for conserved biology by searching for conserved sequences. But the studies revealed not a conserved protein-coding gene but a conserved genomic slot.

(D.P. Kasbekar is a retired scientist. kasbekardp@yahoo.co.in)

A farmer spraying pesticide in Jind district of Haryana on January 14, 2026. R.V. MOORTHY

India a big contributor to global toxicity by pesticides

Divya Gandhi

India is among just four countries that contribute almost 70% to the world's total applied toxicity (TAT) in the form of pesticides directed at agricultural pests, but in effect unleashes collateral damage among "non-target" species.

In 2022, at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, countries committed to reducing pesticide risk by 50% by 2030.

According to a new paper in *Science*, however, efforts to fulfill the pact are not on track. Researchers, for the very first time, calculated the TAT from 2013 to 2019 across more than 600 pesticides, in 65 countries, and found that it had increased. China, Brazil, the U.S., and India are the biggest contributors of global TAT, accounting for nearly 70%. Pesticides were used copiously on fruits, vegetables, maize, soybean, rice, and other cereals. The study also found that toxicity increased in India, the U.S., Brazil and countries in Africa.

China, Brazil, the U.S., and India are the biggest contributors of global TAT, accounting for nearly 70%. Pesticides were used copiously on fruits, vegetables, maize, soybean, rice, and cereals

To estimate TAT at a national level, the scientists checked the annual amount of pesticide used in agriculture in the study countries and the compounds' toxicity and lethality for different non-target species, such as pollinators, aquatic plants, invertebrates, fish, terrestrial arthropods, soil organisms, terrestrial vertebrates, and plants. The researchers found that terrestrial arthropods were most affected, followed by soil organisms and fish. The toxicity has been affecting people as well.

"These chemicals now permeate daily life in ways that are often invisible: in wall paints, incense sticks, furniture, aircraft cabins, stored grains, and even temple prasad," the author, Narasimha Reddy Donthi, an independent public policy expert, wrote.

The Insecticides Act 1968 focuses on agricultural use, with few provisions for "ordinary use" in homes, hotels, construction sites, and transport systems, he added. The 1968 Act is obsolete, Mr. Donthi told *The Hindu*. "The use, misuse, and overuse have changed since 1968. Pesticides have become more toxic. They are persistent across food, water and soil." India uses at least 66 pesticides that are banned elsewhere, he added.

The new Pesticides Management Bill 2025 is expected to be passed in March this year. It aims to reduce the risk to the environment and push for pesticides that are "biological and based on traditional knowledge". But without taking expert inputs, it could be worse-off than the 1968 Act, he said. "India needs a long-term transformation policy in agriculture, shifting away from 'green revolution' packages, which includes pesticides, in view of the farmers' crisis, climate change, chemical-residue laden environment. Liability has to be inbuilt into law, as a policy," Mr. Donthi said.

To ensure comprehensive monitoring, it is essential that all countries regularly report updated annual data on agricultural pesticide use, broken down by active ingredient, study co-author Jakob Wolfram, of the Institute for Environmental Sciences, University Kaiserslautern-Landau in Germany, said.

As the environmental activist Rachel Carson wrote in her 1962 book *Silent Spring*: "If we are going to live so intimately with these chemicals eating and drinking them, taking them into the very marrow of our bones," we had better know something about the power of the "who's who of pesticides".

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

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

The science of taste

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

You don't 'taste' most of what you call taste. Instead, a large share of the flavour comes from _____ smell, which is aroma moving from the mouth to the nose. This is why food can seem bland when you have a blocked nose. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

Scientists used a compound in chilli peppers called X to probe the receptor that produces the sensation of burning pain. The work led them to identify TRPV1, an ion channel that responds to noxious heat and capsaicin, and helped establish the molecular picture of how the nervous system detects temperature and pain. Name X.

QUESTION 3

There is some evidence that humans can taste fat, especially certain fatty acids, in a specific way that goes beyond texture and aroma, using dedicated receptors. This is why scientists have proposed the term '_____' as a distinct taste quality. Fill in the blank with a word that means "oily taste" in Latin.

QUESTION 4

Many people with certain variants of the TAS2R38 gene, which is related to tasting bitterness, find compounds like phenylthiocarbamide and 6-n-propylthiouracil intensely bitter, and they often also report stronger sensations from some other foods. What is the colloquial term for such people?

QUESTION 5

When a small small current is applied on the tongue, it can produce sour or metallic sensations because it changes the way ions flow and thus the local chemistry on the surface of the tongue. What is this phenomenon called?

VISUAL: Name this berry. It contains a compound called miraculin that binds to sweet receptors and can make acidic foods like lemon taste sweet for about an hour. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Answers to February 17 quiz:

1. Proverb related to fresh-cut grass – **Ans: Make hay while the sun shines**
2. Time perception when you constantly monitor it – **Ans: Prospective**
3. Part of the nervous system that regulates finger temperature – **Ans: Sympathetic**
4. Principle that explains people spending "bad" money – **Ans: Gresham's law**
5. Climate phenomena denoting points of no return – **Ans: Tipping points**

Visual: **Ethylene**

First contact: Tamal Biswas | K.N. Viswanathan | Anmol Agrawal

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The number of rape cases reported in Odisha last year

2,994 Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the Assembly that 2,994 rape and 7,382 molestation cases were reported in the State in 2025. The CM said 1,183 cases of sexual harassment and 115 attempt to rape cases were also reported. PTI

Number of Maoists who surrendered in Chhattisgarh in 2 years

2,704 Chhattisgarh Governor Ramen Deka declared that the State is on the verge of eliminating left-wing extremism, citing a massive crackdown with 532 Maoists neutralised, more than 2,700 surrendering and 2,004 arrested in the last two years. PTI

Flights disrupted due to drones during the Lunar New Year

50 Unauthorised drones disrupted more than 50 flights at Vietnam's Danang international airport during the Lunar New Year holiday. Two separate incidents last week saw flights delayed or forced into holding patterns when authorities detected drones flying close to aircraft. AFP

Amount utilised for flood management post-2014 in J&K

487 in ₹ crore. The Jammu and Kashmir government has expended over ₹487 crore on a series of flood management initiatives under various phases of the flood management programme, in the aftermath of the 2014 deluge that ravaged the Valley. PTI

Amount required by Ukraine to rebuild from Russia's invasion

588 In $ billion. Ukraine needs $588 billion to rebuild from the destruction caused by Russia's four-year invasion, a figure almost three times the country's annual economic output, the World Bank and other institutions said. AFP

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On the independence of the EC

An independent Election Commission is the bedrock of Indian democracy. To ensure that it remains so, various safeguards are built into the basic structure of the Constitution

LETTER & SPIRIT

C.B.P. Srivastava

Free and fair elections are key to a successful and vibrant democracy, a maxim included in the Basic Structure of the Constitution via *Indira Gandhi versus Raj Narain* (1975). However, in recent times, the fairness of the electoral process in India has been under question for many reasons, culminating in a resolution by the Opposition alliance to remove the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC). These controversies centre around the issue of alleged 'vote theft', and the manipulation of electoral rolls in the much-talked about Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

It has been alleged that the Election Commission (EC) has allowed massive irregularities in voter lists, specifically targeting minority and Opposition-supporting voters. It was alleged that the SIR in Bihar was rushed and designed to delete voters in order to target minorities. The names of approximately 65 lakh voters have been deleted during the SIR exercise which was challenged in the Supreme Court.

This is quite a casual way of doing away with a citizen's 'right to vote'. Adult franchise as provided in Article 326 of the Constitution is the bedrock of democracy. Any procedural impropriety would affect its merit and sanctity.

Speaking out: Activists from various groups stage a protest against the SIR at Freedom park in Bengaluru on February 7. ALLEN EGENUSE. J

THE GIST

- It has been alleged that the Election Commission (EC) has allowed massive irregularities in voter lists, specifically targeting minority and Opposition-supporting voters.
- Article 324 provides for an EC with a CEC and other commissioners, and also includes a provision for regional commissioners.
- Though the Opposition has said that it will adopt democratic tools to move the motion against the CEC, it is unlikely to get passed as the ruling alliance holds sufficient majority in Parliament.

On selecting the EC

The process of appointing election commissioners had caused controversy when the Government passed the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Office and Terms of Office) Act, 2023, which regulates the appointment and removal of the CEC and election commissioners, replacing the 1991 Act. The 2023 Act stipulates that election commissioners should be appointed by the President based on a selection committee comprised of the Prime Minister, a Union Minister and the Leader of Opposition. It was alleged that the passing of the Act was in contravention of the decision of the Supreme Court in *Anoop Baranwal versus Union of India, 2023* in which the Court held that the Chief Justice of India should also be included in the committee. However, this provision was removed which created a controversy on the grounds that the independence of the EC would be adversely affected. The Act has been challenged again in *Jaya Thakur versus Union of India, 2024*. The next hearing for the same is scheduled for March 2026.

The Constitutional mandate

The Constitution of India, under Article 324, provides for a permanent Election Commission with powers of superintendence, direction and control of the elections of the President, Vice-President, Parliament and of the legislature of the States. This constitutional basis and permanency of the Commission creates a background for its independence. The 2023 Act provides that the CEC will hold office for six years or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier. By far the most significant provision ensuring independence of the EC is the provision for the removal of the CEC and other election commissioners. Clause (5) of Article 324 says that the CEC can be removed only in the manner prescribed for the removal of a Supreme Court judge under Article 124(4), which are either proved misbehaviour or incapacity. Under Article 324(5), the CEC's conditions of service cannot be varied to their disadvantage during their tenure.

The removal of other election commissioners is done by the President on the advice of the CEC. However, the Supreme Court in *Vineet Narain versus Union of India, 1997* held that the CEC shall not give his advice *suo motu*. This provision strikes a balance between the executive power and the independence of the election commissioners.

The CEC's position

Article 324 provides for an EC with a CEC and other commissioners, and also includes a provision for regional commissioners. In 1989, the commission was made multi-member but the two additional posts were abolished in 1990. Again on October 1, 1993 after drawing strength from clause (2) of Article 324, it was made a multi-member commission permanently which was validated by the Supreme Court in *T. N. Seshan versus Union of India* (1995).

Interestingly, Clause (3) of Article 324 provides that when any Election Commissioner is so appointed the CEC, he/she shall act as the Chairman of the EC. The language of Article 324 makes it crystal clear that the CEC is appointed and commissioned as the commissioner having certain exclusive powers, and in case of making the Commission multi-member, he shall preside over the meeting as its chairman. The idea behind this provision is to ensure that the conduct of elections is done by an administrator and at the same time to make the decision of the Commission consensus-based or democratic. Such provisions also ensure the independence of this constitutional body.

The procedure to remove the CEC is very complex and rigorous. It is a quasi-judicial Parliamentary procedure. The complexity of the process ensures its independence from any possible arbitrary action by the government. While the Representation of the People Act of 1950 and 1951 focuses on electoral procedures, voter registration, and candidate qualifications, Section 11 of the CEC and other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Terms of Office) Act, 2023 gives the procedure to remove the CEC and other Commissioners.

For the removal of the CEC, Article 324 (5) shall be read with Article 124(4) in order to understand the grounds for removal and the procedure.

Section 3 of the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, deals with the investigation into misbehaviour or incapacity by a commission member. It says that if notice is given to the Lok Sabha, at least 100 members must sign, while in the case of the Rajya Sabha, the minimum number of signatories to such a motion shall not be less than 50. Following this, the Speaker or, as the case may be, the Chairman may admit or refuse the motion.

The Speaker or Chairman thereafter constitutes a three-member committee comprising the Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court Judge, the Chief Justice of a High Court and a distinguished jurist.

In order to ensure coordination between the two Houses of Parliament, a provision is made that if the notice is given to both Houses on the same day, the committee shall be constituted only after both Houses accept the motion.

Further, definite charges must be framed and communicated on which investigation needs to be conducted. The CEC should be given reasonable time and opportunity to present his statement of defence. This is a provision which ensures the protection of the Doctrine of Natural Justice by way of protecting the 'Rule of Fair Hearing'. This is again one of the most significant features of India's Constitution. In the case of allegations of any physical or mental incapacity, medical examination by a medical board appointed by the Speaker or Chairman, as the case may be, needs to be conducted.

The political angle

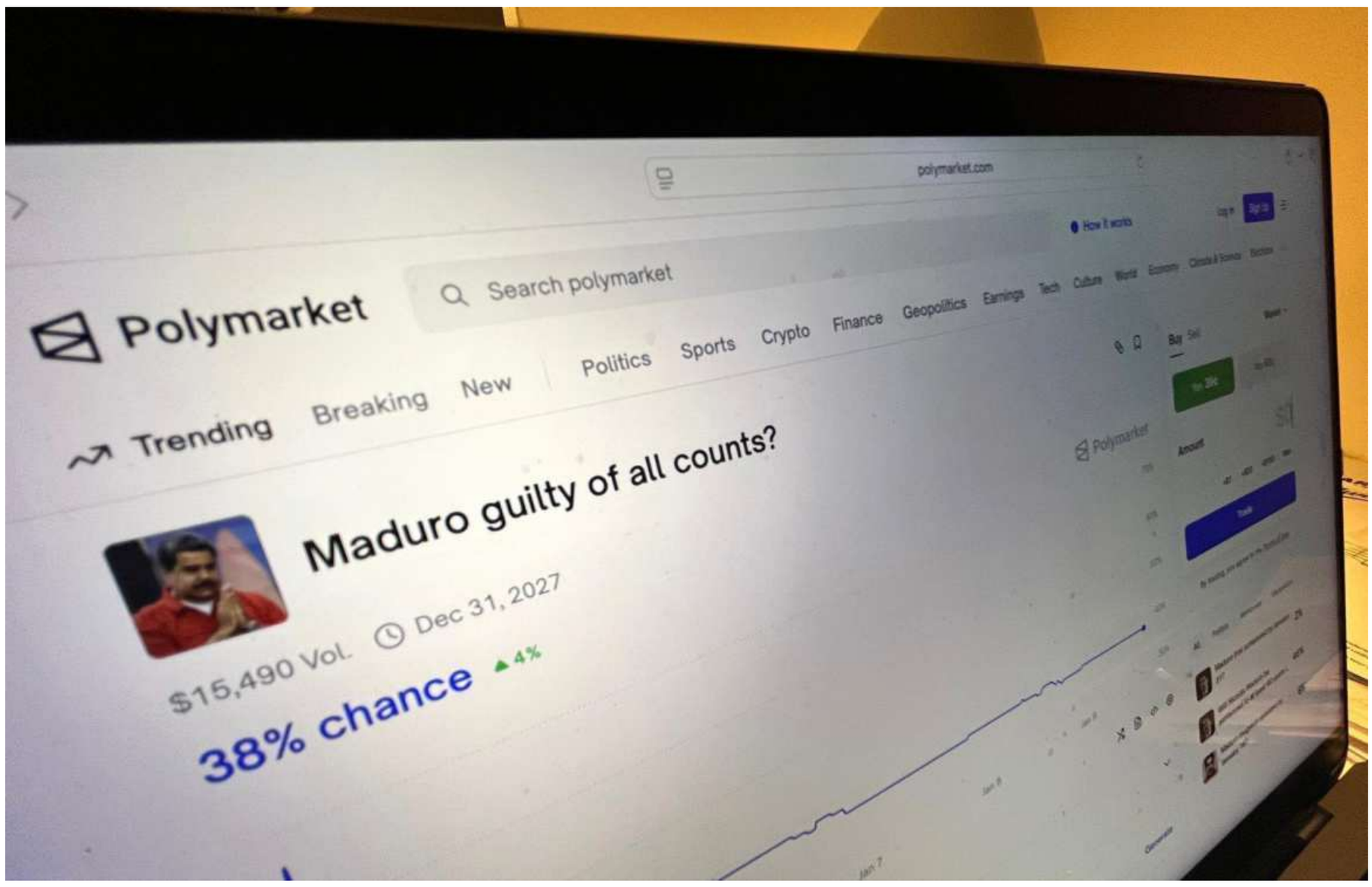
Though the Opposition has said that it will adopt democratic tools to move the motion against the CEC, it is unlikely to get passed as the ruling alliance holds sufficient majority in Parliament. The ruling government has rejected the allegations of any bias. The moot point is that constitutional bodies must be well-respected by all, be it citizens, ruling parties or the Opposition; otherwise, it sends a wrong signal to the masses across the country.

All political parties need to consider that constitutional or statutory bodies operate according to the provisions provided in the Constitution or in the respective statutes. While dissent against the actions of such bodies is not wrong, it should also be considered that the politicisation of the Constitution or constitutional bodies would be detrimental to Indian democracy.

The political safeguard provided by the Constitution must be taken care of and any dilution would be politically sensitive mainly because it would affect fairness in the electoral process and in the balance of power between the Government and independent and credible democratic institutions. The rule of thumb in Indian democracy is that it thrives on a blend of liberality and command, by balancing the authority of the state with the liberty of its citizens.

C.B. P Srivastava is President, Centre for Applied Research in Governance, Delhi.

CACHE



Dangerous game: The Polymarket prediction market website on January 9 in Philadelphia. AP

The explosive rise and inherent risks of prediction markets

Polymarket and Kalshi, two popular prediction market platforms, allow users to bet on anything from Bitcoin prices to bombings, raising a host of legal and ethical red flags. Such prediction markets are also sparking interest in India

Sahana Venugopal

The story so far:

In a booming section of the Internet, gamblers do not restrict their bets to sports teams and horses. They also bet on the possibility of Israel launching strikes against Gaza, the U.S. election results, the possible return of Jesus Christ, and the number of tweets Elon Musk might post on a given day. These bets are placed on prediction market platforms like Kalshi and Polymarket, where speculators bet on the outcomes of real world events including wars, the Oscars, ongoing court cases, gold prices, government proceedings, and even the local weather.

How do prediction markets work?

A prediction market is a platform where users buy units of a 'probable event' to make a profit when that event happens (or not). Generally, users can fund their trading accounts through crypto, credit/debit cards, or bank transfers. A platform fee may or may not be charged. Once set up, users can browse topics such as science, sports, culture, finance, etc. to find an event they want to bet on. Kalshi and Polymarket both claim to be the largest prediction market platforms. For transactions, Polymarket uses the USDC stablecoin – a non-official cryptocurrency pegged to the value of the U.S. dollar – via the Polygon network.

Take a real question from Polymarket, as of February 4: "Will anyone be jailed over Epstein disclosures?" Here, the answer 'Yes' was worth 19 cents at the time, while 'No' was worth 82 cents. Clearly, users were betting on the latter outcome. Users choose to buy 'Yes' or 'No' "shares," and these values may continue to change based on new developments. A Polymarket calculator showed that buying $100 worth of 'Yes' shares meant the user would get $499.43 in case anyone was jailed due to the Epstein disclosures. If they bought $100 worth of 'No' shares, they would get $121.95 in case the situation panned out as they predicted. Remember the "unit" prices can change drastically at any time. Users can also choose to sell their "shares" before the stipulated deadline, in case they want to cash in their profits or cut their losses.

Prediction markets are surging in popularity because of their design, ease, and social media virality. Kalshi and Polymarket give speculators the confidence to bet on real-world events they are familiar with, instead of forcing them to research unfamiliar asset classes or learn about technical investment options and indicators. Zooming out, prediction markets claim that such economies are focused on crowdsourced truth or crowd wisdom, and that there is less chance of bias and deception, since a large number of people bet on outcomes they truly believe will happen.

Regarding the controversial West Asia-related prediction markets that allow bets on future air strikes, Polymarket's website stated: "After discussing with those directly affected by the attacks, who had dozens of questions, we realized that prediction markets could give them the answers they needed in ways TV news and X could not".

Kalshi tells its users that they "have the ability to make the same smart trades and strategic investments that were once the exclusive domain of the financial elite".

Why are they being criticised?

Those opposing prediction market platforms list risks including the promotion of irresponsible gambling, people being encouraged to bet on violence, the rapid spread of false news, and the potential for insider trading due to powerful individuals becoming involved in sensitive markets where privileged information results in profits.

In January 2025, Kalshi announced that Donald Trump Jr. had joined as a strategic advisor. Mr. Trump Jr. claimed on X that people close to him used Kalshi during the election night to know that Mr. Trump had won "hours ahead of the fake news media". In August, media outlets reported that the Trump Jr.-linked venture capital firm 1789 Capital invested in Polymarket, and that he had joined its advisory board.

Both Kalshi and Polymarket are also active on social media platforms like Elon Musk-owned X and Meta-owned Instagram, where they post clickbait-style news snippets to their huge followings and depict their users' bets as though they are fact-based statistics.

Moreover, both Polymarket and Kalshi have published fake news in the past. In fact, Amazon's Jeff Bezos once disputed Polymarket's claim that he asked Gen Z entrepreneurs to get "real world jobs" at McDonalds or Palantir before starting a business. Meanwhile, the *Axios* outlet reported that Kalshi falsely posted about U.S. and Denmark discussions, leading to an official clarification from Denmark.

Are prediction markets regulated?

This is a grey area. Prediction markets are regulated in some jurisdictions while banned in others. Kalshi reported it was regulated by the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), but it faces restrictions and legal challenges in multiple U.S. states. Meanwhile, 33 countries are completely restricted from accessing Polymarket, including the U.S., Germany, the U.K., and Singapore.

Prediction markets are also sparking interest in India. In recent months, multiple Reddit users have created threads to ask whether betting via platforms such as Polymarket is legal in India. Other Redditors explored ways to make money off prediction markets without attracting legal scrutiny.

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

On February 24, 1920, Adolf Hitler announced the Nazi Party's 25-point programme in Munich. A quiz on Hitler's various security groups

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

In September 1919, Adolf Hitler joined the German Workers' Party (DAP), a small nationalist group in Munich founded by _____ _____. On February 24, 1920, the DAP renamed itself 'NSDAP', later colloquially called the Nazi Party. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 2

In 1921-22, the NSDAP set up a paramilitary wing called the Sturmabteilung, or SA for short, and used it to intimidate its opponents and to stage rallies. What was the colloquial name for members of this wing, which was based on the colour of their uniforms?

QUESTION 3

Hitler didn't trust the Sturmabteilung, so in 1923 he created a separate unit in charge of his personal security. However, this unit was abolished after the event known as X that year, failed and landed Hitler in prison. Name X.

QUESTION 4

In 1925, Hitler created Y, whose name was German for 'Protection Squadron'. For Hitler's purposes, it replaced the Sturmabteilung. Thanks to the leadership of Heinrich Himmler from 1929, it went on to become one of the most powerful and feared organisations in Nazi Germany. Name Y.

QUESTION 5

Name the event of February 23, 1933, that Hitler used as a pretext to arrest communists en masse, skewing the elections on March 5 in the NSDAP's favour and eventually leading to Hitler getting the power to make laws without parliament.

Visual question:

Name this leader who, despite his dislike of Hitler, made choices that sowed political instability and allowed Hitler to consolidate power.

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. Name Rajinikanth's debut film. **Ans: *Apoorva Raagangal***
2. The names of Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth's characters in *16 Vayathinile.* **Ans: Kamal was Gopalakrishnan aka 'Chappani' while Rajinikanth played the villain 'Parattai'**
3. The Tamil version of the Telugu *Andamaina Anubhavam*. **Ans: *Ninaithale Inikkum***
4. The last time the two shared the screen as full-fledged co-leads was in this 1979 fantasy film. **Ans: *Allauddinum Albhutha Vilakkum***
5. Rajinikanth's first full-length comedy film. **Ans: *Thillu Mullu***
6. In their only Hindi film to date, this legend enacted the role of Kamal's sibling. **Ans: *Geraftaar* and Amitabh Bachchan**
7. This person is directing and composing the music for the reunion film. **Ans: Nelson Dilipkumar and Anirudh Ravichander**

Visual: Name this acclaimed K. Balachander work. **Ans: *Moondru Mudichu***

Early Birds: Sunil Madhavan| Arun Kumar Singh| Tito Shiladitya| Renuka Jadhav| R. Sivakumar

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the meaning of "roller coaster ride"? (Rani Gurunathan, Erode, Tamil Nadu)

A roller coaster is a ride which one finds in many amusement parks. It is a small railway which goes up and down steep slopes and sharp curves. As it comes down the steep slopes, the roller coaster suddenly and sharply changes direction, often causing the people in the carriages to scream in excitement or fear. When you say something is a roller coaster ride, it means it is full of unexpected ups and downs. A situation which is impossible to control is often referred to as a roller coaster ride. Here are a few examples.

Life with our new boss has been a roller coaster ride.

Anand's relationship with his father has been a constant roller coaster ride.

What is the meaning of "vertically challenged"? (M. Mohamed Hussain, Nellai District, Tamil Nadu)

People who are short, generally, don't like to be told that they are short. When you tell someone that he is short, he feels hurt. If you are talking to someone who is short and want to refer to his/her height without hurting his/her feelings, you can say that he/she is "vertically challenged". It is the politically correct term.

Can the word "any" be used with plural nouns? (S. Manikantan, Chandra Layout, Bangalore)

Yes, it can. When the word "any" is followed by a countable noun, the noun is usually plural. Here are a few examples. If you have any questions, please talk to our Manager. We don't need to buy any cassettes. Do you have any one rupee coins?

What is the difference between "occupation" and "designation"? (V. K. Vithal, Gulbarga, Karnataka)

The word "occupation" refers to the kind of work you do; it refers to your job. You may be a teacher, an accountant, a salesperson, a police officer, etc. These are all examples of different kinds of occupation. The word "designation", on the other hand, refers to the title that you have been given. For example, when you join the university as a teacher, you may join as "Lecturer". Lecturer is a designation, it tells other people where you are in the teaching hierarchy. When you get a promotion, you become a Reader, and later a Professor. Your designation changes from Lecturer to Reader, etc. But the occupation of all three – Lecturer, Reader, and Professor – is the same – teaching.

When you talk about the "chemistry" between two people, what are you talking about? (N. Balasubramanian)

When you refer to the "chemistry" between two individuals, you are talking about the attraction and understanding between them. Uma refused to marry Satguru because there was no chemistry between them. My boss and I have the wrong chemistry. We just can't stand each other. The first time they met, there was an immediate chemistry.

Published in The Hindu on September 7, 1999.

Word of the day

Unsolicited: not requested or sought

Synonyms: unasked-for

Usage: *He keeps giving me and my friends unsolicited advice.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/unsolicitedpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˌʌnsəˈlɪsɪtɪd/

CORRECTION: In the article 'Why are apple traders in J&K worried?' published in these columns on February 23, the extent of land under apple orchards should read as 1.73 lakh hectares, and not as published. The error is regretted.