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வாய்மையே வெல்லும்

தாயுமானவர்...

அனைவர் வாழ்விலும் சிறந்த மாற்றம்!
ஸ்டாலின் அரசு தந்த முன்னேற்றம்!!

அன்புக்கரங்கள் திட்டம்
பெற்றோரை இழந்த
10,637 குழந்தைகள்
கல்வியைத் தொடர மாதம் ரூ.2000

தாயுமானவர் திட்டம்
27.41 இலட்சம் மாற்றுத்திறனாளிகள்
& முதியோர் இல்லங்களுக்கே சென்று
ரேஷன் பொருள்கள் வழங்கல்

மாற்றுத்திறனாளிகள் பராமரிப்புத் தொகை
ரூ. 2,000 ஆக உயர்வு
2.59 இலட்சம்
மாற்றுத்திறனாளிகள் பயன்

கலைஞர் கைவினைத் திட்டம்
தமிழ்நாட்டின் பல்வேறு கைவினைக்
கலைஞர்கள் 23,879 பேருக்கு
ரூ. 405 கோடி கடனுதவி
ரூ. 83 கோடி மானியம்

இலங்கைத் தமிழர்களுக்கு வீடுகள்
10,469 வீடுகள் கட்ட அனுமதி
6,010 வீடுகள் நிறைவு

தொல்குடி திட்டம்
ரூ. 450 கோடி மதிப்பில்
6,685 வீடுகள் மற்றும்
908 உட்கட்டமைப்புப் பணிகள்

அயோத்திதாசப் பண்டிதர் குடியிருப்புகள் மேம்பாட்டுத் திட்டம்
ரூ. 482 கோடி மதிப்பில்
5,281 உட்கட்டமைப்புப் பணிகள்

அன்புச்சோலைத் திட்டம்
மூத்த குடிமக்களுக்கு
28 பகல்நேரப் பராமரிப்பு மையங்கள்

தூய்மைப் பணியாளர்கள் உணவுத் திட்டம்
இந்தியாவில் முதல்முறை -
தினசரி 1.30 இலட்சம்
பணியாளர்கள் பயன்

சமூகப் பாதுகாப்பு
35.34 இலட்சம் நபர்கள்
சமூகநலத் திட்டங்களில் பயன்

ஊட்டச்சத்தை உறுதி செய் திட்டம்
1.83 இலட்சம் குழந்தைகள் மற்றும்
தாய்மார்களுக்கு ரூ. 40.88 கோடி
மதிப்பில் சிறப்பு ஊட்டச்சத்து உணவு
78% குழந்தைகள் எடை அதிகரிப்பு

திருநங்கையர் நலன்
- மாத ஓய்வூதியம் ரூ. 1,500 ஆக உயர்வு
- ஊர்க்காவல் படையில் பணி நியமனம்
- திருநங்கையர் பாதுகாப்பிற்காக "அரண் இல்லம்"
- உயர்கல்வி உதவித் தொகை

வெல்வோம்
ஒன்றாக!

செ.ம.தொ.இ / 211 / வரைகலை / 2026

தமிழ்நாட்டின் வளர்ச்சிப் பயணத்தில் ஒருவரையும் பின்தங்க விடமாட்டோம் !

THE HINDU GROUP

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FAIRS & FESTIVALS

TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND ANCIENT CULTURES OF TAMIL NADU

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

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

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GLOBAL HONOUR

Manipuri film *Boong* wins BAFTA award

NEWS » PAGE 12

HOSPITAL SHIP

Greenland says 'no thanks' to President Trump's offer

WORLD » PAGE 16

SECURITY BREACH

Armed intruder shot dead on Trump estate

WORLD » PAGE 16

STRATEGIC SHIFT

From back office to global brain trust

India's GCC 4.0 era of high-end R&D, Agentic AI

EDITORIAL » PAGE 10

DOMINANT DISPLAY

South Africa proves too strong for India

SPORT » PAGE 17

Venugopal meets Stalin as Cong. eyes more seats

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

A Congress delegation on Sunday night pressed the leadership of the ruling DMK for more seats in the Tamil Nadu Assembly election.

However, the delegation did not raise the party's earlier demand for "a share in power".

On a day when the DMK formally began seat-sharing talks with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the Congress lost no time in conveying its expectations, though talks with it had not originally been scheduled.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal met DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at his Alwarpet residence to discuss the party's aspirations.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 8

Time for nations facing tariffs to unionise: Lula

Brazil's President says small countries negotiating individually with bigger ones always lose; he urges countries in the Global South to act together in negotiating with global superpowers

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Instead of negotiating with the U.S. on tariffs separately, countries should form "negotiating blocs", Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said here on Sunday, advocating for "unionisation" of those suffering from the tariffs.

Mr. Lula, himself a trade union leader in the 1980s before he founded Brazil's ruling Workers Party, said that while he did not wish to comment on the internal workings of the U.S. where the Supreme Court struck down the tariffs imposed globally by U.S. President Donald Trump, he hoped that all countries would be "treated equally" by the U.S. on the issue.

"I want to tell the U.S. President that we don't want a new Cold War. We don't want interference in any other country, we want all countries to be treated equally," Mr. Lula said, answering questions from presspersons at the end of his four-day visit to Delhi.

Brazil and India were the two highest tariffed countries by the U.S., slapped with 50% duties on exports each, and face tariff threats from Mr. Trump over their membership of the BRICS grouping, trade with Iran, and imports of Russian oil. Neither country has thus far concluded a trade deal with the U.S. Mr. Lula, who is expected to visit Washington next month, said he hopes to put all outstanding issues with the U.S. "on the table" for Mr. Trump.

"When a small country negotiates with a bigger country, the agreement will always be harmful for the smaller country. This is the experience that I bring from the trade union and labour movement. To negotiate with the employer, all workers must get together and confront the company policy. If they do it individually, they all lose," he said, likening international trade to his trade union negotiations, adding that countries in the Global South, as well as others, must "act together" in negotiating with global superpowers.

Close ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in New Delhi on Saturday. ANI

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

Security forces launch a cordon-and-search operation after an encounter breaks out at Chatroo, Kishtwar, on Sunday. ANI

3 JeM terrorists killed in Kishtwar: Army

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

Three Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, the Army said.

Officials said the bodies of the terrorists were charred beyond recognition as the hut in which they were hiding caught fire during the gunfight. They said a preliminary investigation by security agencies suggests that one of the dead is Saifullah, a JeM commander who entered J&K five years ago.

Earlier, security forces encircled the terrorists and cordoned off the area. The Army said the forces re-engaged the terrorists around 11 a.m. in a "challenging terrain". "The hunt continues and those seeking to disturb peace will find no sanctuary," the Army said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

NEARBY

DMK alliance set to win 2026 polls: CPI(M) leader

CHENNAI
The DMK-led alliance will win the 2026 Assembly election and disprove the claim that the party is incapable of securing consecutive electoral victories, CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam said. » PAGE 8

'AMMK will hold seat-sharing talks with BJP'

MAYILADUTHURAI
AMMK chief T.T.V. Dhinakaran has said that seat-sharing talks would be held with the BJP, and that his party was a part of the NDA "through the BJP and not the AIADMK". » PAGE 8

EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 7

VIT CHENNAI

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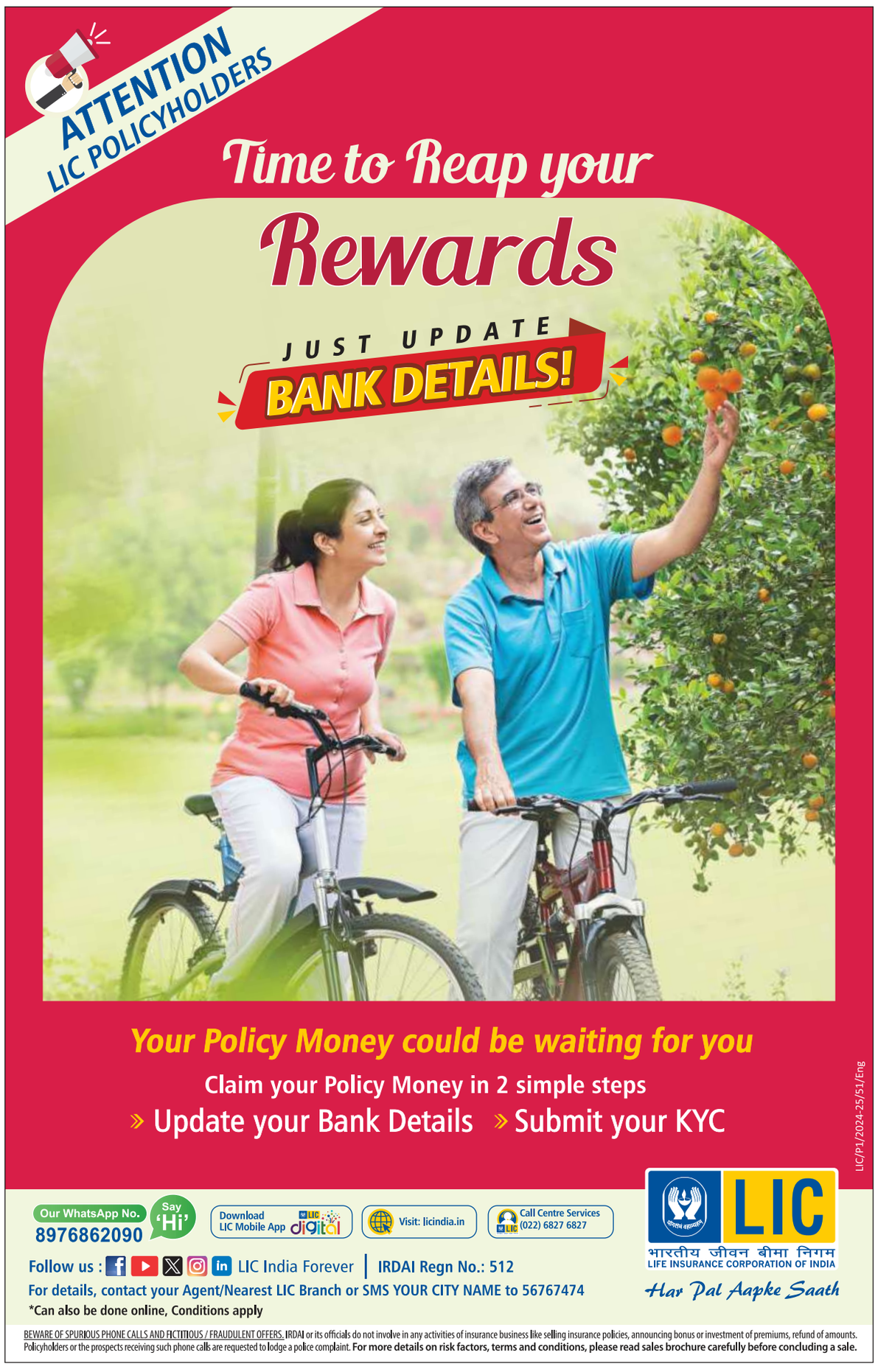

INBRIEF

Sanctuary with lifelong refuge for rescued animals launched

An animal sanctuary and therapeutic retreat centre, 'The Tranquile', was formally launched as a "lifelong refuge for rescued animals" in the city on Sunday. The project is a joint initiative of I-CARE Charitable Trust, founded by animal welfare activist Shiranee Pereira and PFCI Chennai. Former Indian cricketer and coach Robin Singh, philanthropist Nina Reddy, members of the Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board, and representatives of animal welfare organisations, were present at the launch. The centre is envisaged as a permanent sanctuary for nearly 1,000 animals – including horses, camels, and donkeys – and birds rescued from abuse, abandonment, illegal captivity, and slaughter. Animals will be housed in open and natural enclosures, designed to allow free movement and social interaction, rather than be confined in cages or chains.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (February 23, Monday), the following explainers are available:

- Why are apple traders in J&K worried? **newsth.live/applejkexp**
- How proteins are being tweaked to be quantum sensors inside the body **newsth.live/bodyproteins**

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Public Works Dept. set to restore two Egmore Museum buildings to former glory

The Geology and Anthropology galleries will undergo repairs; the PWD's Building Centre and Conservation Division is engaged in carrying out the work at the 16.25-acre museum complex

HERITAGE AND HISTORY

K. Lakshmi
CHENNAI

Two historic buildings at the Egmore Government Museum, home to the Geology and Anthropology galleries, are poised to regain their former glory as the Public Works Department (PWD) has begun meticulous restoration of the landmark structures.

The weathered walls and facades of the iconic structures, which showcase a slice of history, stand as reminders of a rich architectural past. The PWD's Building Centre and Conservation Division engaged in heritage restoration is carrying out the work at the 16.25-acre museum complex known for its Indo-Saracenic architectural style.

One among the six buildings in the complex, the Geology section, at the rear side of the Museum Theatre was built in 1851. Spread over nearly 5,500 sq.ft., the single-storey structure with a mezzanine floor has suffered about 60% decay.

Preserving the past: PWD officials said the restoration will be completed in a year. R. RAGU

The 16-large window frames on the ground floor are now being prepared for restoration. The damaged partly panelled and partly glazed doors are set to be replaced.

Deep cracks

Pointing to the deep cracks running through the walls, an official of the PWD official said preliminary work is in progress to repair the damaged inner walls and also leaky Mangalore tile roofing. While many of the geological exhibits have been relocated, some of the permanently fixed installations are being covered to facilitate restoration work.

Traditional '*Theervai*' wall plastering work using lime mortar would be carried out with materials sourced from Virudhunagar district.

Another majestic red-bricked structure at the rear side of the Museum Theatre and Connemara Library, which houses the Anthropology gallery, also showed signs of decay.

A plague embedded in the wall states that the foundation stone for the building was laid in March 1890. PWD officials said the Anthropology block was opened in 1896 along with the Museum Theatre.

Extending over nine halls, these galleries showcase exhibits, including those related to ethnology and physical anthropology. While there is a connecting corridor to Connemara library, it has now been closed, said officials.

This building too has been damaged with water leaking from the Madras Terrace roof and seeping through the walls till the ground floor. Work on restoration of decorative art plastering on the ceiling would be taken up after discussion with conservation architect.

Officials said the restoration work also includes the fixing of teak wood glazed ventilators, coloured glass panes and heritage tiled floor, besides rainwater harvesting system and improved landscaping. The project is set to be completed in a year, considering the high footfall at the museum.

Devotees attending the *kumbabhishekam* at the Sri Raveeswarar Temple at Vyasarpadi in Chennai on Sunday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Kumbabhishekam of Raveeswarar Temple held in Vyasarpadi

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The *kumbabhishekam* of the famous Sri Raveeswarar Temple in Vyasarpadi was held on Sunday morning with thousands of devotees witnessing the event.

The temple, which got flooded every monsoon, was lifted from the ground level and now stands at 7.2 ft above the road. It used to be 4 ft. below the road level. The shrines of Sri Raveeswarar and Sri Maragathambal were lifted up, along with the Maha Mandapam and Ardha Mandapam, as one structure with an area of 2,150 sq. ft. The majestic gopuram was also raised by 6.3 ft using jacks.

The previous *kumbabhishekam* was held on February 22, 2013. The *balalayam* for the consecration was done on October 7, 2024.

The *sthala vriksham*, a vanni tree has been safely placed inside a wooden covering. The temple also has a younger vanni tree. The temple, where legend has it that Lord Surya is believed to have worshipped Lord Shiva in the form of a Lingam made of vanni wood and bathed in the temple tank, was renovated during the later Chola period.

The temple tank, the Surya Theertham, was renovated last year.

The temple also has shrines for Sundara Vinayakar, Saint Vallalar, Saint Vyasar, Munai Kaatha Perumal, Subramanya along with Valli and Devayanai, Iyyappan, Kaala Bhairavar, Navagraham, Anjaneyar, and 65 Nayanamars.

Persons with disabilities take centre stage in inclusive theatre performance

Breaking barriers: The cast of the play, 'From Stone Age to Screen Age', put up by the Yes, We Too Can Charitable Trust.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A charitable trust on Sunday staged a theatre performance, "From Stone Age to Screen Age", featuring a cast comprised entirely of persons with disabilities, in Chennai.

It also included sign language interpretation and live audio description, making the performance more inclusive for the audience.

"This is the first time we are showcasing a theatre performance with our members – including 14 people with locomotor disabilities, and speech and hearing impairments. In the field of media, we do not see more persons with disabilities acting. Since it is a commercial industry, they might not have the time to train and provide exposure. This is why we wanted to create a platform for persons with disabilities (to showcase their skills) with our CSR partner Fiserv," says Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu of the YWTC (Yes, We Too Can) Charitable Trust.

The one-hour play was about the journey of human beings from the prehistoric period to the current age of social media, and its consequences.

"When working with persons with disabilities, I never felt they were any different from the artistes I worked with before. I didn't restrict them to certain roles. They performed all types of roles today, despite having only a limited number of days for practice and rehearsal," said Arivazhagan A., the director of the play.

Sathish Kumar, one of the artistes in the play, said the next step should be to provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to play characters that represent them. If a character in a film has a disability, it could be portrayed by a person with disability instead of a non-disabled actor, said Mr. Kumar.

Sridhar from Dummies Drama honoured the artistes.

Student from Maharashtra drowns in sea, another missing

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A woman student from Maharashtra, who had come on a picnic to Chennai with a larger group, drowned in the sea on the Kanathur beach on Saturday evening, while a male student who was washed away in the sea was missing. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has sought the help of the Tamil Nadu government to provide assistance to the family of the victims.

A senior officer of the Tambaram Police Commissionerate said a group of 26 students from Maharashtra had come on a picnic to the Kanathur beach on the East Coast Road (ECR) on Saturday.

Out of this group, three students identified as Mayuri Chaudhury, Jai Patil, and Raj Kedari, entered the water when a huge wave dragged them inside. On seeing this, the other students pulled out Mayuri and Raj, while Jai Patil could not be rescued.

The students took Mayuri and Raj to a nearby private hospital, where Mayuri was pronounced dead. With the help of local fishermen, the Kanathur police were searching for Jai, who was swept away in the sea.

In a social media post, Mr. Fadnavis sought the State government's help to expedite the search and provide all possible assistance. "The State (Maharashtra) administration remains in constant contact with the concerned families and is providing all necessary help," he added.

According to police sources, the relatives of Mayuri and Jai have reached the city.

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CINEMA ❖ ARTS ❖ EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

Naada Inbam, 24992672
Today 6.15 p.m. "Organizing Manodharma" A lec dem by Vidushi Sangeetha Sivakumar, dedicated to Sangita Vidwan Music Composer L Krishnan by his Disciples and family. Ragasudha Hall.

Rasika Ranjani Sabha Foundation, Ch-4.
Today at 6.30 pm, R.S. Manohar's NXGs Proudly Presents Ramakrishna Paramahamsar Directed by S. Shivpprasadh & S. Sruuthi. Ph. No: 86103 57987. Rasikas Welcome.

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(Estd:1900) Ph: 9444701446
DANCE FESTIVAL
at R.K. Swamy Auditorium,
(Sir Sivaswamy Kalalaya S.S. School)
Sundareswarar St., Mylapore
Today-Feb 23-5.30 p.m. Bharatanatyam by NETHRA DILIPAN (Disciple of Guru H.N. Nandhini Suresh, Sri Sai Nrithyalaya)
7.00 p.m. B/N by C. SOUNDARYA (Disciple of Guru M. Lakshmi Priya Raja, Maathrika) - All Are Welcome.
Presented by : Nalli

MISCELLANEOUS

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

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INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER-CALL-3

(Only through KPP Portal) Two Cover System

The Superintending Engineer, Zone-2, BCCC, Bengaluru invites tenders from eligible Contractors firm registered in Bengaluru Central City Corporation or equivalent registration with Labour Department or any State Government Organizations for the **Collection of Parking Fees for Various roads in Bengaluru Central City Corporation, Zone-2** as detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Description
1	Collection of Parking Fees Dispensary Road (OPH Road) to Kamaraj Road & Ibrahim Sahib Street Road. **Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (Rs in Lakhs): 95.22, EMD (In Rs): 1,90,440/-.**
2	Collection of Parking Fees for Millers Road Junction, Planetarium Road, St. John's Church Road & St. John's Road. **Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (Rs in Lakhs): 113.23, EMD (In Rs): 2,00,000/-.**
3	Collection of Parking Fees for 2nd temple road in Dattatreya Temple Ward, Sampige Road, Railway Parallel Road & BVK Iyengar road. **Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (Rs in Lakhs): 96.1, EMD (In Rs): 1,92,200/-.**
4	Collection of Parking Fees for Mavalli Tank Bund road, DVG Road in Sunkenahalli Ward, Shankarmatt Road & PMK Road. **Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (Rs in Lakhs): 109.38, EMD (In Rs): 2,00,000/-.**
5	Collection of Parking Fees for Vani Vilas Road, Vasavi Temple Street, Kanakapura Road, Diagonal Road, Patalamma Road & T Mariyappa Road. **Minimum Reserve Annual License fee (Rs in Lakhs): 122.34, EMD (In Rs): 2,00,000/-.**

Period of Tender: 3 Years + 2 years of extension.
Calendar of events: (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the KPP portal of the Government of Karnataka from **23.02.2026. (2)** Queries may be uploaded in KPP Portal on or before: **03.03.2026** upto **4:00 p.m. (3)** Tenders must be submitted online through KPP portal on or before **4:00 p.m.** on **07.03.2026** and the opening of tenders will be as per e-procurement portal guidelines. **(4)** Technical Bids will be opened on the website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Zone-2, BCCC, Bengaluru on **09.03.2026** at **4:30 p.m.** Further details can be obtained from the above office during working hours or from the website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, OLD given Name: THULASI DHASAS, Old Surname: SEKKIAH, born on 13.07.1958, residing at 40, Jayabalan Street, Vasudevan Nagar, Jafferkhanpet, Chennai–600083, shall henceforth be known as New Given Name: THULASIDASS, New Surname: SEKKIAH.

I, Sumathi Sekar, Spouse of S. Sekar, residing at No. 4/224, "F" Type, 4th Main Road, SIDCO Nagar, Villivakam, Chennai- 600049, hereby declare that I have changed ny name from Sumathi Kuppusammy to Sumathi Sekar for all future purposes.

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(A Govt of Kerala Undertaking)
Kuttanellur, Thrissur-14, Kerala
Ph: 0487- 2459841, 2459807
E-mail : purchase@oushadhi.org
P1/107/2025-26 Date: 23-02-2026
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited for the supply of Chukku and other 26 Raw materials for the period of 10-03-2026 to 31-03-2026. Tenders can be downloaded from the website **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**. For more details, please visit our website **www.oushadhi.org** or contact our Purchase Division at Kuttanellur.
(Sd/-)
Thrissur Managing Director

TENDERS

CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE VELLORE
Ida Scudder Road, Vellore-4, TN.
Timeline Extension - Prequalification of Interior Contractors

CMC Vellore, Chittoor Campus seeks experienced and reputed **Interior Contractors for the Interior Finishing & Fit-out works of its 400-bedded Teaching Hospital (7,32,904 sq.ft.) under construction located at 190 Ramapuram, 189 Kothapalli Post, Gudipala Mandal, Chittoor- 517132, Andhra Pradesh.**

Interested contractors may obtain prequalification documents from **The Engineering Planning Office, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore – 632004,Tamil Nadu** from **23rd February 2026** onwards in person or download from the web site **www.cmch-vellore.edu →Tender Notice → Download CMC Vellore Chittoor Campus Teaching Hospital - PQ Interiors.**

Completed applications supported by prescribed documents should be submitted to **The General Superintendent, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore-632004, Tamil Nadu, on or before 09th March 2026.**
Note: Contractor firms that have already expressed their interest in response to the previous advertisement need not apply.

TENDERS

CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE VELLORE
Ida Scudder Road, Vellore-4, TN.
Timeline Extension - Prequalification of Contractors

CMC Vellore, Chittoor Campus seeks experienced and reputed **Contractors for the complete façade works** for the 400-bedded Teaching Hospital **(7,32,904 sq.ft.)** under construction located at **190 Ramapuram, 189 Kothapalli Post, Gudipala Mandal, Chittoor- 517132, Andhra Pradesh.**

Interested contractors may obtain prequalification documents from **The Engineering Planning Office, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore – 632004,Tamil Nadu** from **23rd February 2026** onwards in person or download from the web site **www.cmch-vellore.edu →Tender Notice → Download CMC Vellore Chittoor Campus Teaching Hospital - PQ Facade.**

Completed applications supported by prescribed documents should be submitted to **The General Superintendent, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore-632004, Tamil Nadu, on or before 09th March 2026.**
Note: Contractor firms that have already expressed their interest in response to the previous advertisement need not apply.

TENDERS

CHRISTIAN MEDICAL COLLEGE VELLORE
Ida Scudder Road, Vellore-4, TN.
Timeline Extension - Prequalification of Turnkey Contractors

CMC Vellore, Chittoor Campus proposes to develop Housing **Blocks (Type BCD, LIQ/MIQ) and a Community Hall with a total built-up area of 1,28,961 sq.ft.(G+4), located at 190 Ramapuram, 189 Kothapalli Post, Gudipala Mandal, Chittoor-517132, Andhra Pradesh.**

Interested contractors may obtain prequalification documents from **The Engineering Planning Office, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore – 632004,Tamil Nadu** from **23rd February 2026** onwards in person or download from the web site **www.cmch-vellore.edu →Tender Notice → Download CMC Vellore Chittoor Campus Teaching Hospital - PQ Housing.**

Completed applications supported by prescribed documents should be submitted to **The General Superintendent, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore-632004, Tamil Nadu, on or before 09th March 2026.**
Note: Contractor firms that have already expressed their interest in response to the previous advertisement need not apply.

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GCC asks Kodungaiyur waste incinerator to stop operations over public health concerns

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has issued a notice ordering the Kodungaiyur waste incinerator plant to stop operations.

According to the notice issued by the Superintending Engineer of the Solid Waste Management Department on Friday, the firm had been ordered to "immediately suspend the operation of the incinerator plant with effect from receipt of this letter and submit within three days a detailed compliance report covering all 48 environmental parameters prescribed by TNPCB (Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board)".

A joint inspection was carried out on February 18 by officials of the TNPCB, GCC and the District Revenue Officer/Assistant Commissioner, Zone - 4.

During the inspection, the following deficiencies were observed: the water scrubber system was found to be inadequate to effectively control emissions; poor housekeeping was noticed on the premises; a huge backlog of unprocessed waste had accumulated within the facility; and more than 100 tonnes of bottom ash was stored at the site.

Pointing to the deficiencies that indicated serious operational lapses and non-compliance with statutory environmental norms and the conditions stipulated in the concession agreement, the civic body stressed the need for installation and operationalisation of a continuous emission monitoring system (CEMS) integrated with TNPCB servers.

Timings
CHENNAI

MONDAY, FEB. 23		
RISE	06:28	SET 18:17
RISE	10:30	SET 23:44
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

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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THE HINDU
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B.Joseph, Asst. Manager (Marketing), 14 Years
T.Bharathi, Receptionist, 14 Years
R.Rajkumar, Resident Manager (Estates & Trust), 13 Years
T.Avudayappan, Field Executive, 13 Years
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DPR of Chennai Port's outer harbour project to be ready by June

The financial model for implementing the ₹10,000-cr. project is being finalised; the outer harbour will feature deeper draught and modern berthing facilities to handle large vessels

Marine initiative: The project, which will be implemented in a phased manner, aims to increase capacity, improve logistics time, and reduce cost. FILE PHOTO

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Chennai Port's ambitious outer harbour project, which is set to be revived for the third time, is estimated to cost nearly ₹10,000 crore. Its detailed project report is expected to be ready by June this year.

The project is essential as the port aims at handling some of the world's largest vessels, whose carrying capacity exceeds 20,000 twenty-foot equivalent unit.

Since the existing inner harbour has certain limitations with respect to draft and berth length, the outer harbour – planned with deeper draught and modern berthing facilities – will help handle such vessels.

The project did not take off earlier as it required huge investment from the firm securing the contract

The project, which will be implemented in a phased manner, also promises to increase capacity, improve logistics time, and reduce cost.

Recently, the Chennai Port Authority awarded a contract to a transaction advisor.

While a DPR was prepared many years ago, some parts of the document need to be revised. "The layout and other such aspects will remain the same. It is the cost and financial model that require modifications. Initially, it was estimated that the project would require nearly ₹8,000 crore, but the revised estimate stands at about ₹10,000 crore," a source said.

The port is still finalising the financial model to implement the project. One of the reasons the project did not take off earlier was that it required a huge investment from the firm securing the contract.

PPP model

But now, the port is looking at the Hybrid Annuity Model, a public-private partnership (PPP) framework.

"If this model is approved by the Board, the port will provide 60% of the cost, while the remaining 40% will come from the firm," another source said.

After this, the Chennai Port Authority must get environment clearance and approval from the Union government. Only then can the port call for bids for the project construction.

Chennai Corporation to deploy sanitation workers through women's self-help groups

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has announced a series of measures to strengthen solid waste management across the city.

The measures include deployment of sanitation workers through women's self-help groups (SHGs), domestic hazardous waste management, and bio-mining of legacy waste.

According to GCC officials, the civic body plans to engage conservancy workers through SHGs in several zones.

In Ambattur, 1,457 workers will be deployed for 90 days at a cost of ₹9.96 crore, and in Teynampet, 114 workers will be deployed for one year, involving an outgo of ₹3.16 crore.

Perungudi will get 181 workers for one year at ₹5.02 crore; Sholinganallur 160 workers at ₹4.44 crore; Manali 115 workers at ₹3.19 crore; and Adyar 267 workers at ₹7.16 crore.

In Tondiarpet, 550 workers will be deployed for 37 days at ₹1.54 crore.

The calculated gross daily allocation per sanitation worker deployed through SHGs in zones such as Ambattur is ₹759, as against the officially mandated daily wage of ₹761 for unskilled conservancy workers.

The GCC will also collect, transport, process and dispose of domestic hazardous waste across all 15 zones for one year at ₹6.49 crore.

Buttermilk for workers

The GCC will also provide buttermilk to workers during summer.

The second phase of bio-mining of legacy waste at the Perungudi dump yard will be taken up at an estimated ₹53.60 crore.

Bio-mining is under way at the Kodungaiyur dump yard, processing 25 lakh tonnes out of 67 lakh tonnes so far.

GCC Commissioner J. Kumaragurubaran said on X that trees would be planted on the reclaimed land parcel.

'Need salary revision'

Noting that several schemes had been proposed for sanitation workers, Tiruvottiyur councillor R. Jayaraman said a salary revision should also be announced.

He pointed out that the incinerator at the Kodungaiyur Waste-to-Energy plant was yet to be scrapped.

While welcoming the rope car project at the Marina, the CPI(M) councillor said the livelihoods of many vendors had been affected after they were removed from the stretch developed under the Blue Flag programme.

Low-pressure area likely to bring rain in Western Ghat districts

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said that the well-marked low-pressure area over the southwest Bay of Bengal recurved northeastwards gradually and lay over the same region at 5.30 p.m. on Sunday.

It is very likely to continue to move further northeastwards over southwest Bay of Bengal during the next 36 hours.

It is expected to bring light to moderate rain at isolated places in Western Ghat districts.

The RMC has forecast dry weather over the rest of Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry and Karaikal area on Monday and Tuesday.

Mist to prevail

Mist or haze is likely to prevail in isolated pockets of Salem, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Tirupattur, Vellore, Ranipet, Tiruvallur, Chennai, and Kancheepuram in the early morning hours of Monday and Tuesday.

On Sunday, rainfall occurred at isolated places over the State (at a few places over south coastal Tamil Nadu and at isolated places over rest of the State), while dry weather prevailed over Puducherry and Karaikal area.

The GCC Council passed a resolution empowering the Chief Vector Control Officer to procure larvicides recently.

GCC plans to appoint entomologists to control vector-borne diseases across city

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

In view of the rise in complaints about vector-borne and zoonotic diseases in the city, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) Council on Friday passed a resolution delegating powers to the Chief Vector Control Officer (CVCO) and appointing additional entomologists for the prevention of diseases.

The CVCO has been empowered to procure larvicides and adulticides and fogging machines, and fill vacancies to various posts, including the post for malaria control workers, under compassionate grounds.

The GCC Council passed another resolution to appoint entomologists at the regional offices for strengthening mosquito and pest control across the city.

At a meeting conducted on February 7, GCC Commissioner J. Kumaragurubaran suggested the appointment of senior entomologists in each region of the Chennai Corporation.

Reports on diseases

The Regional Entomologists will submit reports on malaria, dengue, chikungunya, filariasis, encephalitis, scrub typhus and leptospirosis to the regional deputy commissioners and take measures to promote public health.

They will get inspection vehicles with drivers, data entry operators, and office assistants.

Pointing to the role played by the Vector Control Department, the civic body said the vacancies in the department would be filled. Currently, there are 181 vacancies in the post of basic health workers. A total of 1,142 permanent malaria control workers have been employed by the GCC and 2,450 workers hired temporarily.

NIOT designs profiler to record ocean data in real time

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A team of scientists from the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) has developed a wave propulsion-based vertical profiler (WVP) to record conductivity, temperature, and depth (CTD) data in real time.

The trial was conducted for a week off the city coast recently.

"The U.S. has a similar system, which they call the wire walker. But this (NIOT's WVP) is the first of its kind in India. It is a mechanical device powered merely by buoys [deployed in sea]," said NIOT Director Balaji Ramakrishnan.

At present, 10-12 sensors are fixed along the mooring line of the buoys and data from those fixed points are collected. When the indigenous profiler is produced, it would do away with the need for several sensors and collect more comprehensive data.

S. Muthukumaravel, Group Head, Ocean Electronics Group, NIOT, whose team developed the WVP, said such data would be useful to track the monsoon and extreme events like cyclones, and also to forecast their trajectory and strength. "It will also aid in studies related to climate change," he said.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

BRAHMASHRI SHRI Subramania Sastrigal (93) ex Principal, Rajaveda Kavya Patasala Kumbakonam, passed away peacefully and cremated on 22-02-2026. Dasahasthu on 03/03/26 at 52/12-1, Kasiraman street, Kumbakonam. Smt. Jayalakshmi, Sri S Ganesan -CUB & Smt Bhuvana , Sri S Sriram- USA & Smt Shuba, Sri T R Vasudevan & Smt Bhooma and Sri S.Swaminathan & Smt Uma. Grand son- Pranav and Granddaughters Priya, Aparna, Lavanya & Niranjana. Ph: 9080000180

OBITUARY

Dr. S. VASUDEVAN
DOB:09.08.1950 DOD:21.02.2026
Funeral to be held on 23-02-2026
Deeply mourned by
Family, Friends and Relatives.
Ph: 9884337630

DEATH

Smt VIJAYA DORAISWAMY
(01.08.1940 - 19.02.2026)
W/o Late Sri V. Doraiswamy I.A.&A.S.
(Addl. Dy Comptroller and Auditor General of India)
attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Sathguru Gnanananda Sarasvathi Ma on Thursday. The last rites were held on Friday.
Deeply mourned by
Children:
Padmavathi Padmanabhan; D Rajiv Krishnan and **Sujata; Nitya** and **Ravi Gopalakrishnan;**
Grandchildren:
Mukund Krishna and **Krithika, Nalini, Kalyani** and
Great Granddaughter: **Dhriti.**
Contact:
Padma: 9444044274; Rajiv: 9632548005; Nitya: 9980518509

DEATH

OBITUARY

She smiled She conquered
SMT SHYAMALA SUNDARAM
D.O.D: 22.02.2026
W/O Maj.Gen.C.Sundaram AVSM
Deeply mourned by
Mrs.Padmini Dorairajan
Mrs. Maya & Mr.Shyam Sunder
Dr.Siddharth Dorairajan & Mrs.Vanitha
Dr.Smritha Dorairajan & Dr.C.Anand
Mr.Nikil Shyam Sunder & Mrs. Priya
Kavin, Laya, Taruni, Krithik, Kai
Funeral : 23.02.2026, 3.00 Pm
98400 46366 / 98407 80017

DEATH

SAD DEMISE

It is with deep sorrow that I announce the passing away of my beloved wife,
Mrs. Jamuna Jeevarathanam
(18.12.1957 – 22.02.2026)
Wife of Mr. **R.S. Jeevarathanam,** B.A., B.L.,
Senior Advocate, Madras High Court
Plot No. 919, 13th Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600040.
Funeral services will be held at 11:00 a.m. on 24th February 2026.

DEATH

OBITUARY

We regret to inform that
Sri. C.L. Ramakrishnan
passed away peacefully on
Sunday 22.02.2026
In Grief
Family Members

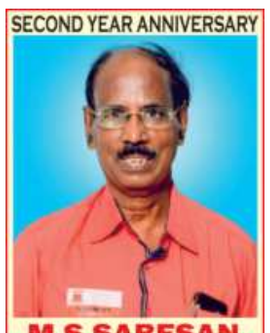
DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

SIXTH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Mr. R.P. SAMY
M/s. NATIONAL SWITCHGEARS Co
17.02.1947 - 23.02.2020
Your vibrant presence still lives in our thoughts and forever in our hearts. We deeply respect your strong values which will continue to inspire us always.
Remembered fondly by
Family members
Devi Kumari, Raj & Uma,
Jaya & Nagarajan, Krithika,
Karthik & Diya
Staff of NATIONAL SWITCHGEARS

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

SECOND YEAR ANNIVERSARY



M S SABESAN
BE (CEG) M.Tech (IIT-M)
DOB: 16.06.1952 - DOD: 23.02.2024
STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
- M S BUILDERS
Fondly Remembered by
Dr. D.Gandhimathi, Dr. SS Aravind,
Dr. SS Lavanya & Grandchildren
Phone: +91 98843 24308

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DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FIRST ANNIVERSARY

D.KALYANASUNDARAM
Retd. ADC of Police & Ex-CGS of Lucas TVS
26-Sep-1947 to 23-Feb-2025
In loving memory of our dear father missed beyond words, remembered with love.

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

14th ANNIVERSARY
In Fond Memory Of

HELEN JAYASEELI MARCUS
23.02.2012
Remembering with Love
John Marcus, Edgar Masscarnes
Amma & Joshua

A Space Marketing Initiative
Dr. KMH Health Insights Series
Monday, February 23, 2026

Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals - Swift advanced aortic care saves two lives in critical emergencies

Dr. Venkateshwar Ravi, Interventional Vascular Surgeon at Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals, discusses evolving approaches to aortic repair, limb-saving procedures, and efforts towards reducing amputations in Tamil Nadu.

AN AWARENESS FEATURE HIGHLIGHTING VASCULAR HEALTH, EARLY DETECTION, PREVENTIVE CARE, AND TIMELY LIFE-SAVING INTERVENTIONS

The aorta, the body's largest blood vessel is responsible for carrying oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body. When this vital artery develops a tear or swelling, the consequences can be sudden and life-threatening. At Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals, advanced minimally invasive vascular procedures are helping patients survive such critical conditions with safer outcomes and faster recovery.

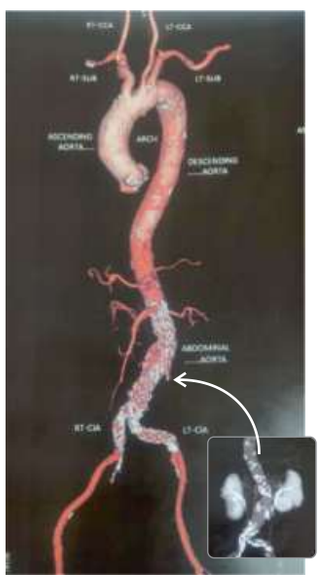
A Second Chance at a New Life

A 45 year old man undergoing regular dialysis and preparing for a long-awaited kidney transplant experienced sudden severe chest pain. Investigations revealed a Type B Aortic Dissection, a dangerous tear in the inner wall of the aorta that can become fatal if untreated.

TEVAR

We performed a highly advanced TEVAR (Thoracic Endovascular Aortic Repair) procedure to seal the tear from within the artery. A carotid-to-subclavian artery bypass was also performed to ensure uninterrupted blood supply to the left hand.

"We were able to treat the condition without open chest surgery, significantly reducing risk and recovery time." The minimally invasive approach resulted in minimal blood loss, quicker healing, and a stable recovery. Today, the patient is back on track to pursue his kidney transplant - his dream restored.


EVAR

Two Critical Concerns One Coordinated Plan

In another complex case, a 65 year old patient presented with severe abdominal pain and was diagnosed with biliary sepsis caused by gallstones blocking the bile duct. Further evaluation revealed an abdominal aortic aneurysm, a balloon-like swelling in the aorta that carries a high risk of rupture.

The multidisciplinary team adopted a carefully staged approach: Emergency ERCP to relieve the bile duct blockage; Cholecystectomy to eliminate the infection source; Stabilization and control of sepsis; followed by EVAR (Endovascular Aneurysm Repair) to repair the aneurysm from within the blood vessel. By addressing the infection first and the aneurysm next, the team ensured the safest possible outcome. The patient responded well to treatment and is now stable.

Vascular Health: A Growing Public Health Concern

While emergency procedures such as aortic repair draw attention, a large number of vascular conditions develop very gradually and often remain undetected until serious complications arise. A vascular surgeon treats disorders affecting arteries and veins throughout the body including blockages in the legs, diabetic foot complications, stroke prevention carotid disease, aneurysms, vascular injuries in trauma and venous disorders.

Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals

Many of these conditions are closely linked to diabetes, hypertension, smoking, and high cholesterol, all of which are increasingly prevalent. Early detection significantly improves outcomes.

Preventing Avoidable Amputations

One of the most pressing concerns in Tamil Nadu is limb loss related to diabetes and Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD). PAD reduces blood flow to the legs. Early symptoms may appear like mild leg pain while walking, numbness in the feet, slow healing wounds, which are often ignored.

When left untreated, reduced circulation can lead to infection, tissue damage, and eventually amputation. However, advances in vascular medicine have made limb salvage increasingly possible. Minimally invasive procedures such as angioplasty and stenting can reopen blocked arteries and restore blood flow. With timely intervention, many amputations are preventable.

Towards an Amputation-Free Tamil Nadu

Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals is working towards raising awareness about early vascular evaluation, particularly among diabetic patients. The focus includes screening high-risk individuals, early referral for non-healing wounds, restoring circulation before irreversible damage occurs, and coordination by a multidisciplinary team - diabetologist, general surgeon, plastic surgeon, orthopedician, vascular surgeon specialists.

> ***Amputation should be the last resort. With early vascular evaluation and timely intervention, most limbs can be saved.***
>
> *— Dr. Venkateshwar Ravi*

Amputation should be the last resort, not the first line of management.

When to Seek Help

A vascular consultation should be considered if there is leg pain while walking, persistent foot wounds, discoloration of toes, sudden severe chest, back, or abdominal pain, or swelling in one limb. Timely evaluation can prevent both life-threatening complications and limb loss.

Advanced Technology. Compassionate Care

With the latest advanced EVAR and TEVAR procedures, Dr. Kamakshi Memorial Hospitals offers smaller incisions, shorter hospital stay, reduced surgical risk, faster return to normal life, and better outcomes for high-risk patients. By combining world-class endovascular technology with compassionate patient-centered care, the hospital continues to set new benchmarks in advanced vascular and aortic treatment, saving lives, preserving limbs, and restoring hope.

For more information visit
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INBRIEF

DMK strongest in western region, says Udhayanidhi

"The DMK is strongest in western region," Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin said at the party's West Region Youth Wing conference in Kaniyur, Coimbatore, on Sunday. Addressing functionaries from 39 constituencies, he said the DMK had appointed administrators in every booth, while other parties were still working out their booth-level structure. Referring to the *Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thittam*, he alleged that the BJP had planned to move court to stall the ₹1,000 monthly assistance scheme. If re-elected, he said, the monthly assistance would be increased to ₹2,000. Referring to the Union Budget, he claimed it contained no major allocations for the State, and it demonstrated the Centre's disregard for the State's interests. The Assembly election will be a "democratic war" between Tamil Nadu and Delhi, he said. Referring to AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, he said the AIADMK had been "sold" to the BJP.

Spectator dies of injuries inflicted by charging bull

S. Gunasekaran, a 47-year-old wage labourer, who had gone to witness a bull-run event, was killed due to injuries inflicted by a charging bull at Perumalpattu village near Tirupattur town on Sunday. He was the second victim to have died during such events in the region. Recently, a 65-year-old man died during a bull race in Vellore. Police said when Gunasekaran tried to cross the muddy track, where bulls were allowed to run, he was hit by the charging bull, and sustained injuries on his chest. He was rushed to Government Taluk Hospital in Tirupattur town, where doctors declared him brought dead. A case was registered and further probe is on.

Over 300 textile mills closed down in T.N. in last few years: report

Many small-scale mills have shut due to rising input costs, steep hike in power tariff, and high cost of borrowing, says spinning mills association

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

Over 300 textile mills went out of operation in Tamil Nadu between 2021-22 and 2023-24, according to the Annual Survey of Industries.

The data released by the Union Ministry of Textiles earlier this month showed that in 2021-22, Tamil Nadu had 2,773 textile mills and 2,121 of these were in operation. In 2023-24, the number went down to 2,455 with just 1,672 mills in operation. Spokesperson of a leading textile association said another 300 mills were closed in the last two years.

According to industry representatives, almost two lakh powerlooms ended operations in the last couple of years. A host of factors has hit the textile industry in the State, they say. Most of the textile industries are in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) segment. Be it raw material, bank interest rates, or power cost, the MSMEs are at a disadvantage. So, a large number of small-scale textile mills have shut shop, said South India Spinning Mills Association (SISPA) secretary Jagadish Chandran.

"The Tamil Nadu textile industry is finding it increasingly difficult to remain cost competitive compared with other States. For instance, power cost for the mills in Tamil Nadu is ₹9.25 a unit. This is at least ₹1 more compared with competing States.

Only those textile units that have invested in wind and solar energy have survived as Tamil Nadu has the most flexible renewable energy policy. The annual increase in power bills should stop," said the spokesperson.

Textile mills lose heavily on the raw material front. Be it cotton, polyester, or viscose, the mills buy raw material from the north and incur transportation cost. The import duty on cotton and quality control orders that are now withdrawn had impacted the industry.

The processing units incur high costs because of zero liquid discharge requirements while States such as Gujarat permit marine discharge of treated effluent.

While the State government recently come out with an integrated textile policy, it should remove caps for subsidies, industry representatives said.

Chronic stress: The textile mills in the State lost heavily on the raw material front, say industry sources. M. PERIASAMY

Textile mills lose heavily on the raw material front. Be it cotton, polyester, or viscose, the mills buy raw material from the north and incur transportation cost

Railway moots more underpasses for wild elephants in forest ranges of Coimbatore

Wilson Thomas
COIMBATORE

The Palakkad Division of the Southern Railway is planning to construct more than two underpasses for wild elephants on the railway line passing through Solakkarai reserve forest of Madukkarai range.

Officials said underpasses are being planned on both 'B' and 'A' lines of the twin single line connecting Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Trains plying on Palakkad-Coimbatore direction are generally routed through 'B' line and the 'A' line is used for traffic on the opposite direction. Two such underpasses constructed by the Railways on 'B' line in 2023 and 2024 are being used by wild elephants to cross the track safely.

Sources in Palakkad Division said locations of the proposed underpasses will be finalised soon for further procedures. A total of 28 incidents of wild elephants getting hit while crossing railway tracks, mostly resulting in fatality, were reported between Kottekad in Palakkad district and Ettimadai in Coimbatore district from 2002 to 2024. The last death of an elephant was in Kerala, when a juvenile tusker was knocked down by a train at Vattappara near Walayar on February 4. Sources said the Palakkad Division has erected fences using old rails on both sides of the vulnerable stretches between Walayar and Ettimadai as physical barriers.

An elephant intrusion detection system (EIDS) installed by the Division for 35 km between Kottekad and Edttimadai at a cost of ₹20 crore is in the testing stage now.

The EIDS uses optical fibre-based sensing network with artificial intelligence-driven analytical modules to detect the presence of elephants near railway tracks to generate alerts.

Speed restrictions, maximum of 65 km/h during the day and 45 km/h from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., are applicable for trains passing through the forest areas of Madukkarai range. A braking distance of about 250 metres is required for a train moving at 65 kmph and around 180 metres when the speed is 45 kmph, sources said.

Underpasses help elephants cross the track without climbing them.

About 8,100 acres of lands belonging to 1,055 temples retrieved, says HR&CE Dept.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

About 8,107.03 acres of lands that belonged to 1,055 temples, whose worth was estimated at ₹8,436 crore, were retrieved from private encroachers during the past five years, the Hindu Religious and Charitable (HR&CE) Endowments Department said on Sunday.

Besides, 2.38 lakh acres of temple lands were measured using DGPS rover land survey and F-line stones were installed in 1,50,221 locations, an official release said.

A sum of ₹212 crore has been earmarked for the renovation fund for 5,000 temples in Adi Dravida and tribal habitations as well as 5,000 temples in rural areas. The installation of three statues of Lord Murugan, all over 100 feet tall, were under way in three temples in the State, it said.

The release said conservation and renovation of temples more than 1,000 years old were undertaken in 352 temples during the past five years at a cost of ₹560 crore.

Kudamuzhukku was performed in 4,332 temples where it was not performed for over 400 years, it said.

It also mentioned the construction of a Vallalar International Centre in Vadalur at ₹99.90 crore.

Palayamkottai clock, 'older than Big Ben', to chime again

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

When antique clock collector Robert Kennedy and master clocksmith Nagaraj climbed the bell tower of the historic Holy Trinity Cathedral at Palayamkottai in Tirunelveli district to inspect its tower clock recently, they were thrilled to make a remarkable discovery: the timepiece predates the Great Bell of the Great Clock at the Palace of Westminster, London, nicknamed Big Ben.

"Big Ben was installed in 1859, whereas this clock was manufactured in 1854 and installed in 1855. It was made by John Moore & Sons of Clerkenwell, a renowned London-based clockmaker," said Mr. Kennedy, who has been invited by the church authorities to examine the mechanism and undertake its restoration. The year 1854 is engraved on the clock.

The cathedral itself, built in 1826 by Rev. C.T.E. Rhenius, recently celebrated its bicentenary, adding further historical significance to the restoration effort.

Although the clock continues to function, it has fallen silent in recent years, unable to deliver its once sonorous chime owing to a technical defect. Mr. Kennedy, who examined other clocks in the country, is also of the view that the Holy Trinity Cathedral clock could be the oldest tower clock in India.

After repeated but unsuccessful attempts to restore the bell's chime, the church authorities contemplated installing a battery-operated mechanism as a substitute. They approached Mr. Kennedy and, following two months of deliberations, he agreed to take up the challenge alongside Mr. Nagaraj, with whom he has restored numerous antique clocks to their former glory.

He was unequivocal in his opposition to replacing the original mechanism. After inspecting the clock, Mr. Nagaraj found the fault lay in the chiming section.

"Tower clocks are meant to be wound weekly; they embody a complex yet exquisitely engineered mechanical system. To replace such craftsmanship with a battery-operated unit would amount to murdering the clock. I told them that if they were determined to install a battery, they might as well sell the clock to me," said Mr. Kennedy, who possesses an extensive collection of antique clocks, watches and lanterns. His collection has previously been featured in *The Hindu*.

Exuding confidence, Mr. Kennedy told the church committee that the remuneration of ₹1.2 lakh should be paid to Mr. Nagaraj only if the bell chimes again.

"We have already submitted our technical report, and I am confident that we shall restore it to full working order," he said. Mr. Nagaraj said he would restore the clock to its former glory within a week, though he would be able to pinpoint the problem only once work commenced. Given that tower clocks of that era were custom-built, the replacement components for the cathedral clock will have to be painstakingly handcrafted.

Mr. Kennedy said there was a need for a comprehensive study of historic clocks across Tamil Nadu, particularly in the southern districts.

The year 1854 is engraved on the clock.

Three persons die as car and two-wheeler collide

The Hindu Bureau
RAMANATHAPURAM

Three persons died when a car and a two-wheeler collided near Mandapam in Ramanathapuram on Sunday. The victims were Tamilmani, 34, of Tiruppur, his wife Felicia, 30, of Sattur, his mother Sumathi – all occupants of the car – and an unidentified man riding the two-wheeler.

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Walk in Interview for the appointment of Contractual Teachers (Purely Temporary) for the Session 2026-27
साक्षात्कार का स्थान: पी एम श्री केन्द्रीय विद्यालय, आइलैंड ग्राउंड्स,पल्लव सलाई, चेन्नै
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2.	Computer Instructor-cum-AI Teacher (Primary and Secondary) Balvatika teacher, PRT, Tamil Translator, Coaches (Games & Sports, Art & Craft, Dance & Music, Yoga) Tamil teacher, German Teacher, Vocational Instructor	01.03.2026 (SUNDAY)

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प्राचार्य, Principal

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA: MINISTRY OF FINANCE: DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
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PRESS NOTE
The Commissionerate of GST and Central Excise has set up a round-the-clock control room to receive complaints from the public about violations in election expenditure norms for the forth coming Elections to Puducherry Legislative Assembly 2026.
2. The public can report violations to landline number 0413-222 1999 or mail to fcm-pycgst@gov.in.
3. The Central GST Commissionerate Puducherry had set up facilities on the directions of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs to monitor election expenditure with respect to the elections to the Legislative Assembly and to provide assistance to the Election Commission of India for conduct of free, fair and transparent elections.
4. The Commissionerate would receive complaints relating to non-monetary inducements (sarees, white goods, kitchen items and other goods and services) and monetary instruments to lure voters. Strict vigil would be mounted on warehouses / depots, vehicular movements of goods and provision of certain services through control room, e-way bill verification teams and warehouse verification teams.
5. Steps will also be taken to identify and seize contrabands, illicit articles, non-monetary inducements (sarees, white goods, kitchen items and other goods and services) intended to be utilized for bribing voters.
6. Public are requested to share information available with them to help the CGST Department in ensuring free, fair and transparent elections.
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Access, Exposure, Capability, Innovation

How India can build a STEM Knowledge Grid by 2030

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Harilal Bhaskar

India often speaks proudly about its demographic dividend, digital expansion, and deep-tech ambition. Yet beneath the optimism rests a quiet contradiction: we expect 21st-century innovation from an education and research ecosystem still shaped by 20th-century structures.

Many institutions continue to work with ageing laboratories. School science remains theory-centred. Teachers are overburdened. Industry engagement is sporadic. Even our brightest students rarely interact with authentic scientific tools before entering the job market.

If India intends to lead the world in climate tech, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, defence R&D, and space innovation by 2030, a slow, incremental path will not suffice. We need a decisive shift from the classroom as the primary learning unit to a distributed national knowledge grid, co-created through modern Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) that are capability building, flexible, modular, and innovation-driven.

Learning Ecosystems: Around the world, the EU's Digital Education Action Plan and America's regional innovation hubs have shown that learning ecosystems — not isolated campuses — build innovation capacity. India needs its own version: Knowledge Grid = Public Infrastructure + Private Expertise + Student Mobility. This involves institutions providing classrooms, labs, and academic frameworks; industry contributing tools, domain knowledge, mentors, and real problem statements; and students moving seamlessly across these nodes, learning from real challenges rather than outdated theory. Every district becomes a STEM node. Every node connects to national labs and industrial clusters. Not a new mega-campus but a living network.

Industrial Sandbox Rooms: A major barrier in India is late exposure to real scientific tools. Students often encounter equipment for the first time in their twenties, if at all. A rapid reform is to create Industrial Sandbox Rooms in schools and colleges. These are small tactically designed micro-labs equipped with simplified industrial machines, simulators for electronics, chip design, drone systems, and materials, and quarterly "challenge kits" inspired by industry use-cases. Students will learn through experimentation, failure-driven insight, and project-based exploration. Germany's dual-system and South Korea's early-tech exposure models demonstrate the transformative power of such small units. India can adopt the same logic at Indian cost points, with Indian ingenuity.

Inverted Internships: One-week internships cannot build competence. A more realistic model is the Inverted Internship. This will involve industry-on-campus modules or three-day bursts where engineers, designers, and technicians teach how products are actually designed, how constraints shape engineering, how failures are analysed, and how real teams solve practical problems. This removes relocation barriers, cuts bureaucracy, and injects contemporary industry thinking into classrooms instantly.

Challenge Bank: By 2030, India doesn't need more syllabus chapters. It needs thousands of real-world problem statements. A National STEM Challenge Bank — drawing challenges from ISRO, DRDO, CSIR labs, hospitals, agri-tech centres, environmental missions, and start-ups — can redefine how India learns. Student teams solve these problems and earn micro-credits, internship priority, and national recognition. This shifts STEM from exam culture to solution culture.

Public-Private Teaching Fellowships: Across India, thousands of brilliant professionals hold expertise that rarely enters education. A Teaching Fellowship can channel this talent. Professionals teach for four hours a week for one semester, supported by contribution credits and CSR-linked incentives. They bring authenticity, current industry insight, real career visibility, and role modelling. Teachers receive reinforcement. Students gain clarity. Industry helps shape its own future workforce.

District STEM Operator Academies: India's innovation bottleneck is not just scientists. It is also the shortage of skilled operators, technicians, instrument specialists, and lab managers. These academies, jointly run by institutions and industry, can train youth in equipment handling, calibration and testing, prototyping, quality systems, and repair and maintenance. Europe's technician schools and America's community-college lab-tech programmes show how vital this layer is. India urgently needs its own.

STEM Access Pass: A simple but powerful reform is a subscription that lets any student use participating labs and sandbox rooms across institutions. This model increases lab utilisation, gives institutions predictable revenue, ensures equitable access, and breaks the public-private resource divide. It is practical, democratic, and deployable at national scale.

Rural Talent Express: India's talent is everywhere but access is not. A Rural Talent Express fleet — mobile labs, drone classrooms, coding buses, and sensor vans — can bring monthly exposure to electronics, drone mapping, coding, sample testing, and materials basics. This ensures that the next generation of inventors may emerge from any block, not only major cities.

Access → Exposure → Capability → Innovation. This is the cycle that built the EU's maker ecosystems and America's innovation clusters. India already has the talent; it needs to give that talent early trust and early tools. If we build this Knowledge Grid now, by 2030 India will see every Class 10 student confident with real instruments, rural districts contributing innovation, strong industry-academia collaboration, a large, skilled technical workforce, and STEM becoming a national capability, not a specialised niche.

India does not require decades to transform its scientific destiny but intent, coordination, and a redesigned ecosystem.

The writer is the COO and National Coordinator of I-STEM

From Page One

Venugopal meets Stalin as Congress eyes more seats in DMK alliance

He was accompanied by Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K. Selvaperunthagai and Girish Chodankar, AICC in-charge for Tamil Nadu. The Congress was allotted 25 seats in 2021.

Sources privy to the discussions said the DMK explained its position to the delegation. "The meeting went well, but nothing has been finalised. We hope that the alliance remains intact and strong," a source said. A DMK source, however, confirmed that the party was ready to part with a Rajya Sabha seat for the Congress.

The Congress delegation agreed to "get back" to the DMK leadership.

With more parties seeking accommodation in the alliance, the DMK is under pressure to reduce its own share of seats.

DMK treasurer T.R. Baalu, who heads the seat-sharing committee, reportedly asked the IUML leadership to scale down its demand to two seats instead of the three it contested last time, as the DMK itself was reducing its share.

According to a Congress leader, Mr. Venugopal handed over a sealed envelope from party leader Sonia Gandhi to Mr. Stalin. DMK sources, however, did not confirm this.

Earlier in the day, the IUML sought five seats. IUML leader Kader Mohideen told journalists that during former DMK president M. Karunanidhi's time, Muslim political parties were allotted 16 constituencies. "We have sought five seats now. We hope at least four will be allotted," he said.

Mr. Mohideen said the IUML was not merely a political party but a socio-political organisation representing the 'jamaats' in Tamil Nadu. "We maintain a balance between *The Quran*, the sayings of the Prophet, and the Indian Constitution. We want 16 seats for Muslim organisations. There is hardly any constituency without Muslim voters," he said.

According to Mr. Mohideen, "Mr. Baalu underlined the need to allot seats to new entrants such as the DMDK and Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam and requested allies to sacrifice a few seats. The DMK is also prepared to sacrifice a few seats."

(*With inputs from Udhav Naig*)

DMK will disprove claim that it can't win consecutive terms: Shanmugam

CPI(M) State secretary says the ruling party has clarity on issues and is mobilising its cadre against the anti-people policies of the BJP govt.; the CPI(M), which has been invited for seat-sharing talks, will seek double-digit seats this time, he adds

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary P. Shanmugam has said the DMK-led alliance will win in the 2026 Assembly election in Tamil Nadu, disproving the claim that the party is incapable of securing consecutive electoral victories.

"I say this because the alliance is very strong. All major parties are part of it. In the past, the DMK did not take to the streets against the Centre. Now, the party has clarity on issues, and is mobilising its cadre against the anti-people policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party government. The third factor is the people-oriented welfare schemes of the DMK government. There is no alternative to the DMK-led alliance that can override all these factors," he said in an interview to *The Hindu*.

Mr. Shanmugam dismissed the argument that the AIADMK had gained in strength by bringing together the estranged leaders. "It is not newly gained strength. There is merely an attempt to mend a broken AIADMK. It is a broken pot, and the BJP is trying to fix it. There is no emotional cohesion," he said.

P. Shanmugam dismissed the argument that the AIADMK had gained strength by bringing together estranged leaders.

"Edappadi K. Palaniswami [AIADMK general secretary] refused to include [expelled coordinator] O. Panneerselvam. There are reports that Sasikala [former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's aide] is planning to launch a party. Even T.T.V. Dinakaran joined the alliance under certain compulsions. Can they even come together to organise Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary celebrations," the CPI (M) leader asked.

'No clarity in NDA'

He said there was no clarity between the BJP and the AIADMK on the alliance leadership. "Mr. Palaniswami says the AIADMK will form the government, while the BJP says the National Democratic Alliance [NDA] will form a coalition government. Union Minister Piyush Goyal appears to be deciding who should take the lead, while Mr. Palaniswami remains a side actor and a mute spectator," he said.

Mr. Shanmugam said the political conditions favoured the DMK-led alliance.

"One of the key reasons is the bias of the BJP-led Union government in fund allocation and grant of approval for schemes. The prevailing sentiment is strongly against the Union government, which works to the advantage of the DMK," he said.

Reiterating that the welfare schemes of the DMK government provided an added advantage, Mr. Shanmugam said the alliance had remained strong and cohesive for the past eight years. "The alliance partners have been united in conducting agitations and campaigns on issues concerning the welfare of Tamil Nadu. Taken together, these factors significantly affect the prospects of the Opposition alliances," he said.

Asked about the DMK's promise to shut down State-run Tasmac shops in the past, Mr. Shanmugam said his party did not favour total prohibition.

"Drinking has been a human habit for centuries. Today, sales are regulated through Tasmac. As per our party constitution, a person with a drinking habit cannot continue as a party member. Even those advocating total prohibition have no concrete plan to implement it. Prohibition may lead to illicit brewing and sale, with bootleggers controlling entire districts," he said.

As an alternative, he suggested reducing the number of TASMAC liquor outlets and their working hours. "Liquor is available even in Gujarat, where prohibition is in force. All States in India sell liquor. The question is: who should sell it – private contractors or the government? If liquor is banned in Tamil Nadu, people will travel to Puducherry. The issue must be approached from the perspective of rehabilitation. Prohibition will not solve all problems; it is practically impossible," he said.

Asked whether Tasmac revenue should be used to fund welfare schemes, Mr. Shanmugam said it remained an important source of revenue, along with sand mining and registration.

"Tasmac was not started by the DMK. Both the DMK and the AIADMK have run liquor outlets. Can former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami say he would close them if the AIADMK returns to power? Can the BJP make such a promise? Only those with no realistic chance of winning elections promise total prohibition," he said.

Mr. Shanmugam said the CPI(M), which has been invited for seat-sharing talks on February 27, would seek a two-digit number of seats.

"Last time, driven by the compulsion to defeat the AIADMK and the BJP, we signed the seat-sharing agreement [for six seats]. We were the last ally to do so. There was disappointment among our party units," he said.

'Vijay keen on contesting from north Chennai'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) general secretary (election campaign management) Aadhav Arjuna on Sunday claimed that party president Vijay's intention was to contest from an Assembly segment in north Chennai and moved a resolution for the actor-politician to contest from the Perambur Assembly constituency.

'For development'

Speaking at a party meeting in Perambur, he said Mr. Vijay had expressed his desire to contest from a seat "plagued by severe poverty, unemployment among youth, lack of educational opportunities for women, and riddled with alcoholism and drug addiction", with a vision of transforming it into a developed region such as Singapore. "North Chennai suffers from poverty. The DMK fostered rowdyism here for its gains," Mr. Arjuna claimed.

"We [party members] also wish he would contest either from Kolathur or Radhakrishnan Nagar, as well. Since north Chennai had been consistently neglected and sidelined by the DMK for over 50 years, our leader [Mr. Vijay] is the only one capable of breaking this cycle," the TVK leader added.

Stalin gave ₹5,000 only because of pressure from our party: Palaniswami

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The DMK government led by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin gave ₹5,000 to beneficiaries of the *Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thittam* a few days ago only because of the pressure mounted by the AIADMK, party general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami said at a public meeting near Madhavaram on Sunday.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami speaking at a meeting near Madhavaram on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

He recalled having made 10 electoral assurances, including one to grant a monthly assistance of ₹2,000 to all women heads of families holding ration cards. Soon after his party announced the promises, Mr. Stalin grew anxious and credited the sum into the accounts of the beneficiaries, he said. Mr. Palaniswami said the AIADMK was a party where even a worker could become its general secretary, and the Chief Minister. But that was not the case in the DMK. Though DMK general secretary Duraimurugan was the longest-serving MLA now, he was not made the Deputy Chief Minister "only because he is not a family member of late leader M. Karunanidhi", he said.

Accusing Mr. Stalin prioritising his family's welfare over that of the people, he said DMK rule was promoting dynasty politics and wondered whether such a party should continue in power. Udhayanidhi Stalin got the post of Deputy Chief Minister without working for the party, and he qualified for the post only because he was the Chief Minister's son, Mr. Palaniswami said.

The DMK, he said, had looted the State while being in power. Mr. Stalin was a "traitor" as he failed to keep several electoral assurances.

Rejecting Mr. Stalin's charge that he was afraid ('*bayanthangolli*'), Mr. Palaniswami said: "Unlike you, we are not hitching a ride on the back of many alliance parties," and added Mr. Stalin should not underestimate the AIADMK. The DMK government had increased the State's debt and the people will have to bear the burden, he said.

Earlier in the day, referring to the Delhi Police's arrest of six Bangladeshi nationals for allegedly planning a terror attack in Tiruppur, Mr. Palaniswami charged that the DMK government had pushed the State's law-and-order situation to an alarming low, claiming it had moved beyond ordinary crime and into terrorism.

AMMK to hold seat-sharing talks with BJP, not AIADMK, says Dhinakaran

The Hindu Bureau
MAYILADUTHURAI

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) general secretary T.T.V. Dhinakaran said on Sunday that seat-sharing discussions for the upcoming Assembly election would be held with the Bharatiya Janata Party, reiterating his party was a part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) "through the BJP and not the AIADMK".

Incidentally, the AIADMK is the dominant partner in the alliance. Speaking to reporters after attending a wedding reception at Kollidam near Sirkazhi in Mayiladuthurai district, Mr. Dhinakaran said the AMMK had joined the NDA led by the BJP and seat allocation talks would be conducted through the national party. "We joined the NDA with the BJP. Seat-sharing talks will happen through the BJP. The number of seats is yet to be finalised," he said.

T.T.V. Dhinakaran

Mr. Dhinakaran said the AMMK would field candidates while focusing on strengthening the alliance and he would not contest the election and had not sought a Rajya Sabha seat. His decision was aimed at avoiding "unnecessary complications" and ensuring unity within the alliance.

Criticising expelled AIADMK coordinator O. Panneerselvam, he said recent political developments and statements by supporters of Mr. Panneerselvam invoking the names of former Chief Ministers M.G. Ramachandran and Jayalalithaa had hurt the sentiments of party cadre. He said such actions were contrary to the legacy of leaders who had consistently opposed the DMK.

While acknowledging leaders are free to take political decisions, Mr. Dhinakaran described the developments involving Mr. Panneerselvam's group as "painful and condemnable" from the perspective of party workers and emphasised the need for loyalty to leaders even after their lifetime.

Earlier in the day, referring to the Delhi Police's arrest of six Bangladeshi nationals for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to carry out a terror attack in Tiruppur, Mr. Dhinakaran criticised the DMK government for having failed in ensuring the safety of the people of Tamil Nadu. He charged that the numbers of murders, dacoity and crimes against women were on the rise. "What will the DMK government say now over the arrests by the Delhi Police? In 2022, it termed the explosion in Coimbatore a cylinder blast and tried to deceive the people."

Mr. Dhinakaran further contended that there were questions as to whether the State's Anti Terrorism Squad, which was established in 2023, was in deep slumber. He added that it was certain the people would bring an end to the DMK during the Assembly election.

Congress still weighing options ahead of seat-sharing discussion

Udhav Naig
CHENNAI

While the Congress prepares for tough negotiations with the DMK over seat allocation for the Assembly election and possibly over "power-sharing", sources in the party indicated that the leadership was still "seriously weighing" options. This comes against the backdrop of the DMK looking to accommodate newer parties, which would make it difficult for the party to accept the Congress's demands.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a Congress leader, who will be sitting at the negotiating table, said he wishes "these discussions [about pushing for more seats and seeking a share in power] had taken place six months ago", and not "just before the election".

"The optics are not great. Imagine raising these issues, creating a big hue and cry... and settling for 28 or 29 or 30 seats? We should have debated, discussed, and raised these issues – six months ago. And moved out of the alliance if we wanted to. The Delhi high command is still talking about 41 seats," he said.

"The DMK is trying to bring in smaller players – Makkal Needhi Maiam (already in), Sridhar Vandayar's party and actor Karunas. It has roped in the DMDK as well, mainly because it is concerned about the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam joining the AIADMK alliance. The DMK doesn't want to leave any stone unturned. Given this situation, how much can we realistically hope to get? If we settle for 30 seats, would that not make us look weak?" he asked.

Meanwhile, a senior member of the VCK, another ally, said if the DMDK was allotted more than six or seven seats, it meant the DMK was preparing for the Congress's exit. At the same time, he added: "We expect the DMK would agree to our demand of 10 seats, considering the value we bring to the alliance and our performance since 2019. The DMK understands our value."

On the logic of DMK seeking to contest in more seats, he said: "The DMK needs to contest in 170-180 seats to ensure it gets a majority on its own. There will be anti-incumbency."

Spirit of patriotism was deeply entrenched within Jayalalithaa, says Prime Minister in *Mann Ki Baat*

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to the National Democratic Alliance voter base in poll-bound Tamil Nadu on Sunday by paying tribute to late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, praising her leadership and welfare initiatives.

He said Jayalalithaa, whose birth anniversary is on Tuesday, had a "crystal clear" thought process and had a lasting impact on the people of the State.

The BJP is in alliance with the AIADMK in the State, where the Assembly election is expected to be held in April-May.

In his *Mann Ki Baat* address, the Prime Minister said *Amma* Jayalalithaa had worked for the welfare of society and he still felt the deep affection the people of Tamil Nadu had for her.

Paying tribute to Jayalalithaa, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recounted how the late leader had attended his swearing-in ceremonies as Gujarat Chief Minister in 2002 and 2012. FILE PHOTO

"Our *Nari Shakti* connection with her has been even more special. This is also because while in government, she made many commendable efforts for the welfare of mothers, sisters, and daughters," he said.

> Many years ago, she invited me to Chennai over lunch on the auspicious occasion of Pongal. That affectionate gesture will remain unforgettable for me
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister of India

The Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP on Sunday attacked the ruling DMK and said the law-and-order situation in the State was "in shambles".

Concrete steps

Recalling Jayalalithaa's tenure, Mr. Modi said the late leader "took concrete steps to maintain law and order in the State". "The spirit of patriotism was deeply embedded within her. She was also deeply proud of India's cultural heritage," Mr. Modi said. He recounted how Jayalalithaa attended his swearing-in ceremonies as Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002 and 2012.

"Her thinking was crystal clear and her thoughts uncluttered. This was a significant characteristic of hers. Many years ago, she invited me to Chennai over lunch on the auspicious occasion of Pongal. That affectionate gesture will remain unforgettable for me," he said.

On multiple occasions in the past, the Prime Minister has spoken about his personal rapport with Jayalalithaa.

Top Maoist leaders surrender in Telangana

Tippiri Tirupati, also known as Devji, lays down arms along with senior leader Malla Raji Reddy and other cadres; Devji is believed to have taken over as general secretary of the banned outfit after the killing of Nambala Keshava Rao; surrender was expected, details to be revealed soon, say police

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Police achieved a huge success in its anti-Maoist operations with the surrender of Tippiri Tirupati, also known as Devji, along with senior leader Malla Raji Reddy and a few others in Asifabad district on Sunday.

A senior police official of Telangana confirmed to *The Hindu* that the top Maoist surrendered and the official information would be revealed a couple of days later.

"The surrender was expected and the police was pursuing it," the official said.

The 62-year-old Devji, a native of Jagtial district, is reported to have succeeded as the general secretary of the CPI (Maoist) after the encounter of Nambala Keshav Rao in May 2025.

Devji's surrender comes in the wake of several senior leaders either being killed in the encounters or laying down their arms to leave the Maoist movement that is getting diluted day by day.

Other cadres follow

Along with Devji, another senior Maoist leader from Telangana playing a key role at the national level, Malla Raji Reddy, also surrendered.

Several cadres of the Maoists also followed their leaders.

Devji's surrender is considered to be a major achievement for the Telangana Police and a setback for the movement. FILE PHOTO

The development comes in the wake of surrendered Maoists asking the rest to lay down their arms as there is no patronage for the militant movement in the present circumstances.

In fact, an influential Maoist, Mallojula Venugopal Rao, a Telangana native, who surrendered along with cadres in Gadchiroli in October 2025, had advised the Maoists to lay down their arms.

The Union government has also fixed March 2026 as the deadline to eliminate the armed struggle from the country.

Major achievement

Devji's surrender is considered to be a major achievement for the Telangana Police since many senior Maoists from Telangana, heading the organisation across the nation, recently surrendered in neighbouring Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh rather than Telangana.

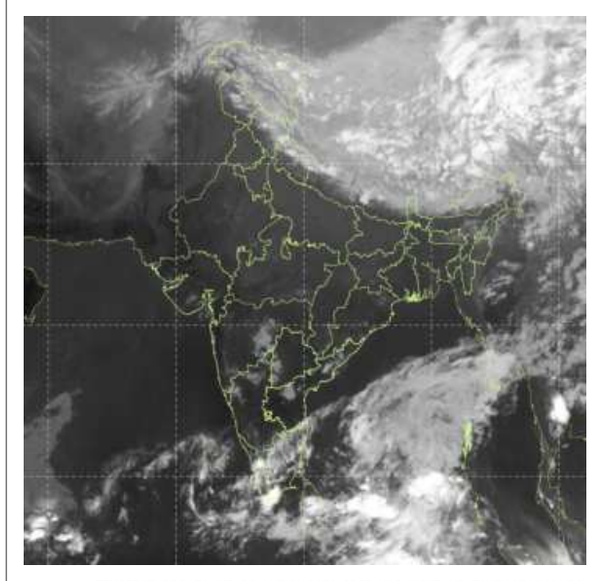
Police officials revealed that Devji played a major role in the creation of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and went on to occupy the key posts within the organisation such as Central Committee member and politburo leader.

Attracted to the armed struggle during his Intermediate days in 1982, Devji was part of the now-banned Radical Students Union (RSU), a student affiliate of the then People's War Group (PWG).

Devji went underground after a case was booked against him during ideological clashes between the RSU and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad in Karimnagar district.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with lightning likely at places over Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, East Madhya Pradesh, Gangetic West Bengal, Telangana and Vidarbha. Squally weather likely to prevail over southwest Bay of Bengal near Southeast Bay of Bengal, and adjoining Sri Lanka coasts.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	--	31.5	17.0
Ahmedabad	--	35.4	18.2
Aizawl	--	30.0	12.2
Allahabad	--	31.2	15.0
Bengaluru	--	32.4	19.6
Bhopal	--	32.2	14.6
Bhubaneswar	--	35.7	18.4
Chandigarh	--	27.2	11.2
Chennai	--	32.9	25.4
Coimbatore	--	34.2	23.4
Dehradun	--	25.9	12.8
Gangtok	--	16.0	10.0
Goa	--	33.0	23.5
Guwahati	--	31.4	15.8
Hubballi	--	34.0	22.0
Hyderabad	--	33.5	21.4
Imphal	--	27.5	11.4
Jaipur	--	29.3	15.4
Kochi	36.0	30.2	22.8
Kohima	--	23.8	10.7
Kolkata	--	33.5	18.2
Kozhikode	0.2	35.1	26.0
Kurnool	—	37.0	22.5
Lucknow	--	29.4	14.0
Madurai	--	37.0	25.0
Mangaluru	—	34.0	23.6
Mumbai	—	31.8	23.1
Mysuru	—	34.0	23.6
New Delhi	—	29.8	13.0
Patna	—	28.8	17.6
Port Blair	—	31.9	25.5
Puducherry	—	31.1	24.1
Pune	—	33.5	17.0
Raipur	—	34.8	20.3
Ranchi	—	29.0	14.0
Shillong	0.1	20.3	9.5
Shimla	—	20.8	9.4
Srinagar	—	20.7	1.7
Thiruvananthapuram	2.0	32.2	24.4
Tiruchi	--	33.9	23.6
Vijayawada	—	35.2	22.2
Visakhapatnam	—	32.0	22.4

(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	.70	.93	75	205	251	
Bengaluru	6	31	17	126	99	
Chennai	.12	.10	60	97	76	
Delhi	.—	110	22	226	167	
Hyderabad	4	8	.8	131	136	
Kolkata	.28	.77	32	225	144	
Lucknow	.14	.28	45	136	144	
Mumbai	4	.63	32	174	141	
Pune	.—	.88	59	230	160	
Visakhapatnam	.14	.73	22	90	128	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 302 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Madikeri, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 18.

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

Karnataka MLA held for taking bribes sent to judicial custody

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Shirahatti MLA and BJP leader Chandru Lamani, who was arrested by the Lokayukta Police while allegedly taking a bribe from a contractor in Gadag district on Saturday, was brought to Bengaluru on Sunday.

He was produced before the judge of the Special Court of Magistrate for criminal cases against former and present MPs and MLAs, at his residence. He was remanded in judicial custody till March 3. Dr. Lamani was shifted to the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison. His personal assistant, Manjunath Valmiki, and an associate, Guru Naik, were also produced before the judge. All three were remanded in judicial custody after the hearing.

The Gadag Lokayukta Police seized ₹5 lakh from a private hospital run by Dr. Lamani, where the bribe was allegedly paid.

Telangana BJP chief detained amid attempts to visit Kamareddy clash site

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP president N. Ramchander Rao, who was stopped from visiting Kamareddy district where Congress and BJP cadre clashed on Saturday, was taken into preventive custody on Sunday morning. He was shifted to the Bolarum police station. Mr. Rao had been under house arrest since Saturday night to foil his attempts to go to Kamareddy and Banswada.

In Kamareddy, tension prevailed due to the challenges and counter-challenges between Kamareddy BJP MLA Venkataramana Reddy and Congress leaders over a parcel of land belonging to Shishu mandir.

Mr. Rao condemned the alleged attack by Congress leaders and workers on the camp office of Mr. Reddy, accusing the Congress government of unleashing a "reign of repression" through illegal arrests and house detentions.

He said that the attack on the BJP MLA's camp office, followed by "indiscriminate arrests" and preventive house arrests of BJP leaders, had exposed the "authoritarian nature" of the Congress.

N. Ramchander Rao

He alleged that he was illegally placed under house arrest ahead of his proposed visit to Banswada and Kamareddy, where he intended to express solidarity with the party MLA.

The State BJP chief also alleged that Congress leaders, unable to substantiate "baseless allegations" against the BJP MLA, resorted to violence instead of engaging in debate.

He said that BJP leaders and cadre were determined to visit Kamareddy and Banswada despite all obstacles.

Karnataka plans phone restrictions for children

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government is mulling over enforcing restrictions on mobile phone usage by children under the age of 16.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah sought the opinions of Vice-Chancellors of public universities, at a meeting which was also attended by the Chancellor, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot.

Mr. Siddaramaiah pointed to youth falling into the trap of drugs, referring to the influence of mobile phones, social media, and content related to drug use and other harmful habits.

Radiant temple

Decked up: The Attukal Bhagavathy temple lights up as preparations for the annual 10-day Pongala festival begins in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Cong. leadership tussle in Karnataka regains traction

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU/ BELAGAVI

The public discussion over leadership change has regained traction in the Congress in Karnataka.

While Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's social media posts on Saturday about being targeted garnered interest, demand for a Dalit Chief Minister has gained momentum.

On Sunday, Social Welfare Minister H.C. Mahadevappa urged the Congress high command and Mr. Siddaramaiah to take a decision to appoint a suitable Dalit leader as the Chief Minister. He cited that there was a considerable Dalit population in the State, which had stood by the Congress. "...a Dalit Chief Minister has to happen," he said.

Siddaramaiah

His comments came on the day that the Chief Minister made another statement on the possibility of a Vokkaliga or Dalit leader becoming Chief Minister only through the Congress.

Over the past fortnight, the leadership issue has again come up with the Chief Minister's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah and Dr. Mahadevappa making statements in favour of Mr. Siddaramaiah's continuation, even as legislators Iqbal Hussain, H.C. Balakrishna, and Shivaganga Basavaraj have supported Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. An overseas trip of Congress legislators is being seen as an effort from the Chief Minister's camp to display strength.

Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi claimed that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had told him that the high command had come to a conclusion on the leadership issue and it would be implemented at an appropriate time.

Congress seeks to implicate CMO in 'wrongful arrest' of Tantri in gold theft case

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress on Sunday sought to implicate Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's office (CMO) in the "wrongful" arrest and incarceration of Sabarimala senior Tantri Kandararu Rajeevaru in the Ayyappa temple gold theft case.

Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala said the CMO had scapegoated the tantri to insulate former and present Devaswom Ministers, as well as the former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president P.S. Prasanth from prosecution.

Cong. leader says the CMO scapegoated the Tantri to insulate Devaswom Ministers from prosecution

Mr. Chennithala relied on the court's granting bail to the tantri last week to make his case. Quoting the order, he said the court concluded that the SIT had "submitted nothing on record or an iota of evidence to establish any positive involvement of the petitioner (Tantri) in the alleged irregularities".

"The High Court-appointed SIT, after a phase, had come under the CMO's control...," he said.

Law Minister P. Rajeeve countered that it was a question for legal experts to decide whether a trial court hearing a bail plea could opine on the merits of the case.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary M.V. Govindan on Sunday said that no one would be protected in the ongoing probe. Reacting to the bail granted to the tantri, Mr. Govindan said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe was still under way and that conclusions on charges could be drawn only after its completion.

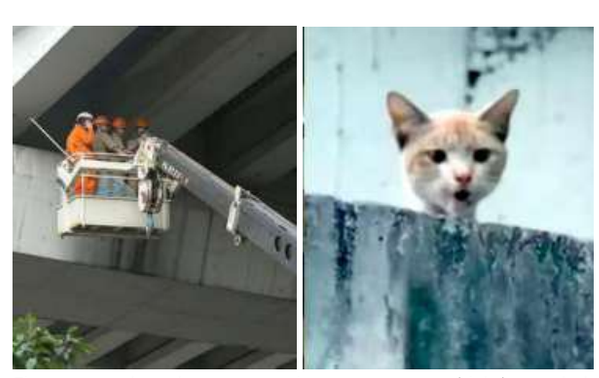
Cats have nine lives? Meet a feline that came back from brink down a Metro pillar

Fire and Rescue Services team, assisted by an animal rescue group, brought the cat down after days of efforts; traction power was shut down at 11 p.m. on Saturday to carry out the rescue

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A cat trapped between the pillars of the Kochi Metro near Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Kaloor, was rescued in the early hours of Sunday after an operation that had to be suspended on Saturday due to practical difficulties.

The Gandhi Nagar Fire and Rescue Services team, assisted by an animal rescue group, brought the cat to safety by 1.30 a.m. The operation had resumed at 12.45 a.m. after the Metro power supply was shut down at 11 p.m. on Saturday. The animal, which had remained atop the pillars for a few days, was later shifted to a veterinary hospital for medical care.



Fire personnel conduct an operation to rescue a cat (right) stranded atop a Metro pillar in Kochi on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGMENT

The cat was brought down amid loud cheers from onlookers.

Fire and Rescue officials launched the operation on Saturday after being alerted by Kochi Metro staff. The cat was first spotted two weeks ago, and Metro staff had been feeding it. However, their attempts to rescue it failed when the animal entered a cavity between the rail and the viaduct.

Though Kochi Metro Rail Ltd. had suspended power supply for 17 minutes on Saturday afternoon to facilitate the rescue attempt, the cat could not be caught at that time.

IUML slams 'beef festival' held by SFI as poll 'gimmick'

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Even as the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) criticised the upcoming movie *Kerala Story 2* as an attempt at deepening communal divisions, the party has taken a stand against the "beef festival" organised by the Students' Federation of India (SFI) in Kerala against the film.

IUML State general secretary P.M.A. Salam on Sunday said that the "provocative" protests were a "cheap political gimmick" of the CPI(M)'s student wing to attract Muslim voters in the poll-bound State.

Tariffs in trouble

The U.S. Supreme Court has done well to limit Trump's presidential powers

In a major blow to a central pillar of U.S. President Donald Trump's foreign policy, the country's Supreme Court (SCOTUS) has ruled by a 6-3 margin that his use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose tariffs on numerous countries is not in accordance with law and must be struck down. With Chief Justice John Roberts and two other conservative justices appointed by Mr. Trump siding with the three liberal justices on the subject, the Court ruled that Mr. Trump's assertion of "extraordinary power to unilaterally impose tariffs of unlimited amount, duration, and scope", is contravened by the absence of "clear congressional authorization" to exercise it. It also observed that the IEEPA contained no reference to tariffs or duties and that the executive had not identified any statute that used the word "regulate" to authorise taxation. Arguing that until now no President has read IEEPA to confer such power, the SCOTUS concluded that all the evidence available and its reading of the statutes implied that the Court believed that "IEEPA does not authorize the President to impose tariffs." Unsurprisingly, Mr. Trump reacted angrily on social media, posting that he would be raising his global tariff rate to 15%, after initially suggesting that it would be imposed at 10%, under the authority conferred to the White House for 150 days under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. Tariffs imposed under laws other than the IEEPA, including those on aluminium and steel under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, are unaffected by this ruling although Mr. Trump would face challenges in bringing fresh tariff rounds under this umbrella.

While multiple countries were slapped with tariffs earlier, including India at a whopping overall rate of 50% owing to Washington's objections to New Delhi purchasing oil from Russia, the impact of the SCOTUS ruling will vary based on the specifics of trade agreements struck, if any. Indian negotiators seeking to conclude the terms of a free trade agreement would not be blamed for feeling like they were suspended in limbo after the ruling has changed the terms of debate on which sectors to open up to concessionary rates in bilateral trade, especially after the American side's punitive potential has now been defanged to an extent. At a broader level, the ruling is to be welcomed by anyone valuing robust democratic checks and balances. The two administrations of Mr. Trump have stretched, and in some cases exceeded, the scope of permissible policy actions under domestic and international law. Until this ruling by the court, there has been a deafening silence on containing such actions by institutions rooted in constitutional authority that are capable of imposing a countervailing force.

Lines in the sand

The Pax Silica alliance holds benefits, but could also tie India down

India's entry into the Pax Silica alliance represents a strategic manoeuvre to secure its technological future by aligning with a U.S.-led coalition focused on the infrastructure for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and critical minerals. Its membership could boost domestic industrial goals by complementing initiatives such as India Semiconductor, IndiaAI, and National Critical Mineral Missions. By joining this ecosystem, India will aim to secure raw materials supply and advanced equipment, attract investment, and influence global tech and security standards. India does not currently possess significant capacity in processing critical minerals nor does it extract them in large quantities. That said, for the rest of the world, including the Pax Silica group, the more important implication is in India's potential to shift the centre of gravity for global manufacturing and consumption. India's massive demand can be useful to financially justify new supply chains, especially ones not pegged to China; the country can also provide the engineering talent and assembly capacity required to diversify the global technology supply chain. India's participation could also add significant geopolitical weight to the bloc's efforts to establish democratic governance for critical technologies, rendering the coalition's standards more viable.

Of course, there is no such thing as a free lunch. The implications for India include potential economic retaliation from China, such as trade friction, slower market access, or pressure on upstream inputs such as minerals and active pharmaceutical ingredients. The Pax Silica partnership's focus on "trusted ecosystems" could also translate into rigid expectations regarding export controls and technology-transfer guardrails, which could clash with India's preference for not locking itself into alliances but, instead, pursuing what External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has called "issue-based alignments". The government could open itself up to more criticism at home particularly if the U.S.-led bloc also begins to shape India's domestic AI rules in ways that look externally driven. Smaller Indian firms attempting to join global value chains could also face significant financial burdens and longer timelines due to stricter security audit requirements. In the end, the success of Pax Silica will depend on whether its partners go beyond talks to build a real-world supply chain where raw minerals are mined, refined, turned into chips, and used to power AI systems, all among the pact's members, creating a secure technology network that drives India's economic growth while protecting the alliance from disruptions.

Parliament's historic law, an extended wait for women

S.Y. Quraishi

is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder: The Making of the Great Indian Election'

When Parliament passed the Women's Reservation Act in September 2023, millions of Indian women believed that their moment had finally arrived. One-third of all Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats would be reserved for them. The legislation was hailed as a historic victory for gender justice, ending decades of parliamentary stalemate. But the Act contains a clause that changes everything: reservation will begin only "after the first Census taken after the year 2026" and the subsequent delimitation of constituencies. Thus, on the Act's own terms, implementation in 2029 is constitutionally impossible.

This is not a political prediction. It is a legal and logistical certainty. The next general election will be held in 2029 – before the constitutional prerequisites can be completed. Unless Parliament amends the Constitution again, Indian women cannot exercise their guaranteed representation until at least 2034.

The constitutional roadblock

The timeline is unforgiving. The Act mandates two sequential steps: first, a national Census; second, a delimitation exercise based on that Census data. Both are constitutionally required. Neither can be bypassed.

The next Census is scheduled for 2027. After enumeration, the data must be verified, compiled, and officially published – a process that, historically, has taken between 12 to 18 months. Only after official publication can the President of India constitute a Delimitation Commission under Article 82.

That Commission then faces an unprecedented task: redrawing 543 parliamentary constituencies and over 4,000 State Assembly constituencies. As this writer examined in these pages recently, the Commission must balance population distribution, administrative boundaries, geographic compactness, community representation, and the creation of reserved constituencies for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and now women.

India has constituted four Delimitation Commissions since Independence. Not one completed its work in fewer than three years. The most recent, established in 2002, took six years –and it was an exercise which only redrew internal boundaries without reallocating seats among States. The next Commission will be far more complex, reallocating seats among States for the first time since 1976 while implementing women's reservation simultaneously.

Even on the most optimistic timeline – Census completed in 2027, data published by early 2029, the Commission working with unusual speed – delimitation cannot conclude before 2032 or 2033. But these days, anything is possible. Without a new constitutional amendment removing the Census-delimitation linkage, women's reservation cannot be implemented in 2029. Was this delay accidental or by design? The political arithmetic provides the answer. If reservation was implemented immediately within the existing 543-seat Lok Sabha, 181 constituencies would become women-only, displacing an equal number of male incumbents overnight. No political party wanted to bear that electoral cost.

> To tie the Women's Reservation Act — a constitutional promise — to delimitation fails India's women

The solution was elegant in its political logic: tie reservation to delimitation. After the 2027 Census, when constituencies are redrawn, the total number of Lok Sabha seats is expected to increase substantially – possibly to around 800, perhaps even 888. With an enlarged House, one-third of seats can be reserved for women without displacing current male Members of Parliament.

The political pain is absorbed by expansion rather than replacement. This explains the mechanism. It does not justify the consequence: another decade-long delay for half of India's population.

A history of waiting

Indian women have already waited several years for this legislation. The first Women's Reservation Bill was introduced in 1996. It was debated, amended, reintroduced, and blocked repeatedly. The Bill lapsed with successive Lok Sabhas. It passed the Rajya Sabha in 2010 but never came to a vote in the Lok Sabha.

The 2023 Act was supposed to end that wait. Instead, it has extended it. If delimitation is completed in 2032 or 2033, reservation will apply only from the 2034 general election. Women who celebrated the Act's passage in 2023 will wait through another full election cycle before they can contest a single reserved seat.

By tying women's representation to delimitation, the Act has entangled gender justice with India's most divisive demographic issue: the north-south seat distribution imbalance. When delimitation occurs, States with faster population growth will demand significantly more parliamentary seats. States that invested in population control will see their proportional representation decline. This tension is precisely why delimitation was frozen in 1976 and extended in 2001. By linking women's reservation to this unresolved federal arithmetic, Parliament has placed women's rights hostage to a debate that has paralysed consensus for half a century. This deadlock could further delay delimitation – and with it, women's reservation.

Why should half of India's citizens wait for an exercise that has nothing to do with gender equality? The constitutional timeline is not the only problem. The Act leaves critical design questions unanswered.

First, why does reservation exclude the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils? The Act applies only to directly elected lower houses.

Second, the Act provides no sub-reservation for Other Backward Class (OBC) women, even though Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women receive proportional sub-quotas. OBC women constitute nearly 40% of India's female population.

Third, the Act mandates that reserved constituencies will rotate after each general election but offers no operational clarity. Will women candidates shift constituencies every five years? How will rotation work when delimitation itself reshuffles boundaries?

These unanswered questions compound the implementation crisis. Without clear rules, political parties will exploit ambiguities, legal challenges will multiply, and women candidates will bear the costs.

A straightforward solution

The constitutional barrier is real, but not inevitable. Parliament created it; Parliament can remove it.

There is no constitutional necessity tying women's reservation to delimitation. Article 15(3) already empowers the State to make "special provisions" for women and children. Parliament can exercise that power again to enable immediate implementation.

The solution is straightforward: amend the Constitution to permit reservation before delimitation, either by modestly expanding the Lok Sabha immediately or by applying reservation within current constituencies for two election cycles.

Alternatively, Parliament could expand the House incrementally – adding 180 seats earmarked exclusively for women – before full delimitation concludes. This would deliver on the reservation promise while avoiding displacement of incumbents.

None of these approaches is technically impossible. What is required is political will.

The government must clarify its road map now. Will it delink reservation from delimitation through amendment? Will it expand the Lok Sabha preemptively? Will it freeze State-wise seat allocation to prevent the north-south debate from derailing women's representation?

Parliament must also address the design gaps: extend reservation to the Upper Houses, include OBC sub-reservation, and publish clear rotation rules developed in consultation with women's organisations and constitutional experts.

Above all, Parliament must recognise one principle: representation delayed is representation denied.

India cannot afford another historic law that waits endlessly to take effect. If reservation is a constitutional promise – and the 2023 Act declares that it is – then it must now become a constitutional reality. Not in 2034. Not after another election cycle. Now.

India's women have waited long enough.

India's leap, from back office to global brain trust

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The narrative of India as the 'world's back office' has been officially retired. By early 2026, a profound transformation had occurred. India has become a strategic-nerve-centre for the global corporate elite. What were once known as captive centres are now Global Capability Centres (GCCs), which are sophisticated hubs that do not merely support the parent company but also define its future. This transition from cost-cutting centres to global growth engines marks a watershed moment in India's economic history.

The evolution of Indian GCCs has progressed through four distinct waves, culminating in the current GCC 4.0 era. Initially, centres were established to exploit labour arbitrage and handle routine IT and business process tasks. However, in the last few years, there has been a decisive move toward end-to-end product ownership.

Today, nearly 58% of GCCs in India are investing heavily in Agentic AI, which are autonomous Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems that can reason and execute complex tasks, thereby moving beyond mere experimentation to enterprise-scale deployment. These centres now manage global strategy leadership, high-end research and development (R&D), and proprietary intellectual property (IP) creation, making them indispensable nodes in the global value chain.

Benefits for companies and the nation

For multinational corporations (MNCs), the Indian GCC offers a unique competitive advantage: access to a multi-dimensional talent pool at a scale found nowhere else. With India housing over 1,800 GCCs and employing nearly two million professionals, companies can now drive faster innovation cycles through a follow-the-sun model. Beyond technology, these centres have become global "Centres of Excellence" (CoEs) for finance, legal, and human resources, allowing parent companies to centralise their most critical functions in a high-skill, high-efficiency environment.

Today, Indian GCCs act as global CoEs that drive high-end R&D in fields such as quantum computing, semiconductor design, and Agentic AI. These centres no longer support the parent company. They have end-to-end product lifecycles, from initial conceptualisation and architecture to global deployment and customer feedback loops. This evolution means that the shadow leadership housed in Indian GCCs often possesses greater technical depth and execution power than the traditional headquarters.

> India's Global Capability Centre revolution is drawing eyeballs, but there are challenges as talent gaps, cyber threats and fiscal pressures

For the Indian population, the GCC boom has catalysed high-value employment and regional development. These roles are intellectually stimulating and offer compensation far above that of traditional service-sector jobs, creating a new class of global professionals. Perhaps, most significantly, growth is finally trickling down into Tier-II and Tier-III cities such as Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), and Kochi (Kerala). This geographic diversification reduces the strain on saturated metros such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad while stimulating local real estate, infrastructure, and retail economies across India.

Steering through challenges

Despite the record growth, the GCC ecosystem faces challenges that could threaten its momentum. The primary risk is the widening of the talent gap. Although India produces millions of engineers, the demand for niche skills in AI security, cloud architecture and quantum-resistant cryptography vastly outstrips the supply. This has triggered a fierce war for talent, leading to wage inflation that could eventually erode the value proposition of multinational corporations (MNC).

Furthermore, GCCs hold more critical global data and have become prime targets for state-sponsored cyber-attacks. With the implementation of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, the pressure on GCCs to maintain flawless cybersecurity governance has reached unprecedented levels. Simultaneously, the introduction of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Global Minimum Tax (Pillar Two) fundamentally alters the tax arbitrage benefit that many MNCs previously enjoyed. With a global floor of 15% tax and the continued bone of contention regarding India's 24% markup for software R&D under Safe Harbour rules, fiscal predictability has become a top-tier board concern.

Finally, geopolitical volatility and protectionism pose long-term risks to investment. As of early 2026, global trade professionals are increasingly wary of United States tariff volatility and reshoring policies that encourage MNCs to return critical data operations to their home markets.

While India remains an attractive destination, owing to its scale, any shift toward digital sovereignty in western nations could slow the pace of new GCC setups. Additionally, as India-based centres now handle 13.7% of global cyber-attack incidents (Cyfirma Report, 2023), the threat of state-sponsored espionage and intellectual property theft has made cybersecurity the most expensive operational mandate for modern GCCs.

Need for proactive policymaking

To secure India's position as the world's innovation capital, policymakers must transition from regulators to active facilitators. The National GCC Policy Framework, proposed in the 2026-27 Budget cycle, is a step in the right direction, but execution is the key. The government should introduce a "Single-Window Clearance" system specifically for GCCs to streamline the establishment of legal entities. Additionally, rationalising transfer pricing norms and providing tax safe harbours for R&D-intensive operations will provide the fiscal certainty that global boards demand. By fostering deeper industry-academia collaborations to upskill the workforce in deep tech and offering capital subsidies for Tier-II expansion, India can ensure that its GCC revolution remains sustainable for the next decade.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Court versus Trump

The Supreme Court of the U.S. rejecting U.S. President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs is a reflection of how elected governments take laws for granted. It is time that Mr. Trump respects federal laws and behaves like a President of the American people, not as a sole leader of the world.

Prabhu Raj R.,
Bengaluru

The Nilgiris under siege

The sweeping land changes in the Nilgiris (Tamil Nadu, "Hollowing out the hills", February 22, 2026) highlight not merely an environmental story but also one of governance failure hiding in plain sight. Estates are now vanishing with builders exploiting regulatory loopholes. When recharge areas are paved over and shola patches replaced by concrete, the downstream consequences for Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Erode are not speculative but inevitable. The solution demands more than satellite monitoring or belated notices. A meaningful Minimum Support Price for tea, strict enforcement of the Tamil Nadu Land Reforms Act, and community-level awareness can avert small tea estate distress sales. The Blue Mountains cannot afford to wait for the Madras High Court to act alone.

K. Chidanand Kumar,
Bengaluru

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

Protecting the freedom of speech of MPs

P.D.T. Achary

Former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha

Recent happenings in Parliament have brought into sharp focus the issue of freedom of speech in the Houses, guaranteed by Article 105 of the Constitution. Of course, this is subject to other provisions of the Constitution and the rules of the Houses. That the freedom of speech of MPs is subject to the rules of the Houses seems to have created the wrong impression that the provisions of the rules can in a way override constitutional rights. The root of the problem which the leaders of the Opposition face in Parliament lies in this erroneous impression. The Supreme Court has clarified on many occasions that the restrictions on the rights of citizens should not be such that they eclipse those very rights. This principle would apply to the freedom of speech of MPs in the Houses as well. The rules of the Houses are meant to regulate the conduct of the proceedings in accordance with the Constitution.

Expunging words

The question which has arisen in the first part of the Budget Session of Parliament is whether there were too many restrictions imposed on the freedom of speech of the members of the Houses, in particular, the leaders of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, reportedly wrote to the Chairman about the expunction of many portions of his speech and requested him to restore what was cut. His complaint is that after these cuts, his speeches made little sense.

An MP has the right to speak freely in the House and to have their remarks entered into the official records of the House. If the speech is not recorded, is partially recorded, or if many portions are arbitrarily deleted, the MP's right under Article 105 is infringed. Of course, Rule 380 permits the Speaker to expunge words if they are unparliamentary, defamatory, indecent, or undignified. But it permits the Speaker to expunge only the offending word and not sentences or paragraphs from the speech. Naturally, in a civilised debate in the Legislature, there should be no place for offending words which destroy the sanctity of debates and lower the dignity of the House. That is why rules confer the right on the presiding officers of the Houses to remove them from the records. But while exercising this right, the officers are duty-bound to ensure that the freedom of speech of MPs in the Houses is not diminished.

The Constitution adopted freedom of speech as the main privilege of MPs. As Erskine May, an authority on parliamentary system, says, these are special rights which are indispensable for members, for the smooth functioning of the legislature. Only the free, frank, and fearless expression of members' views enables the Legislature to perform its role effectively. If the rule on expunction is applied mindlessly to speeches made in the House, it will stifle the freedom of speech.

What are the constitutional provisions and the rules of the House to which the freedom of speech in the House is subject? Article 121 says no discussion can be held in Parliament on the conduct of a judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court except when the House considers a motion for the removal of that judge. As regards the rules of the House, they impose certain restrictions on the freedom of speech, such as sub judice matters, personal allegations, questioning the bona fides of fellow members, reflecting on the conduct of persons in high authority, and defamatory or incriminatory allegations against any person without giving prior notice to the Speaker. These rules in no way stifle the freedom to speak in the House. The problem arises when these rules are sought to be weaponised. A mindless application of the expunction rule will make a speech incoherent. It must be kept in mind that speeches made in Parliament are preserved for posterity.

> The freedom of speech of MPs is subject to the rules of the Houses. This seems to have created the wrong impression that the provisions of the rules can override constitutional rights

Parliamentary conduct and practices have a firm normative base. After independence, when India was transitioning to the post-colonial system, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru reset the relationship between the government and Parliament and the government and the Opposition in Parliament. He would do two things in this context. First, he would be present during the question hour every day and supplement or even correct the answers given by ministers because he believed that Parliament should be given the correct and full information. Second, he would come to the House to listen to the speeches of the Opposition leaders because he believed that he would get to know the reality only from their speeches and not from the adulatory paeans from his own party members. There cannot be a democratic Parliament without an Opposition. As the constitutional lawyer Ivor Jennings said, "Attacks upon the government and upon individual ministers are the function of the Opposition. The duty of the Opposition is to oppose."

A tragic development

The Parliament of the day seems to be losing this perspective. Ours is perhaps the only Parliament in the democratic world where a leader of the Opposition is effectively prevented from speaking in the House and against whom a motion is brought to have him disqualified for life. It is tragic that such an attempt is being made by a senior member of the House when it should be clear that Parliament has no power to disqualify a member. But this move is a pointer to the irretrievable breakdown of the relationship between the government and the Opposition. Jennings' words are prophetic: "The minority agrees that the majority must govern and the majority agrees that the minority should criticise. The process of parliamentary government would breakdown if there were no mutual forbearance."

Cricket goes on, no accountability yet

While the IPL resumes, questions from the 2025 stampede remain unanswered

STATE OF PLAY

K.V. Aditya Bhardwaj
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After much deliberation, the Karnataka Cabinet recently cleared a proposal to allow big-ticket cricket matches, particularly those of the Indian Premier League (IPL), at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. It was in front of this venue in the heart of Bengaluru that 11 Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) fans died in a stampede in June 2025. The team's trophy victory after a 17-year wait had led to a fan frenzy, leading to the tragedy.

Following the incident, the State government, which faced criticism for its alleged failure at crowd control, imposed a blanket ban on cricket matches at the stadium. It did not even allow the Vijay Hazare trophy without spectators. An expert committee, led by Greater Bengaluru Authority chief M. Maheshwar Rao, had found that the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), which runs the stadium, had not implemented the safety measures recommended by the John Michael Cunha Commission after the stampede.

But with former Indian pacer Venkatesh Prasad taking over as chairperson of the KSCA recently, the focus shifted to reviving cricket at the stadium. The State government has now given conditional approval to hold IPL matches this season, after the KSCA promised that all safety precautions would be implemented in a phased manner. As RCB is the defending champion, the opening match of this season is expected to be held here.

The stampede also prompted a debate on relocating the stadium out of the Central Business District. There are four major sporting venues in the Central Business District – M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bangalore Golf Club, Bangalore Turf Club, and Kanteerava Indoor Stadium – all within a 2-kilometre radius of the State legislature. Last week, the Cabinet also cleared a proposal to shift racing activity out of the Bangalore Turf Club to Kunigal on the city's outskirts.

The discussions have centred around the judicious use of public land and congestion caused by these venues. Over the last eight months, there have been three proposals by the Bangalore Development Authority, the Karnataka Housing Board, and the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority to build cricket stadiums on the city's outskirts, though none of these locations are well served by public transport. By contrast, as many have pointed out, Wankhede Stadium (Mumbai), Eden Gardens (Kolkata), M.A. Chidambaram Stadium (Chennai) are all located in the centre of these cities. Even M. Chinnaswamy Stadium is set to remain within the city, according to the recent Cabinet decision.

The Cunha Commission recommended not holding "any large crowd events" at the stadium, though it did not clarify whether this includes cricket matches. The stadium, built in 1969, has a seating capacity of 33,000 and did not experience a stampede before the tragedy of June 4, 2025. That episode was caused by an unprecedented situation in which a crowd of over 2.5 lakh gathered around the stadium to join the unticketed RCB victory celebrations. An open-air felicitation of the team on the steps of the Vidhana Soudha by the Chief Minister and an announcement of a victory parade of the team that eventually did not take place contributed to the chaos.

Using the tragedy as a benchmark to ban matches was seen as a knee-jerk reaction aimed at covering up the government's own culpability. The terms of reference of the Cunha Commission were also set in such a way that the Commission only examined what happened at the stadium and did not take a holistic view of the incident. Though the Bengaluru City Police were blamed and the City Commissioner was suspended in an unprecedented manner, the Chief Minister's sacking of his political secretary for his alleged role in the day's preparations was an indirect admission of culpability. But now, as public anger over the mismanagement that led to the stampede has cooled off, the government has allowed KSCA to also resume cricket matches at the stadium.

The RCB, the event managers who were part of the victory celebrations, and the KSCA were all booked in the stampede case. Hearing petitions filed by them challenging the FIR, the High Court of Karnataka restrained the State police from filing a chargesheet in the case without their prior permission. No chargesheet has been filed yet. The five police officers suspended over the stampede have all been reinstated. As life moves on, cricket resumes with another IPL season. The families of the 11 who died in the stampede, however, still await justice.

A new CPI base, a clearer inflation signal

Under the new CPI, when States such as Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka show higher inflation, it points to rising costs in services

DATA POINT

Chandrasekar K.

India's inflation index has been updated to reflect better how households allocate their spending today.

Under the earlier Consumer Price Index (CPI), consumption was grouped into six broad categories, with a wide range of everyday services – such as health, education, transport, and personal care – aggregated into a single head. The revised CPI, shown in **Chart 1,** re-organises the basket into 12 distinct categories in accordance with the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018. This improves the visibility of individual components of household expenditure. As a result, the weight of food has declined, while housing and services account for a larger share, in line with long-term changes in consumption patterns. The revision does not alter what households spend; it refines how that spending is measured for inflation.

The intellectual foundation of this approach dates back more than two centuries. In 1822, Joseph Lowe developed the idea of measuring inflation in England during the Napoleonic wars, arguing that treating all prices equally was mistaken and that goods and services should be weighted according to their importance in everyday consumption. The modern Consumer Price Index continues to follow this principle: prices change, but the basket remains fixed for a given base period. The latest revision updates the basket using Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) data and aligns weights with current spending patterns. How this works in practice is illustrated in **Chart 2.**

What does CPI General (Combined) mean? Chart 2 shows the monthly trends of CPI General (Combined), with the base year at 2024. When the report states that the CPI General (Combined) stood at 104.46 in January 2026, consider a simple example. Let us suppose Usha bought a fixed basket of goods in the same proportions covering all 12 CPI categories for ₹100 in January 2024. This year is treated as the base year, so CPI 2024 is set at 100. When Usha returns to the market in January 2026 and buys the same basket of goods in the same quantities, she now has to pay ₹104.46. That is why the CPI for January 2026 is shown as 104.46. In plain terms, CPI 104.46 means that the same basket of goods that cost ₹100 in the base year now costs ₹104.46. Therefore, the CPI indicates how expensive life has become compared to the base year. It reflects the price level, not how fast prices are rising.

The inflation rate explains the pace of price increases. Using the same example, an inflation rate of 2.75% compares prices in January 2026 with prices in January 2025, not with the base year. If Usha bought the same basket for about ₹101.60 in January 2025 and it now costs ₹104.46 in January 2026, the increase over one year is 2.75%. This is why inflation is reported at 2.75%. Simply put, the inflation rate shows how fast prices have risen over the past year. It does not indicate how expensive things already are; it only shows how quickly prices have gone up recently.

Chart 3 highlights the top five States (with a population above 50 lakh as per the last conducted Census in 2011) recording the highest inflation in January 2026 – Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka. This reflects structural differences in household spending that are captured more clearly under CPI 2024. With the revised index reducing the weight of food and raising the weight of housing and services – based on updated Household Consumption Expenditure Survey data – price pressures in non-food categories now have a greater influence on headline inflation.

In services-intensive States such as Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, higher costs for housing, health, education, transport, and personal services translate more directly into higher inflation. Telangana recorded an inflation of 5% last month. The figures are followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which recorded an inflation of 3.67% and 3.36%, respectively.

Rajasthan's inclusion among the higher-inflation States is linked to a key methodological change: CPI 2024 explicitly includes rural housing and utilities, which were not fully captured earlier, thereby correcting an understatement of non-food inflation in largely rural States. Rajasthan recorded an inflation of 3.17% in January this year.

Overall, the chart shows that under the new CPI, State-level inflation is shaped less by food price movements alone and more by differences in consumption structure, a contrast that was less visible under the earlier CPI base.

It also helps explain how the Reserve Bank of India looks at inflation. Under the new CPI, when States such as Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka show higher inflation, it points to rising costs in services such as rent, health care, education and transport, not just short-term food price changes. This is important for the RBI because food prices often rise and fall quickly, while service prices generally remain high for longer. The CPI 2024 thus enables the RBI to judge whether price pressures are transitory or persistent, a key input for interest-rate decisions.

Chandrasekar K. is with the Indian Statistical Service. The views expressed are personal.

Both the figures CPI General (Combined) and the inflation rate of January 2026, using which calculations were made, are only provisional figures

A revised basket

The data for the charts were sourced from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation (MOSPI)

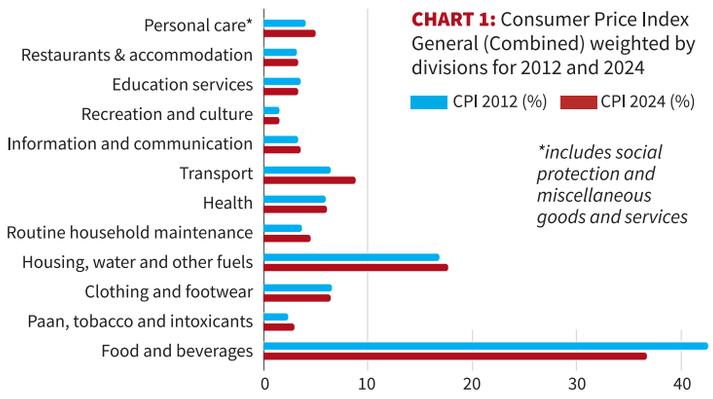


CHART 1: Consumer Price Index General (Combined) weighted by divisions for 2012 and 2024

1 The revised CPI in Chart 1 re-organises the basket into **12 distinct categories** as per the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018

2 The third chart only lists the top five States with a population above 50 lakh as per the last conducted Census in 2011 and which recorded the **highest inflation** in January 2026

CHART 2: Monthly trends of Consumer Price Index General (Combined) (Base 2024=100)

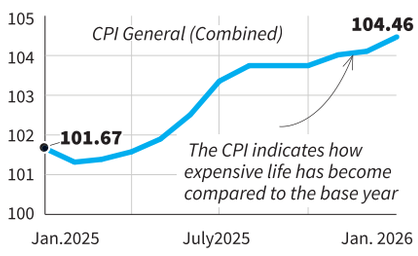
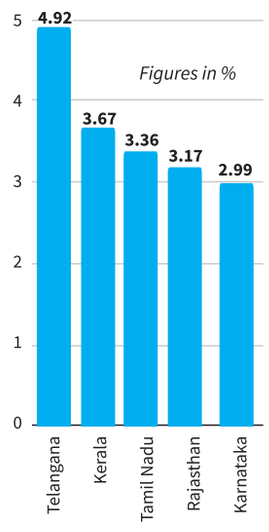


CHART 3: Top five States recording the highest inflation rates in Jan 2026



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 23, 1976

PM suggests cleanliness as part of study

Bombay, Feb. 22: The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to-day suggested that teaching of cleanliness be made part of educational curriculum, right from kindergarten.

Inaugurating the All-India best city contest here, Mrs. Gandhi said cleanliness, sanitation, and love for trees must be the form of major educational campaign. "It would have been more suitable if I had swept one of the Bombay streets instead of inaugurating the contest." Clean cities led to clean thinking which was a must for any progress, she added.

Mrs. Gandhi said: "We got a bad reputation the world over for lack of cleanliness. Tourists told us that while understanding our socio-economic problems, they did not understand why we lived in dirt. We must take our own initiative and participate in the cleanliness campaign before hearing from foreign advisers on what we should do."

Mrs. Gandhi congratulated Bombay even for moving at snail speed in cleanliness. Others did not move at all, she added. She said she was sure that Bombay would win the contest if the competition was held immediately.

She said apart from the problem of cleanliness, there were problems of air pollution. We must plant a lot of trees and see that the flora and fauna did not die out.

Mrs. Gandhi said rather than merely admonishing people for lack of cleanliness and giving incentives, they must be made to participate in the beautifying programmes.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 23, 1926

Making the road safe for pedestrians

Vienna, Feb. 21: A new contrivance to prevent a motor car from running over pedestrians was demonstrated to the Press by its inventor Jakob Singer. It consists of network of India rubber ropes as wide as the car and fixed in front of it. The Police forbade experiments with living persons, so a wooden image was weighted with iron to 120 pounds with movable limbs and this was at first used successfully. Subsequently a workman obligingly allowed himself to be run down and was caught in the net.

From Page One

Time for nations facing tariffs to unionise: Lula

Brazilian President Lula speaks at the India-Brazil Economic Forum in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

Mr. Lula also called for UN Security Council reforms, and in particular, seats in the Council for India, Brazil, and others.

"Why is India not a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a country that has 1.4 billion people? Why Brazil is not there at the UN Security Council," he said, adding others such as Germany, Mexico, Nigeria and Egypt as well to the list. He said that as a result, the UN today does not have much efficacy. "UN is capable of making a diagnosis but it doesn't have the capability to prescribe medication or do the treatment," he said.

He said India had taught him some lessons in economic management, recounting a story from his visit to India in 2005, during his previous tenure as President, when he was hosted by then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"It was in India in 2005 that, for the very first time, I perceived the importance of having international hard currency reserves," he said, adding that he was impressed that India had then amassed $100 billion in reserves. He said he had committed to do the same in Brazil, eventually building reserves of $360 billion and Brazil moved from being a debtor to the IMF to a creditor, which he called a "transformative experience" for Brazil.

Mr. Lula recounted some personal memories as well, while speaking about his talks in Delhi which ended with agreements on critical mineral cooperation, steel mining and digital partnership. He said that he was touched that his favourite Brazilian songs were played during the official banquet lunch with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the dinner hosted by President Droupadi Murmu.

Three JeM terrorists killed in Kishtwar: Army

The Army said the forces displayed "tactical precision, seamless synergy and resolute aggression" during the gunfight, and the troops dominated the encounter site. "War-like stores, including two AK-47 rifles, have also been recovered," the Army said.

General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff, commended the troops of the Northern Command for "exemplary professionalism and steadfast resolve" in the ongoing counter-terror operations in Jammu and Kashmir, an Army spokesperson said. He lauded their vigilance, operational excellence and seamless coordination under challenging conditions.

The Army said that it "remains unwavering in its commitment to ensuring lasting peace in J&K with zero tolerance for terrorism in all its forms."

Sunday's encounter was part of Operation Trashi-I, which was launched in January against terrorists active in Kishtwar's Chatroo belt. "Troops of White Knight Corps, along with J&K Police and CRPF, in a joint operation, established contact with terrorists," the Army said.

There have been four major gunfights in the Kishtwar district this year. One soldier was killed on January 18, and a terrorist was gunned down on February 4 in two separate encounters in the district, which has many of J&K's high mountain passes.

Amid SIR push, Calcutta HC forms panel to manage cases

Chief Justice Sujoy Paul meets Chief Electoral Officer, senior officials; following Supreme Court order, judicial officers are set to begin the process of completing the SIR in West Bengal today

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, Sujoy Paul, has constituted a committee to oversee interim arrangements for shifting urgent matters to alternative courts, following the engagement of judicial officers for work related to the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

The development comes in the wake of the Supreme Court's order of February 20, in which it has directed that judicial officers be assigned to complete the ongoing SIR in West Bengal.

The top court pointed out that the persistent "trust deficit" between the State government led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the Election Commission had led to a "stalemate", with time running out.

The committee appointed by Chief Justice Paul comprises Justices Tapabrata Chakraborty and Arijit Banerjee, Registrar General Nabanita Ray, Registrar (judicial service) Raju Mukherjee, and Joint Registrar-cum-Secretary to the Chief Justice Ajay Kumar Das.

Paper trail: People wait in queues during hearings under the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, at Krishnanagar in Nadia district of West Bengal. PTI

District committees

In a separate notification, the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court constituted a committee for each district "for the smooth compliance of the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court", comprising the District Judge, the District Magistrate, and the Superintendent of Police.

On Sunday, Chief Justice Paul held a meeting with the State's Chief Electoral Officer, Manoj Kumar Agarwal, Chief Secretary Nandini Chakravorty, Director-General of Police Piyush Pandey, Kolkata Commissioner of Police Supratim Sarkar, and other officials representing the Union of India.

It was decided that judicial officers would begin the process of completing the SIR from Monday. The Supreme Court had on February 20 also directed the EC to publish the processed list of electoral rolls on February 28.

Unless the electoral rolls are finalised, the schedule for the Assembly election in West Bengal cannot be announced.

The EC has decided to deploy 480 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces in the State by March 10. The first 240 companies will be deployed by March 1.

ED identifies eight priority areas for coordinated action

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has identified eight focus areas for coordinated action. They are tracking of foreign assets, misuse of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, trade-based money laundering, cyberfraud, illegal online gambling, drug financing, share market manipulation, and foreign interference through illicit funding.

The decision was taken during its 34th quarterly conference of zonal officers in Guwahati from February 19 to 21, headed by ED Director Rahul Navin.

All zonal heads were directed to intensify efforts in tracing and securing proceeds of crime parked abroad, particularly in jurisdictions such as Dubai and Singapore.

They were also told to keep a close watch on professional money laundering channels disguised as trade.

"Instances of potential collusion between corporate debtors, resolution professionals, members of the Committee of Creditors, and other stakeholders were flagged as areas requiring scrutiny," said the agency with respect to IBC-related cases.

Given the rise in digital-arrest scams and other forms of cyberfraud, the ED chief asked officials to crack down on organised syndicates and identify cross-border elements. In cases involving illegal betting and online gaming platforms, they were advised to focus on dismantling the linked financial networks, including payment gateways, mule accounts and offshore operators.

Drug traffickers

The ED will also intensify action against the financial networks of drug traffickers and their "hawala" linkages, money laundering through share market manipulation, and foreign funding channels that may be used for unlawful narrative building, destabilising activities or other anti-national purposes. "The importance of international cooperation and development of institutional soft power was also highlighted, with emphasis on the ED being a reliable, professional and proactive partner for foreign counterpart agencies," the ED said.

Sweet moment: Creators of *Boong* with their award at the 79th British Academy Film Awards in London on Sunday. AP

Manipuri film creates history; secures first BAFTA win for India

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

India created history at the 79th British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) on Sunday with *Boong*, a Manipuri film directed by Lakshmipriya Devi, winning the country's first award on the prestigious stage, considered the British equivalent of the Oscars. The movie won the award in the Best Children and Family Film category.

Boong was India's sole representation at this year's event in London, and beat high-profile and popular contenders such as *Lilo & Stitch*, and *Zootropolis 2 (Zootopia 2)*, and animated science fantasy *Arco*. Actor and producer Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, who backed the movie, attended the event along with Ms. Devi.

Before death, Manipur MLA wrote to PM, sought probe into mob attack

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Five months before his death, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA from Manipur Vungzagin Valte wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi detailing how he was brutally attacked by the "Meitei militia [Arambai Tenggol]".

Valte had said that the attack left him with severe injuries that paralysed him, and despite the gravity of the incident, no special inquiry, either by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or the National Investigation Agency (NIA), was ever initiated.

The letter was sent on September 13, 2025, when Mr. Modi made his maiden visit to Manipur after the ethnic violence broke out on May 3, 2023. Arambai Tenggol, a relatively new radical Meitei armed group, gained notoriety after the conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities started.

Vungzagin Valte

Valte, who never recovered from the life-threatening injuries after being assaulted by a mob on May 4, 2023, passed away at a private hospital in Gurugram, Haryana, on Friday. "The arrest may take time as he was attacked by a mob. We are pursuing all leads," Losii Dikho, Deputy Chief Minister, Manipur told *The Hindu*.

In the letter, Valte had said that as a three-term MLA and BJP adviser to former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, he had "witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by the Zomi-Kuki-Hmar community".

"On May 4, 2023, after attending security meeting at CM's office, to discuss the safe transportation of my people especially Churachandpurians stranded in Imphal due to the ethnic violence, I was brutally attacked on my way back home at RIMS Road by the Meitei militia [Arambai Tenggol], resulting in severe injuries that have left me paralysed and handicapped till date. Despite the gravity of this incident, no special inquiry [CBI/NIA] has been initiated, and the community remains marginalised," the letter said.

He added that the Zomi-Kuki-Hmar community had been driven out of the State capital Imphal and from the valley, leading to complete physical and social divide. "In light of this, I humbly request that a Separate Administration, preferably a Union Territory with a legislature under the Indian Constitution, be granted to the indigenous tribal community as mentioned above," the letter said.

'Lasting solution'

Valte had said that a separate administration would ensure justice, administrative convenience, and a lasting solution. He had said that his appeal aligned with the demands of the Kuki National Organisation and the United People's Front, who are seeking a political solution through Suspension of Operations talks. "I urge you to consider this request at the highest level, as forced imposition of peace has proven unsustainable in Manipur's history," his letter said.

On the fateful day, when Valte was going to his official residence at Lamphelpat in Imphal, his car was stopped by a group of people. He and his driver, Thanghoulal, were physically assaulted.

Looking forward to Israel visit, says Modi

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he was looking forward to his upcoming visit to Israel.

Mr. Modi said this on X in response to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comment.

"Thank you, my friend... I fully agree with you on the bond between India and Israel as well as the diverse nature of our bilateral relations. India deeply values the enduring friendship with Israel, built on trust, innovation and a shared commitment to peace and progress. Looking forward to our discussions during my upcoming Israel visit," Mr. Modi said.

Modi's visit entangled in Israel's turbulent domestic politics

Press Trust of India
JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming Israel visit is getting entangled in the domestic politics of the West Asian country, with Opposition leader Yair Lapid threatening to boycott his parliamentary address unless the Supreme Court chief is invited for it, as per convention.

Mr. Modi is expected to arrive in Israel on Wednesday, for a two-day visit, during which he is likely to address the Knesset (Israeli parliament) and meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog.

Mr. Lapid has insisted that Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit be invited to the Knesset when Mr. Modi addresses the House. Sources in the Opposition maintain that it is not a call for a boycott; instead, the government is "intentionally trying to force us into a bad situation". "We spoke to the Indian embassy ... They are in panic from this. Prime Minister of India, Modi, is invited to the Knesset next Wednesday, something that is a matter of honour for all of us," Mr. Lapid told the Knesset recently.

Internal turmoil

Israel's domestic politics is embroiled in a heated debate over judicial overhaul, a divisive issue that has also sharply split the population for over two years. The country faced large protests on the issue before the October 7 attack by Hamas two years ago, drawing hundreds of thousands of people to the streets every weekend for almost 10 months.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to address the Knesset and meet his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu during the visit.

Following Mr. Amit's election as court President in January 2025, Justice Minister Yariv Levin has refused to recognise his authority, meet him or address him as head of the court. The State Gazette has also not published his name as the Chief Justice, as required by law.

This has led to Mr. Amit's exclusion from multiple Knesset events – including addresses by U.S. President Donald Trump and other world leaders – to which he would have traditionally been invited.

Two weeks ago, the Opposition boycotted a Knesset session to celebrate its 77th anniversary due to Mr. Amit's exclusion.

"If the coalition boycotts the President of the top court during the special session with the Prime Minister of India, we will not be able to attend the debate," Mr. Lapid recently told the lawmakers, stressing that another public boycott of Mr. Amit by the coalition would cause "enormous embarrassment" to the legislature.

"We do not want India to be embarrassed by us, with the Prime Minister of a nation of a billion people standing here in front of a half-empty Knesset," Mr. Lapid emphasised.

To prevent harm to ties between Jerusalem and New Delhi, Mr. Netanyahu "must immediately instruct Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana to also invite Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit to the ceremonial meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Mr. Lapid asserted.

The Opposition leader's threat has led to heated exchanges in the political circles with the Knesset Speaker accusing Mr. Lapid of harming the Indo-Israel relations in order to score domestic political points.

"If the Leader of the Opposition wants to harm the foreign relations of the State of Israel with an important friend of ours..., that is his choice. An unfortunate, wrong choice, and I hope he will reverse it," Mr. Ohana posted on X, calling such threats "illegitimate weapons in an internal political struggle."

The Speaker also called upon the Opposition leader to explain to the Indian government why he did not choose to boycott appearances by Argentinian President Javier Milei and Mr. Trump, "even though Justice Amit was not invited" to their speeches.

Student shot at outside BHU hostel, case filed

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Gunshots were allegedly fired at a student outside the Birla hostel at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), officials said on Sunday. Roshan Mishra, a third-year BA student, claimed three persons arrived on a motorcycle and suddenly opened fire when he was standing outside the hostel on Saturday night. No one was injured in the incident.

"We have registered a case against five individuals... and efforts are under way to catch them," said the police.

The police believed the alleged incident is the result of a rivalry between two students' groups.

BSP seeking 'master key of power', says Mayawati

Press Trust of India
LUCKNOW

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) will continue striving to obtain the "master key of power" through democratic means, party chief Mayawati said on Sunday while chairing an all-India meeting of the party at its central camp office in Lucknow to review organisational strengthening across the country.

Taking note of concerns in the country over trade deals with various nations and blocs – especially the interim deal with the U.S. – Ms. Mayawati said the cut-throat competition among countries to "make themselves first" had pushed the exploitative global order into a deeper crisis.

Alleging that policies of rival parties have undermined their credibility, she said the BSP's governance record in Uttar Pradesh, based on '*Sarvajan Hitay, Sarvajan Sukhay*' (welfare of all, happiness of all) and the rule of law, had raised expectations among the public.

She also praised party workers for their efforts despite alleged obstacles from rival parties and governments.

Congress protest shows its ideological bankruptcy: PM

Modi accuses party of using AI Impact Summit for 'dirty and shameless politics'; he says Congress should have taken into account the fact that it was not a BJP or NDA event, but a national event

The Hindu Bureau
GHAZIABAD

In a scathing attack on the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the principal Opposition party of indulging in "dirty and shameless politics".

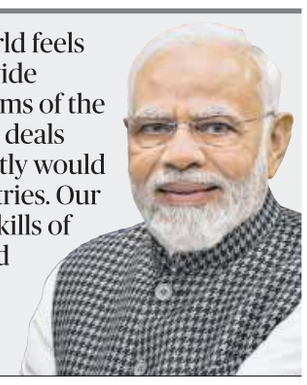
Linking the party youth wing's "shirtless" protest on Friday at the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi to the nation's image, Mr. Modi said the Congress and its ecosystem had touched a new low.

Describing the topless protest as "*nangi rajneeti*" (naked politics) in front of industry leaders, he said it was an example of ideological bankruptcy that had lowered the dignity of a global event.

"Everybody knows you [Congress] are naked. You don't need to take off clothes," Mr. Modi said, addressing a public meeting in Meerut on the sidelines of the inauguration of the Namo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) and Meerut Metro.

Separating the Congress from the rest of the Opposition, the Prime Minister said even the Congress's allies had deserted it on the issue.

> Today, the world feels India can provide solutions to the problems of the 21st century. The trade deals India had struck recently would help small-scale industries. Our priority is to take the skills of small businessmen and artisans to the world
>
> **NARENDRA MODI**
> Prime Minister



'Just the Congress'

Mr. Modi asked the media not to generalise his criticism of the Congress as that of the entire Opposition. "Were the TMC (Trinamool Congress), DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party), or NC (National Conference) responsible for the Delhi protest? No, it was just the Congress that sinned, and I want to publicly pay gratitude to those who have criticised the Congress's behaviour," he said.

Reiterating that the Congress leadership hated him and wanted to dig his grave, Mr. Modi said they should have taken into account that the summit was not a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or National Democratic Alliance (NDA) event.

"It was a national event, the first of its kind organised in a developing country to take a leadership role in the 21st century," the Prime Minister said.

A pattern

Describing it as a pattern, Mr. Modi, for the first time, reacted to Speaker Om Birla's apprehension over the picketing of his (Mr. Modi's) Lok Sabha seat by female Congress MPs.

"One has to win hearts to become PM. One can't become PM by sending female MPs to surround the PM's chair. What's the compulsion? Are you that hollow?" the Prime Minister said, targeting the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

Eager for trade

Referring to the recent trade agreements with the European Union and the United States, Mr. Modi said the developed world was eager to trade with India.

"It was not the case during the Congress rule because of its scam-tainted image. Today, the world feels India can provide solutions to the problems of the 21st century," Mr. Modi said.

The trade deals India had struck recently would help small-scale and cottage industries, he said. "Our priority is to take the entrepreneurship and skills of small businessmen and artisans to the world," he added.

Prime Minister launches full Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to the gathering during the launch of the Meerut Metro and Namo Bharat services. PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated the remaining sections of the Namo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), including the 5-km stretch between Sarai Kale Khan and New Ashok Nagar in Delhi and the 21-km stretch between Meerut South and Modipuram in Uttar Pradesh. The RRTS has been integrated with the Meerut Metro, which was also launched.

Mr. Modi said the entire 82-km corridor of the RRTS project provided a glimpse of what connectivity would look like in a developed India that used Metro rail for intra-city travel and the Namo Bharat trains to accelerate the "twin cities" vision. "This integration allows commuters to travel within the city or go directly to Delhi, thus ending the compulsion for many workers and students to live in rented houses in Delhi. A unique feature of the project is the integration of Indian Railways, Metro, and bus stands at Sarai Kale Khan, Anand Vihar, Ghaziabad, and Meerut," he said.

Talking about development in the regions, Mr. Modi said, "The government's investment in modern infrastructure, including expressways, freight corridors, and the Jewar International Airport is creating vast employment opportunities."

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal, speaking at the inauguration, said the proposal for two new rapid rail corridors starting from Sarai Kale Khan was expected to be approved soon.

"One corridor is planned from Sarai Kale Khan to Karnal in Haryana, covering a distance of 125-130 km, which can be completed in about an hour and a half. Another route is proposed to connect Sarai Kale Khan with Babarpur in Haryana and Neemrana in Rajasthan," he said.

The Sarai Kale Khan station, the originating station of the corridor, is strategically located as a major multi-modal hub, seamlessly connecting the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station, Delhi Metro's Pink Line, Veer Haqeeqat Rai ISBT, and Ring Road.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, commenting on the launch, said the Delhi-Meerut corridor will transform the capital's pace of development and stimulate economic activity in the Delhi-NCR region. "The corridor will help passengers save time and resources, marking a historic milestone for Delhi and the surrounding region as the project is expected to ease traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions by reducing the number of private vehicles on the roads, thereby creating a positive environmental impact," she said.

Congress rebuts PM, says women MPs were protesting for a cause

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday reacted sharply to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that "one can't become Prime Minister by sending women MPs to capture the Lok Sabha seat". Mr. Modi made the comments at a public event after inaugurating the Delhi-Meerut Rapid Rail Transit System.

"It is very unfortunate that Prime Minister forgets that Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi *ji* was not allowed to speak during the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address. For two days, Mr. Gandhi was not allowed to speak in Lok Sabha. Then, eight of us were suspended. Only then women MPs protested," Congress Whip in the Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore said in a video posted on X. "You were afraid to come to the House, Mr. Prime Minister. It is not as if the women MPs, who belong to Dalit and backward classes, were misbehaving, they were protesting for a cause," he added.

The Prime Minister had "compromised the interest of farmers, MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) and textile industry" through the India-U.S. trade agreement over which Indian Youth Congress workers protested at the recent AI Impact Summit, Mr. Tagore said.

Former IYC chief Srinivas B.V. also defended the IYC's "shirtless protests", and accused the Prime Minister of playing the "victim card". "Did IYC claim the Chinese [robot] dog as Indian? Did IYC get stalls for fraud institutions like Galgotia? Did IYC sign an anti-India trade deal? Did IYC's name come up in the Epstein files?" Mr. Srinivas said in a post on X.

On the draw

AI Impact Summit is a 'turning point' in use of tech: Modi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The India AI Impact Summit "proved to be a turning point in the trajectory of how the world will utilise the power of AI in the future", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, adding that global leaders were impressed by India's progress in the domain.

In his *Mann ki Baat* address, Mr. Modi – who met global leaders and tech CEOs and showed them India's innovations – said leaders from many countries and industries, innovators, and people from the start-up sector came together at the summit.

Eighty-five countries and three international organisations signed the New Delhi Declaration. "Guided by the principle of '*Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya*' [Welfare for all, Happiness for all], the Declaration underscores that the benefits of AI must be equitably shared across humanity," the government had said.

Mr. Modi said world leaders were impressed by two exhibits at the venue. The first one showed how use of AI helped people in the treatment of animals, and how farmers tracked their livestock with 24x7 assistance.

The second was related to Indian culture and heritage. Mr. Modi said leaders were amazed at how with the help of AI, India is preserving ancient texts, knowledge, manuscripts.

The AI summit, which ended in Delhi on Friday, attracted five lakh visitors.

Mr. Modi urged people to remain vigilant against online financial fraud and digital arrests. He appealed for complete KYC compliance saying it is crucial for the safety of an individual's bank account.

In the backdrop of the Opposition's allegations that the India had compromised the interests of farmers during trade negotiations with the U.S., he said farmers were not just food providers, but true "devotees" of the earth. He highlighted how farmers are blending tradition with technology and cited the example of Hirod Patel in Odisha who has installed a mesh over a pond and is growing vegetables on it. He said in Kerala's Thrissur, 570 varieties of rice are grown in a single field.

"Today, India has become the world's largest rice producer... agricultural products are now reaching foreign countries more easily by air. Nanjangud bananas from Karnataka, Mysuru betel leaves, and Indi lemons were exported to the Maldives," he said.

Lyutens's statue to be replaced by Rajagopalachari's

NEW DELHI
Ahead of the 'Rajaji Utsav' celebration on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that a statue of British architect Edwin Lutyens in Rashtrapati Bhavan will be replaced by that of C. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian Governor-General of independent India.

Former Assam Cong. president Bhupen Borah joins BJP

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Bhupen Borah

Former Assam Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah joined the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday, a week after quitting the party he served for almost 33 years.

State BJP president and MP Dilip Saikia welcomed Mr. Borah, a two-time former MLA, at a programme organised at Vajpayee Bhavan, the party's headquarters in Guwahati.

Soon after joining the party, Mr. Borah said any self-respecting Assamese would cease to stay with the Congress.

"The Congress has 700 ticket aspirants and 100 of them will be able to contest the Assembly election. The remaining 600 may not come to the BJP, but the self-respecting Assamese of Rajiv Bhavan (State Congress headquarters) will come to Vajpayee Bhawan," he told pressmen.

He said the condition of many leaders in the Congress was like that of the Mahabharata's Karna before he died.

"I have moved away from Duryodhana but the Karnas are still there. They will slowly get to know who will be on which side in the battle of the Mahabharata. I want to tell the Karnas of Rajiv Bhavan that the result of this battle has been already decided," he said, pointing to the election to the 126-member Assembly expected in April.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated Mr. Borah for "beginning a new life from today".

Mr. Borah resigned from the Congress on February 17 over differences with the State leadership. The party's top leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, had asked him to consider withdrawing his resignation, but he remained unmoved.

Dismiss Piyush Goyal from Cabinet, SKM urges Murmu

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The withdrawal of 11% cotton import duty on August 19, 2025 has sunk domestic cotton prices, the SKM said. REUTERS

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has sent a letter to President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday, urging her to dismiss Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal from his post for "betraying the nation's confidence" by entering into a bilateral trade agreement with the United States. The SKM urged her to direct the Prime Minister not to sign the agreement on terms which were detrimental to farmers. It also sought a direction from her against a recent demi-official letter of the Union Finance Ministry asking the Kerala government to end bonus to paddy farmers.

The SKM alleged in the letter that the Narendra Modi government succumbed to the pressures of the U.S. and endangered India's self-reliance and sovereignty. Maintaining that the terms accepted as per the interim deal were detrimental to the interests of the Indian economy and farmers, the SKM said the government remained silent about the terms. "In fact, all announcements made by Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, the chief negotiator, only confirm the worst fears, that the government is either unable to or unwilling to stand up to U.S. diktats. Such acquiescence before an imperial superpower has led to serious resentment among the farming community," the letter said.

'No satisfactory answer'

The SKM asked when no deal had been signed as of now, why did U.S. President Donald Trump declare the free trade agreement with India. "Why did Prime Minister Narendra Modi endorse India as a party to the agreement? Why no statement placed in Parliament that was in session? The Prime Minister has yet to give a satisfactory answer," it said.

On cotton, the SKM said India was self-dependent with double the production of the U.S. "The withdrawal of 11% cotton import duty on August 19, 2025 has sunk domestic cotton prices. Cotton farmers are staring at very serious losses," it said, adding that Mr. Goyal was insensitive to this issue. The SKM added that the deal would put over 55 lakh apple farmer families in the country into crisis. Maize would be imported as dry distilled grain (DDG) as per the interim deal and the import of DDG would deplete the domestic prices and impact 120 lakh corn farmers, the SKM maintained.

U.S. trade deal must be put in cold storage, says Congress

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the government over the interim U.S. trade deal, the Congress on Sunday said it was reflective of "*Abki baar Trump se haar*" and must be put in "cold storage" in view of the confusion following the U.S. Supreme Court's verdict.

Congress general secretary communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh said the terms of the framework for the interim agreement must be renegotiated and the clause talking about import liberalisation, especially of agricultural produce, must be scrapped. Mr. Ramesh said an agreement was about give and take but India had only given under the deal.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given a slogan in Houston in 2019 – '*Abki baar Trump Sarkaar*' but this framework for an interim agreement is proof of '*Abki baar Trump se haar*'," he said. What happened on February 2 that there was a need for the Prime Minister to "force" Mr. Trump to announce the trade deal, he asked.

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R.O. No.: GMCC/APTRANSCO/53/26

INBRIEF

Five police personnel killed in Odisha highway accident

Five police personnel were killed and three injured in a collision between their vehicle and a truck laden with stone chips on National Highway 49 in Jharsuguda district of Odisha on Sunday. The police personnel were returning from the wedding of a constable in the Rengali area in the Lakhanpur police station limits, when the accident took place in front of the Jharsuguda Sadar police station. Local people and police personnel took out the victims from the mangled vehicle and rushed them to the Jharsuguda District Headquarters Hospital. The truck driver was detained, and the vehicle seized.

Four teachers, peon held for 'sexually assaulting' minor girl

Four teachers, one of them a woman, have been arrested in Kendrapara district of Odisha for alleged repeated sexual assault on a 12-year-old student on the school premises for two years. A peon has also been arrested for alleged sexual misconduct. The police took action based on a complaint filed by the girl's mother. The girl told her family that she had been sexually assaulted on multiple occasions over the past two years. A court remanded the accused in judicial custody. The mother told the police that no action had been taken against the accused even after a complaint was made to the principal in January.

Delhi Police arrest 8 with alleged link to terror outfits

Six were arrested from Tamil Nadu and two from Bengal; one of them is a native of Malda and the remaining are said to be Bangladesh nationals; police say the eight were planning a major attack

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has arrested eight persons with alleged links to terror organisations based in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the police said on Sunday.

Six of the suspects were arrested from Tamil Nadu and two from West Bengal. One of them is a native of West Bengal and the remaining are said to be Bangladesh nationals.

The arrests came even as security agencies issued an alert on Saturday on a possible explosion near the Red Fort.

The Delhi Police Special Cell arrests two from West Bengal on Sunday in connection with a terror plot. ANI

'Objectionable posters'

"On February 7, some miscreants had affixed some objectionable posters at various Metro stations across Delhi. The Metro police immediately identified the miscreants and the routes they took for leaving the city. The case was formally transferred to the special cell on February 13. They were tracked down to Kolkata in West Bengal by a team of the special cell. Two persons, namely Umar Farukh and Robiul Islam, were arrested," said Pramod Singh Kushwaha, Additional Commissioner of Police of the special cell. Umar is said to be a resident of Malda in West Bengal and Robiul a Bangladesh national.

The two had affixed posters in Delhi previously too, the officer added. According to the police, the two suspects were operating under a former terror handler, Shabbir Ahmad Lone, who is now based in Bangladesh. Lone had been arrested in 2007 and had connections with the Lashkar-e-Taiba. Upon release from prison in 2019, he restarted terrorist activities and established contact with the Lashkar, the police said.

Umar was allegedly in touch with Lone and had also travelled to Bangladesh to meet him.

The police said Umar recruited six other Bangladesh nationals working in Tiruppur in Tamil Nadu and conducted dry runs of pasting these posters across various cities in the country, including Delhi and Kolkata, on the commands of Lone.

Those arrested are said to be Bangladesh nationals and had been working in garment factories in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the police said.

Umar and Robiul were staying at an expensive house in Kolkata, which was said to be their hideout. Interrogations revealed that they had planned to take the men working in Tamil Nadu to Kolkata and engage them in terror activities, the special cell said.

Attack plans

The phones recovered from the eight arrested revealed that they had done reconnaissance of different cities and were planning a major terror activity in heavy footfall and sensitive areas, Mr. Kushwaha said.

Umar was working at a garments factory in Kolkata. The six others arrested from Tamil Nadu were also employed in similar professions. He also had another connection in Bangladesh through whom he came into contact with persons in Tamil Nadu, the police said.

Tripura woman held captive, raped by live-in partner: family

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

The police rescued the young woman on February 19 after they received a call from her mother

Days after a young man was arrested by the Gurugram Police for allegedly beating his live-in partner, a 19-year-old woman belonging to Tripura, her mother has said that the accused held her daughter captive in a room for three days, raped her, and subjected her to brutal torture, inflicting burns and stab injuries.

Speaking to a news agency on Sunday, the woman said her daughter called her on February 19 night and told her about the ordeal.

"She told me that her friend Shivam had been torturing her for the past three days. She said that he would kill her that day. After that, I called the Badshahpur police station and they saved my daughter," said the victim's mother.

The young woman, under treatment in a hospital in Delhi, befriended the accused on a social media platform. She is a student of biotechnology at a prominent college in Gurugram. The accused, also aged 19, is a resident of Delhi's Narela.

According to the police, a team rescued the young woman on February 19 after they received a call from her mother and admitted her to a government hospital in Sector 10.

The victim told the police that she shared a room with the accused and he had suspected her conduct and repeatedly assaulted her.

Preliminary investigation had revealed that the victim and the accused had met last September and their families had even discussed their wedding, the police said.

Rape charges

Gurugram Police spokesperson Sandeep Kumar on Sunday said that the victim was under treatment and stable.

He said all relevant sections of law, including rape charges, had been invoked in the case based on a complaint of the victim and more sections could be added based on the opinion of the doctors treating her.

Security agencies issue alert on illegal use of satellite phones in Indian waters

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

Security agencies have issued an alert on the illegal use of satellite communication devices in Indian waters, terming it not only a violation of existing laws but also a potential threat to national security.

Acting on these inputs, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) has proposed stricter penal provisions to prevent the unauthorised usage of the satellite communication channels.

Expressing concern, the DGS said security agencies continued to report instances of vessels and crew members carrying undeclared portable satellite communication devices, including satellite phones and satellite-enabled messaging equipment. Such incidents, it noted, were in clear violation of regulatory norms.

Security alerts also indicated the use of Zoleo satellite devices connected to smartphones compatible with Iridium satellite communication systems for messaging in areas without cellular network coverage. "Such actions constitute serious violations of existing orders and pose potential national security threats," the DGS said.

Agencies report vessels and crew carrying undeclared portable satellite devices.

The DGS now seeks to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements governing the use, declaration, authorisation and reporting of satellite communication equipment by ships and seafarers operating in Indian waters, in the interest of maritime safety and national security.

In an earlier order dated July 12, 2023, the DGS had permitted the use of Iridium-based satellite communication equipment in Indian waters exclusively for Distress and Safety Communications under the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), subject to specified conditions. However, the use of Thuraya satellite equipment continued to remain banned in Indian waters.

The DGS pointed out in the absence of Iridium gateways or ground stations within the Indian region – both on land and at sea – communications made using Iridium-based portable devices could not be effectively monitored, examined or traced.

"This limitation is of particular concern in suspicious or sensitive cases and underscores the necessity for strict compliance and enforcement," it stated.

Under existing rules, satellite communication equipment that was not part of a ship's GMDSS station and constituted the personal belongings of crew members or other individuals was not permitted for use in Indian waters or within Indian territory. Any such personal satellite devices found onboard must be placed under the custody of the Master (Captain) and sealed by Indian authorities upon arrival.

In a draft order issued recently calling for comments from stakeholders, the DGS stated any ship or vessel found violating rules related to satellite phone usage – including failure to declare or unauthorised use of satellite communication equipment – would be issued an infringement notice and face penal action under applicable Indian laws.

Biotechnology is set to drive evolution of personalised medicine, say experts

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

With the Centre announcing a massive investment of ₹10,000 crore in the Union Budget 2026-27 for the biotechnology sector, India is poised to become a global biopharma manufacturing hub, panellists at a webinar on "Biotech Education in Personalised Medicine" said on Sunday.

The aim is to focus on boosting the production of biologics and biosimilars through a new initiative called the Biopharma Shakti. This will be a huge space available to students who are planning to seek out careers in biotechnology, they added.

The timing is perfect and biotechnology is a stable and promising career because healthcare demand is always growing, and government support and investment are available along with strong opportunities in Indian and global job markets, said Meenakshi Sinha, director at Cipla, lead advanced therapies and chief of staff to Global CEO & MD.

She was speaking at the webinar jointly organised by the Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai and *The Hindu* as part of the new series "Biotechnology: Role in Industry 5.0 Sustainable Future Pathways". The series aims to highlight the transformative role of biotechnology across healthcare, agriculture, environmental solutions, and research-led innovation.

S. Shridevi, Professor and Deputy Director, Centre for Neuroinformatics, VIT, Chennai, talked about core technologies such as generative, multimodal and reinforcing AI and deep and machine learning that were powering drug discovery. She said medical treatments were undergoing paradigm shift from reactive to proactive and standardised to individualised treatments based on genetic, metabolic, lifestyle, season, region, and ethnic profile of people.

"That is why biotechnology education is fast evolving and integrating genomics, bioinformatics, data since and clinical practice to prepare professionals for this transforming landscape of personalised medicine, based on genetic profiles of people," she said.

G. Jayaraman, Professor and Dean, School of Bio Sciences & Technology, VIT, Chennai, announced the launch of a new biotechnology programme for the academic year 2027 at VIT, Chennai that will introduce innovative and specialised strategies to make students industry-ready. He said bioinformatics and computational biology, along with programming and large datasets analysis, would play a key role in the development process of drugs in the future.

Parul Ganju, scientist-entrepreneur and co-founder and CEO of Ahammune Biosciences, highlighted how COVID-19 was the biggest game-changer in recent times. "Science shapes our lives," she said, "and biotechnology is now transforming human-centric innovations and sustainability."

Biotechnology is set to drive the evolution of personalised medicine by facilitating precise diagnosis, targeted therapies, and optimised drug selection and dosage, the panelists said.

(The webinar is available at newsth.live/THVITBPY)

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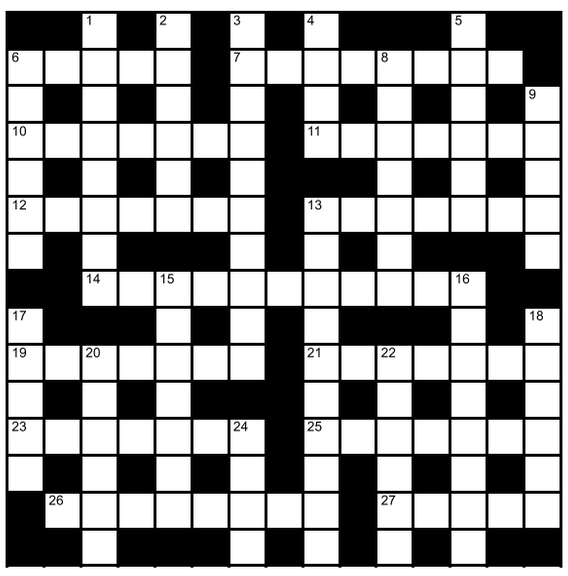
(set by Arden)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

6. Tries out from things for cleaning and grooming with a fabric (5)
7. Criminal chained in front of a Spanish villa (8)
10. Private joint - one enters (7)
11. Time to argue about subversion (7)
12. Barbaric, cruel, hosts providing for the devil (7)
13. Able to jump into a run-down theatre (7)
14. Strangely neutral about extra input - It's the ultimate (2,4,5)
19. Figure about taking people in Delhi to a German city (7)
21. Religious one - here at the centre, he was the first (7)
23. Said to be different amid all the noise - it's contempt (7)
25. Cocktail drinking - one with bottle opener is my brother (7)
26. Song Of Songs able to make you giggle, they say (8)
27. Criminals somewhat received jail sentence (5)

Down

1. By housing the sick is able to get a water boiler (8)
2. Rescue whistle blower's hidden story (6)
3. Yellowish green map, utilize again (10)
4. Go away with these territory markers (4)
5. Makes sense since a state doubled input (4,2)
6. Lets out but we are caught in a fight (6)
8. Others follow the first lady to the top of the world (7)
9. Come together as one, close to one (5)
13. Rear houses empty from top to bottom bed (4- 6)
15. Show servant with worker (7)
16. Copy right - it provided a welcome drink (8)
17. They're highly reactive like the odd adopted child (5)
18. Starts first in Delhi - internal set up is against congress (6)
20. Rascal masquerading as an old sailor (6)
22. Gold coins - where are they in circulation (6)
24. Not all electronic equipment is good (4)

SUDOKU

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

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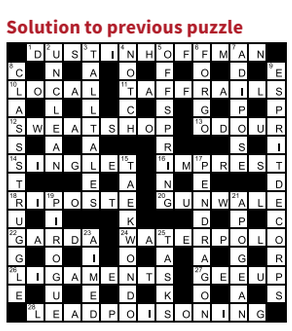
Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

The treasure of jnanis

Acharyas did not impart knowledge to a student randomly. A new sishya could not hope to be taught higher philosophy right at the outset. Several years would be spent by a sishya under the tutelage of an Acharya, before he would be taught esoteric philosophy. This was the usual practice – disciples being taught after they had served their Acharya sincerely for a long time. Even if a sishya had served an Acharya for many years, he would be taught, only if he had an eagerness to learn. But things changed with Ramanujacharya, said Elayavilli Sriram in a discourse. Whoever wanted to learn was taught by him, without keeping students waiting. So, he brought in a new system of teaching, benefiting students who had a desire to study. Thus, Ramanuja expanded the reach of the explanations for religious literature given by scholars.

Prativadhi Bhayankaram Annan wrote a suprabhatham for Ramanuja, where he uses the word *amalaswantha* to describe Ramanuja's purity. Like earlier Acharyas, Ramanuja too was aware of the greatness of sacred texts. But he saw the sorry state of grihasthas. He took pity on them and wanted to help them get liberated. He knew that if too many rules were laid down, people would be put off by all the rigidity. So, he relaxed some rules, to ensure that the scriptures reached everyone. Ramanuja can help us cross the ocean of samsara. On Panguni Uthiram, Ramanuja performed Saranagati in Srirangam. The Lord assured him that anyone associated with him would also attain liberation. Thus, a Ramanuja connection will save us. Prativadhi Bhayankaram Annan's Suprabhatham hails Ramanuja as the treasure of jnanis.

Guaranteed return plan

Pavit Laul

A decade ago, Sanjay, a salaried professional, locked his savings in a fixed deposit (FD). Last month, when it matured, he realised it did not really translate into what he expected. First, the maturity amount, when adjusted for tax and inflation, did not stretch as far as he had imagined. Second, he realised on account of lower interest rates, renewing FD meant much reduced returns in future. The plan did not deliver the financial milestone he was hoping for.

This is the story of millions of savers who are discovering that in today's financial environment, safety alone is no longer enough. What people increasingly seek is not just protection of capital, but protection of purchasing power and long-term financial goals. And this is where guaranteed return plans are gaining relevance among new-age investors.

Certainty as financial priority

While the focus was on maximising returns a few years earlier, today, it is equally on ensuring consistency. This shift is driven by factors such as sliding interest rates, market volatility and high lifestyle inflation. In such an environment, certainty itself becomes valuable. Guaranteed return plans are built around delivering that certainty.

For decades, FDs served as the go-to option for investors who wished to play safe. However, they carry two structural limitations. First, FD interest is fully taxable, which reduces effective compounding over time. A seemingly competitive rate can translate into lower post-tax returns, especially over long horizons. Second, FDs expose investors to reinvestment risk. When FD matures, there is no certainty same rates will be available. This combination can gradually weaken long-term financial planning.

Guaranteed return plans

These plans are long-term insurance-linked savings products that combine wealth creation with life protection. The returns are fixed and assured at the time of purchase and once locked in, they are unchanged for the entire policy span. The returns are unaffected by market movements or interest-rate cycles.

This clarity allows people to plan life goals such as a child's education, retirement income or financial security for the family. Currently, many guaranteed return plans offer returns up to 6.9-7%. The real USP of these plans lie in predictability as the returns do not fluctuate.

Also, maturity proceeds qualify for tax exemption under Section 10(10D), provided the aggregate annual premium across eligible policies don't exceed ₹5 lakh. This helps preserve returns without tax erosion, boosting long-term compounding compared with fully-taxable instruments. Also, premiums paid qualify for deductions under Section 80C, which improves tax efficiency.

The compounding effect

Suppose A invests ₹24 lakh in a FD with 6% interest and Investor B the same amount in a guaranteed return plan offering 6.9% tax-free returns. At the end of 10 years, Investor A's corpus would be much lower than Investor B's even before maturity tax cut. And when you adjust for taxation, the effective amount reduces further. Basically, FD returns are added to the taxable income and taxed as per your income slab. So, for those in 30% tax slab, FD proceeds will also be taxed at 30%. Investor B's maturity value, by contrast, stays largely preserved.

Securing dependents

Another feature is the built-in life cover in these plans. Guaranteed return plans include an insurance component providing financial protection to dependents. This dual structure of savings plus protection ensures that long-term goals remain safeguarded even in unforeseen circumstances even in the policyholder's absence.

Guaranteed return plans are not for replacing other investments. Equity-based assets are crucial for long-term growth and inflation participation. However, guaranteed return plans serve the distinct role of anchoring a portfolio with predictability, tax efficiency and long-term certainty.

(The writer is Head, Investments, Policybazaar.com)

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ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

Opportunities, risks in porting health policy

The facility to shift a health insurance policy from one insurer to another was unveiled in end 2011 by insurance regulator opening up options for insured to better terms elsewhere

TO SHIFT OR NOT?

K. Nitya Kalyani

A few days ago in this column, we examined the risks some insureds encountered while attempting to port hospitalisation policies. After paying the premium, they found themselves either without cover for a period or saddled with terms materially different from what they had proposed and paid for.

In this context, let us look at how you can port policy smoothly –what advantages you should leverage, and the risks and mistakes you should avoid.

Portability – the facility to shift a hospitalisation insurance policy from one insurer to another – was unveiled in end 2011 by the insurance regulator, opening up options for insured to better terms elsewhere and nudge insurers to focus on customer retention via fair pricing and improved service.

No simple exercise

The inspiration was mobile number portability implemented earlier in 2011 giving consumers unprecedented freedom. However, insurance is a far more complex. Porting a health policy was never meant to be a simple "walk in with KYC and switch" exercise, as in the case of mobiles.

Why would you want to port the policy? Primarily, to access better products, get wider coverage or more suitable policy terms with another insurer. This could mean broader risk cover, fewer restrictions, higher sum insured or more competitive pricing.

> In portability, the insurer has to carry forward key accrued benefits from existing policy — sum insured, no-claim bonus and credit built up towards completing waiting period for pre-existing diseases

Equally crucial are service-related considerations – poor responsiveness, unsatisfactory TPA performance or an inadequate hospital network.

That said, porting is not a step to be taken lightly. Your new insurer has the right to accept/reject the proposal. Contrast this with your position with the existing insurer, who is obligated under norms to offer lifelong renewal, provided there is no fraud or material non-disclosure.

Portability does come with certain protections. The destination insurer has to carry forward key accrued benefits from the existing policy – sum insured, no-claim bonus and the credit built up towards completing waiting period for pre-existing diseases and specified treatments

The new insurer, however, is free to set its premium. This is often the very reason porting appears attractive. But as highlighted in the earlier article, it is crucial to ensure you have firm, final terms and rates before letting the existing policy lapse. If this clarity is missing, it is safer to renew with the current insurer – on known, even if imperfect, terms – and work on porting the next year.

> Porting is likely s to be smoother if one is young or middle-aged and sans major pre-existing conditions. For insurer, he/she represents lower risk with many premium-paying years ahead of the insured

A few decision-making pointers may help.

Porting tends to be smoother if you are young or middle-aged and do not have major pre-existing conditions. From an underwriting perspective, you represent a lower risk with many premium-paying years ahead, making acceptance more likely.

In such cases, porting can be a good opportunity to move to policies with better coverage, fewer sub-limits (such as on room rent) or more favourable pricing.

On the other hand, if the current insurer provided good service – prompt claim settlements, reliable TPA support – and you are close to completing waiting periods for pre-existing conditions, continuity itself has value. In such situations, porting may not be the optimal choice.

Instead, consider increasing sum insured with the same insurer, or adding a top-up or super top-up policy. The options typically need no fresh medical underwriting, avoid unpleasant surprises and allow you to continue seamlessly with an insurer you already know. This approach also works well if you have employer-provided base cover and are building personal health insurance alongside it.

Retirement age

For those approaching or past retirement age, porting can be particularly risky. The outcomes may include outright rejection, sharply higher premiums, or additional exclusions and conditions. Staying with the existing insurer preserves the right to lifelong renewability – a benefit that should not be underestimated in today's health cover landscape.

Here again, top-ups and super top-ups are efficient ways to expand coverage. When accepted, they offer a significantly lower premium per rupee of sum insured compared with a base policy.

Finally, remember this distinction: porting policy is your right, but underwriting remains the insurer's right. In the coming articles in this column, we will outline a practical game plan and decision matrix to help you navigate this process with clarity and confidence.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

On alpha fade rate

THINKINVESTOR

Alpha fade rate refers to the gradual decay in the alpha strategy. This is because rate at which an alpha strategy fades can be faster than the rate at which a newer alpha strategy can be developed

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

We had discussed why popularity is not necessarily good (alpha scalability) when it comes to active fund investing. Now, look at a related characteristic viz. alpha fade rate.

Alpha decay

Alpha fade rate refers to the gradual decay in the alpha strategy. This happens because the rate at which an alpha strategy fades can be faster than the rate at which a newer alpha strategy can be developed. Why?

Alpha is the excess returns that a portfolio generates over its appropriate benchmark. An alpha strategy is a rule a portfolio manager applies to create a portfolio from the investable universe to generate positive alpha. Suppose a portfolio's investment universe is the 100 large-cap stocks. An alpha strategy can be a combination of fundamental factors such as profit margin, five-year sales growth and net profit growth of firms in the universe and technical factors such as each stock's price volatility and trading volumes. A portfolio manager and investment team will arrive at an optimal combination of these factors to help them generate alpha returns.

But why should alpha fade? Significant changes to market norms over the years reduced information asymmetry – market participants have access to the same company information. Using this information to test an alpha strategy is easy because of cheap computing power. This means a level-playing field among market participants, especially the institutional investors. Even if one portfolio manager beats the others to designing a new strategy, it may not be long before the others catch up. When many institutions follow the same strategy, it will eventually fade. Note, a strategy must be unique to be able to generate the alpha. Therein lies the problem.

Conclusion

Creating new alpha strategy may not the issue. Rather, the problem is in applying the strategy to the same universe of stocks. Suppose a portfolio manager applies 10 factors to pick stocks and another applies a different set of factors. If both are large-cap managers, they will apply the rule to the same 100 stocks. So, it is highly likely both buy similar stocks, despite applying different set of rules. When a large cohort of managers take similar action, consistently generating alpha becomes difficult. This is true in markets such as the U.S., but emerging markets such as India may not be far behind. You must be mindful of this factor when you buy active funds.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals for managing their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	7.10	6.35	7.10	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	7.20	6.90	7.00	7.00
ESAF Small Finance Bank	7.60	4.75	6.00	5.75
Jana Small Finance Bank	7.77	7.00	7.50	7.77
Shivalik Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	6.75	6.25
slice Small Finance Bank	7.75	6.25	7.50	7.00
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	7.90	7.25	7.25	7.90
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	7.45	7.25	7.20	7.20
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	7.50	6.00	7.50	7.00
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.45
Bandhan Bank	7.20	7.00	7.00	5.85
City Union Bank	7.00	6.80	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.00	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	6.60	6.30	6.40	6.25
DCB Bank	7.15	6.90	7.00	7.15
Federal Bank	6.70	6.25	6.70	6.40
HDFC Bank	6.45	6.25	6.45	6.40
ICICI Bank	6.50	6.25	6.45	6.50
IDFC FIRST Bank	7.00	6.30	7.00	7.00
IndusInd Bank	7.00	6.75	6.90	6.65
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.25	6.75	6.65	6.60
IDBI Bank	6.55	6.20	6.35	6.25
Karnataka Bank	6.65	6.50	6.15	6.15
Kotak Mahindra Bank	6.70	6.50	6.40	6.25
RBL Bank	7.20	7.00	7.20	6.70
SBM Bank India	7.30	7.10	7.10	7.00
South Indian Bank	6.60	6.35	6.20	5.70
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.10	6.80	6.60	6.60
YES Bank	7.00	6.65	7.00	6.75
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	6.45	6.10	6.25	6.30
Bank of India	6.70	6.25	6.25	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	6.65	6.20	5.25	5.00
Canara Bank	6.50	6.25	6.25	6.25
Central Bank of India	6.50	6.20	6.00	6.00
Indian Bank	6.45	6.10	6.05	6.00
Indian Overseas Bank	6.60	6.50	6.10	6.10
Punjab National Bank	6.40	6.10	6.30	6.10
Punjab & Sind Bank	6.75	5.85	5.85	5.95
State Bank of India	6.45	6.25	6.30	6.05
Union Bank of India	6.60	6.30	6.25	6.00

Source:Paisabazaar.com

Rates as on Feb.17

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
(In %)			
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70	7.25-8.70
Bank of Baroda	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.25
Union Bank of India*	7.15-9.50	7.15-9.50	7.15-9.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25-9.10	7.20-9.00	7.20-9.00
Bank of India	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.00	7.10-10.25
Bank of Maharashtra	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90	7.10-9.90
Punjab and Sind Bank	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70	7.30-10.70
Indian Overseas Bank	7.10 #	7.10 #	7.10 #
Indian Bank	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55	7.15-9.55
Central Bank of India	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15	7.10-9.15
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.70 #	7.70 #	7.70 #
ICICI Bank	7.45 #	7.45 #	7.45 #
Axis Bank	8.00-11.90	8.00-11.90	8.00 - 9.10
HSBC Bank	7.45 #	7.45 #	7.45 #
South Indian Bank	7.80 #	7.80 #	7.80 #
Karur Vysya Bank	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65	8.50-10.65
Karnataka Bank	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68	7.30-11.68
Federal Bank	7.50 - 9.50	7.50 - 9.50	7.50 - 9.50
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.90 - 9.30	7.90 - 9.30	7.90 - 9.30
Bandhan Bank	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58	8.41-12.58
RBL Bank	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
CSB Bank	8.05 #	8.05 #	8.05 #
HDFC Bank	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	7.15 #	7.15 #	7.15 #
Bajaj Housing Finance	7.15 #	7.15 #	7.15 #
Tata Capital	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
PNB Housing Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
GIC Housing Finance	8.20 #	8.20 #	8.20 #
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00 #	10.00 #	10.00 #
Sammaan Capital	8.75 #	8.75 #	8.75 #
Aditya Birla Capital	7.75 #	7.75 #	7.75 #
ICICI Home Finance	7.50 #	7.50 #	7.50 #
Godrej Housing Finance	7.60 #	7.60 #	7.60 #

*Extra rate cut of 0.05% to borrowers opting for insurance
Rates as on Feb.18 #onwards Source:Paisabazaar.com

TEL AVIV

U.S. says envoy's remark on Israel and West Asia taken out of context

REUTERS

An uproar continued on Sunday after the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, said Israel has a right to much of West Asia as more Arab and Muslim countries objected. A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy said Mr. Huckabee's comments were taken out of context and that there is no change to U.S. policies on Israel. AP

SEOUL

South Korea condemns Japan for hosting event over disputed islands

REUTERS

South Korea on Sunday objected to the Takeshima Day event held by Japan's Shimane prefecture, calling it an unjust assertion of sovereignty over its territory. The cluster of disputed islands, known as Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea, have long been a source of tension between the two neighbours. REUTERS

CARACAS

Over 1,500 prisoners seek amnesty under Venezuela's new legislation

REUTERS

At least 1,557 political prisoners in Venezuela have applied for amnesty under a new law, the head of the country's legislature Jorge Rodriguez said on Saturday, two days after the measure — enacted under pressure from Washington — came into effect. On Saturday alone, 80 prisoners had been freed from detention. AFP

BEIRUT

IS claims recent attacks in Syria, declares 'new phase' of operations

AP

Islamic State claimed responsibility on Saturday for two attacks targeting Army personnel in Syria, as the militant group signalled renewed operations. The group said it had begun a "new phase of operations" in Syria, describing President Ahmed al-Sharaa as a "watchdog" of a 'Turkish-American' coalition. REUTERS

Pakistan claims at least 70 militants killed in strikes along Afghan border

Islamabad says it hit hideouts of Pakistani militants it blamed for recent attacks inside the country; Afghan Defence Ministry calls the strikes a violation of country's sovereignty; locals claim those killed were neither Taliban nor military personnel

Associated Press
KABUL

Pakistan's military killed at least 70 militants in strikes along the border with Afghanistan early on Sunday, targeting what it described as hideouts of Pakistani militants it blamed for recent attacks inside the country.

Talal Chaudhry, Pakistan's Deputy Interior Minister, told Geo News that at least 70 militants were killed. He offered no evidence. Pakistan's state-run media later reported that militant casualties from the strikes jumped to 80.

The Afghanistan Defence Ministry said in a statement that "various civilian areas" in the provinces of Nangarhar and Paktika in eastern Afghanistan were hit, including multiple civilian homes.

The statement called the strikes a violation of Afghanistan's airspace and sovereignty.

In the crosshairs: People attend the funeral of victims of the strikes in Nangarhar's Behsud district in Afghanistan on Sunday. AP

Civilians killed

Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid earlier on X said the attacks "killed and wounded dozens, including women and children."

Mawlawi Fazl Rahman Fayyaz, the provincial director of the Afghan Red Crescent Society in Nangarhar province, said 18 people were killed and several others wounded.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned Pakistan's Ambassador to Kabul and handed him a note of protest over the Pakistani strikes.

In a statement, the Ministry said protecting Afghanistan's territory is the Islamic Emirate's "Sharia responsibility" and warned that Pakistan would be responsible for the consequences of such attacks.

On Sunday, villagers were seen clearing rubble in Nangarhar following airstrikes, while mourners were preparing for funerals of those killed. Habib Ullah, a local tribal elder, said those killed were not militants. "They were poor people who suffered greatly. Those killed were neither Taliban, nor military personnel, nor members of the former government," he said.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar wrote on X that the military conducted "intelligence-based, selective operations" against seven camps belonging to the Pakistani Taliban, or TTP, and its affiliates.

'No thanks': Greenland PM rejects Trump's hospital ship

Agence France-Presse
COPENHAGEN

Denmark and its territory Greenland on Saturday rejected Donald Trump's offer to send a naval hospital ship to the Arctic island coveted by the U.S. President.

A day earlier, Mr. Trump said he was sending "a great hospital boat to Greenland to take care of the many people who are sick, and not being taken care of there".

'Healthcare is free'

But Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen, who heads the autonomous territory's government, wrote on his Facebook page: "That will be 'no thanks' from us."

"President Trump's idea to send a U.S. hospital ship here to Greenland has been duly noted. But we have a public health system where care is free for citizens," he said.

Jens-Frederik Nielsen

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen likewise told Danish broadcaster DR: "The Greenlandic population receives the healthcare it needs. They receive it either in Greenland, or, if they require specialised treatment, they receive it in Denmark."

He added: "It's not as if there's a need for a special healthcare initiative in Greenland."

On the day that Mr. Trump made his proposal, Danish forces evacuated a crew member of a U.S. submarine off the coast of Greenland's capital Nuuk after the sailor requested urgent medical attention.

In Greenland, as in Denmark, access to healthcare is free for citizens. Without explicitly mentioning the U.S. proposal, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said she was "happy to live in a country where access to healthcare is free and equal for all".

Mr. Trump, in his Truth Social message on Saturday about the hospital ship, posted an AI-generated image of a U.S. Navy medical vessel, USNS Mercy. "It's on the way!!!" he added.

Man shot dead after trying to access Trump Florida estate

Agence France-Presse
MIAMI

U.S. Secret Service agents and a Sheriff's deputy fatally shot a man armed with a shotgun who breached the security perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Mr. Trump was in Washington at the time of the incident, which officials said happened around 1.30 a.m. (06:30 GMT).

Suspect armed

The suspect, a man in his early 20s, was spotted by the north gate of the Mar-a-Lago property, carrying a shot gun and a fuel, the Secret Service said.

Agents confronted the man and told him to disarm, but the man raised his gun. "The only words that we said to him was 'drop the items' which means the gas can and the shotgun," Palm Beach County sheriff Ric Bradshaw told reporters.

The U.S. President was in Washington at the time of the incident

"At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Mr. Bradshaw said.

A deputy and two Secret Service agents then shot him. The individual was pronounced deceased and no U.S. officers were injured. The Secret Service said no one under its protection was present in Mar-a-Lago at the time. The was no immediate reaction from the White House. The name of the suspect in the Sunday incident has not been released while officials attempt to contact his relatives.

Mr. Trump, who often spends his weekends in Mar-a-Lago, has been the target of several assassination plots or attempts.

Earlier this month, Ryan Routh, 59, who plotted to assassinate the President at a Florida golf course in September 2024, two months before the U.S. election, was sentenced to life in prison.

Mr. Routh's planned attack on Mr. Trump came two months after an assassination attempt on the Republican leader in Pennsylvania, where 20-year-old Matthew Crooks fired several shots during a rally, one of them grazing Mr. Trump's right ear.

Iran has right to self-defence if U.S. attacks, says Araghchi

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Iran's top diplomat said on Sunday that his country would strike back at U.S. interests in West Asia in the event of an attack, though he still saw a chance for a diplomatic resolution.

Speaking to U.S. broadcaster CBS, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said he expected new talks on the details of a deal, "probably" on Thursday, amid Washington's military build-up in the region.

"If the U.S. attacks us, then we have every right to defend ourselves," Mr. Araghchi said, alluding to American interests in the region as potential targets.

Still, he said, "there is a good chance to have a diplomatic solution".

Russian drone, missile barrage pounds energy, rail infrastructure across Ukraine

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

Russia fired scores of missiles and drones at targets across Ukraine on Sunday, crashing into energy and rail infrastructure and residential buildings, just two days before the fourth anniversary of Moscow's all-out invasion.

"Moscow continues to invest in strikes more than in diplomacy," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said of the attack, adding that Russia launched about 50 missiles and 300 drones overnight.

"The main target of the attack was the energy sector. Ordinary residential buildings were also damaged, and there is damage to the railway."

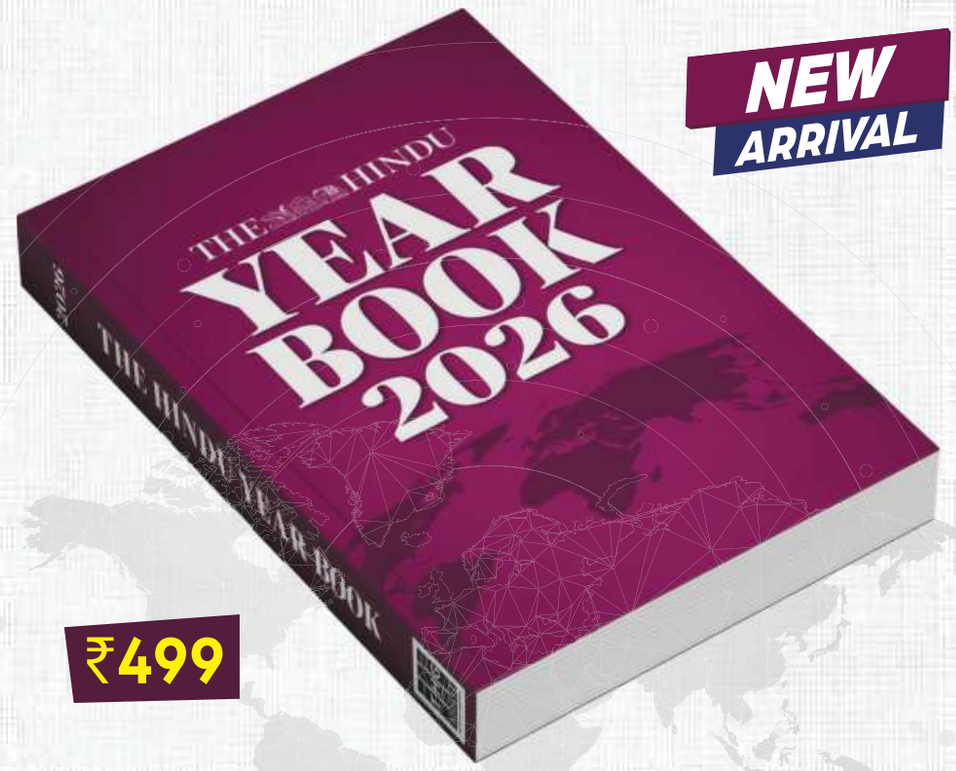
First response: Firefighters at the site of a residential building damaged during Russian strikes in Kyiv, Ukraine on Sunday. REUTERS

The intense barrage came the same day Hungary said it would block the EU's latest package of sanctions against Russia, unless Ukraine re-opens a key oil pipeline that supplies the country. Ukraine says the Druzhba pipeline that crosses its territory to deliver Russian oil to Slovakia and Hungary was damaged late January by Russian strikes. In Kyiv and its region, the Sunday overnight strikes killed one man and wounded a dozen more.

1 killed in 'terror attack'

It also came hours after blasts in Lviv, a western city near the Polish border that rarely sees deadly attacks. Explosions ripped through a central shopping street at around midnight, killing a policewoman and wounding 25 people after officers responded to a reported break in.

"This is clearly an act of terrorism," Mayor Andriy Sadovyi said, offering no details on perpetrators.

THE HINDU GROUP
A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FROM THE HINDU GROUP
The Hindu Year Book 2026
provides chronological, contextual, and factual information on the key events that occupied public attention **between January and December 2025.**
It features a Calendar of Events with Profiles of People, and Data on India and the World. Expert essays cover critical topics such as like AI and the Indus Waters Treaty, while dedicated sections analyse global governance, economy, and sports through evocative photographs and factual reporting.


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CANDID

We could have batted better, but it's part of the game: Suryakumar

VIJAY SONEJI

Sometimes you have to think you cannot win the game in the PowerPlay but you can lose it. We did not have the partnerships we needed. We could have batted better. It's part of the game. We will learn from it and bounce back. Hopefully, bat well, bowl well and field well. Keep it simple — Suryakumar Yadav, India skipper.

CRUSHING DEFEAT

India suffers its biggest loss by runs in T20 World Cup history

VIJAY SONEJI

The 76-run loss to South Africa was India's biggest by runs in the T20 World Cup. The 49-run defeat at the hands of Australia in 2010 was the previous worst performance by the Men in Blue. Sunday's loss was also India's second-biggest defeat by runs in the shortest format behind the 80-run defeat to the Kiwis in Wellington in 2019.

NO EXCUSES

Some of us have played in India, but a majority haven't: Raza

AP

Skipper Sikandar Raza stressed that Zimbabwe, despite playing in India after 10 years, will not offer lack of experience in Indian conditions as an excuse. "Some of us have played here (in India) but a majority haven't. But it's not down to the fast outfield. If anything, I think the weather is slightly more pleasant here," said Raza.

KEEP GOING

Bennett's role is to bat as long as he can, says Zimbabwe skipper

AFP

Brian Bennett is Brian Bennett. His role is just to bat as long as he can. While you may think I am being funny, but only people who understand Brian would know what I am talking about. Brian must just bat... if that means batting 20 overs, 18 overs, 15 overs, it doesn't matter — Sikandar Raza, Zimbabwe captain.

All-round Proteas bring Men in Blue crashing down

Miller, Brevis and Stubbs power South Africa to 187 for seven after the loss of three early wickets; the Indian batting unit comes a cropper as the defending champion's 12-match winning run ends

Putting on a show: Miller counterattacked before Stubbs cut loose at the death to take Proteas to a big total. Jansen was the wrecker-in-chief with four scalps. VIJAY SONEJI

T20 WORLD CUP

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
AHMEDABAD

A Sunday night that commenced on a boisterous note lapsed into silence as the hours ebbed away at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Defending champion India suffered its first defeat in the current T20 World Cup as South Africa emphatically won the Super Eight Group 1 match by 76 runs.

Meek surrender

Pursuing South Africa's 187 for seven, the Men in Blue were bundled out for 111 in 18.5 overs. During the chase, India suffered a double blow up front. Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma rushed their shots against Aiden Markram and Marco Jansen, respectively, and retreated to the hut.

Meanwhile, Abhishek Sharma guided Markram for four and his clenched fist was an instant sign of relief after being stuck on zero in his previous three outings.

There was hope when Suryakumar Yadav etched his fours and Abhishek upper-cut a six off Kagiso Rabada.

Just as the crowd regained its voice, Abhishek spooned a catch off Jansen, and the Indian think-tank promoted Washington Sundar to seal the cracks.

The southpaw hung around, smote Keshav Maharaj for six, and then edged Corbin Bosch. And once captain Suryakumar too perished to the seamer, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, and the rest, were left with too steep a mountain to climb.

Earlier, Markram won the toss and opted to bat while a sea of blue flowed into the massive venue. After an economical first over from Arshdeep Singh, the South African skipper watched fellow-opener Quinton de Kock strike Jasprit Bumrah for a four, and get castled off the very next delivery.

Markram followed suit, popping a catch off Arshdeep, and the Proteas were unsettled when Ryan Rickelton too departed.

Having pulled a six off Arshdeep, the batter lobbed Bumrah's slower delivery, straight to an eager Dube. From three for 20, the visitors found some relief through David Miller's fours. Miller (63) was decisive in his shots, and that attitude rubbed onto Dewald Brevis too.

Both hit a six each off Varun Chakaravarthy as a partnership took shape for the fourth wicket.

Dube, too, was toyed around until Brevis miscued a shot and that concluded the 97-run alliance.

However, Miller soldiered on and the Indians turned erratic. The southpaw finally holed out in the deep while trying to plunder Varun.

Bumrah excels

The host pulled back at the death, thanks to Bumrah, even as Tristan Stubbs swung his bat and helped the Proteas register a score that stayed well beyond India's reach.

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA

Aiden Markram c Hardik b Arshdeep 4 *(7b)*, Quinton de Kock b Bumrah 6 *(7b, 1x4)*, Ryan Rickelton c Dube b Bumrah 7 *(7b, 1x6)*, Dewald Brevis c Abhishek b Dube 45 *(29b, 3x4, 3x6)*, David Miller c Tilak b Varun 63 *(35b, 7x4, 3x6)*, Tristan Stubbs (not out) 44 *(24b, 1x4, 3x6)*, Marco Jansen c Rinku b Arshdeep 2 *(6b)*, Corbin Bosch c & b Bumrah 5 *(6b, 1x4)*, Kagiso Rabada (not out) 0 *(1b)*; Extras (b-1, lb-2, nb-2, w-6): 11; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 187.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-10 (de Kock, 1.5 overs), 2-12 (Markram, 2.4), 3-20 (Rickelton, 3.6), 4-117 (Brevis, 12.2), 5-152 (Miller, 15.4), 6-158 (Jansen, 17.2), 7-167 (Bosch, 18.5).

INDIA BOWLING

Arshdeep 4-0-28-2, Bumrah 4-0-15-3, Varun 4-0-47-1, Washington 2-0-17-0, Hardik 4-0-45-0, Dube 2-0-32-1.

INDIA

Ishan Kishan c Rickelton b Markram 0 *(4b)*, Abhishek Sharma c Bosch b Jansen 15 *(12b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Tilak Varma c de Kock b Jansen 1 *(2b)*, Suryakumar Yadav c Brevis b Bosch 18 *(22b, 2x4)*, Washington Sundar c de Kock b Bosch 11 *(11b, 1x6)*, Shivam Dube c Ngidi b Jansen 42 *(37b, 1x4, 3x6)*, Hardik Pandya c Stubbs b Maharaj 18 *(17b, 1x6)*, Rinku Singh c Stubbs b Maharaj 0 *(2b)*, Arshdeep Singh c Stubbs b Maharaj 1 *(2b)*, Varun Chakaravarthy (not out) 0 *(3b)*, Jasprit Bumrah c Markram b Jansen 0 *(1b)*; Extras (lb-1, w-4): 5; Total (in 18.5 overs): 111.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Kishan, 0.4), 2-5 (Tilak, 1.1), 3-26 (Abhishek, 4.3), 4-43 (Washington, 7.2), 5-51 (Suryakumar, 9.1), 6-86 (Hardik, 14.1), 7-86 (Rinku, 14.3), 8-88 (Arshdeep, 14.6), 9-111 (Dube, 18.4).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Markram 1-0-5-1, Jansen 3.5-0-22-4, Rabada 4-0-32-0, Ngidi 4-0-15-0, Maharaj 3-0-24-3, Bosch 3-0-12-2.

Toss: South Africa; **PoM:** Miller.
South Africa won by 76 runs.
India's next match: **February 26** vs. Zimbabwe, Chennai, 7 p.m.

'We thought this was the best XI'

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
AHMEDABAD

India's inexplicable meltdown against South Africa shifted attention to the team composition. During the post-match press conference at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate conceded that World Cups never come easy.

Fine line

Reacting to vice-captain Axar Patel's omission, ten Doeschate said: "We have the highest regard for Axar. It is just that in the case of match-ups against left-handed batters, we thought this was the best XI, especially our bowlers. It is a thin line, do we go with an extra batter or an extra bowler?"

On Abhishek Sharma's form, ten Doeschate explained: "The other day too I said how he is in good rhythm in the nets. Yes three zeroes can weigh you down, he is trying his best. Yes we have been losing wickets early. There is also some inexperience in the ranks, we are trying to address all that. We have to be careful while apportioning blame."

Keeping it simple

Meanwhile, David Miller, who rescued South Africa with a superb knock, said: "In front of a large audience, you try to do the simple things. This game is a game of risks and as a cricketer you play to your terms. Today was an all-round great performance."

He stressed that India is beatable. "We just got to stay in our lane and do our plans. Against Varun Chakaravarthy we did our best. He is a world-class bowler but we took our chances. Getting 187 on (the) board and getting those early wickets helped us".

A struggle: Abhishek's form is a big concern for India. VIJAY SONEJI

Salt and Jacks star in England's comprehensive win over Lanka

Abhishek Saini
PALLEKELE

Phil Salt (62, 40b, 6x4, 2x6) curbed his instinct for big hits and adapted to a slow surface at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium here on Sunday to set up England's 51-run victory over Sri Lanka in the T20 World Cup Super Eight clash.

Salt's effort allowed England to survive a top-order slide and post 146 runs for nine. In reply, Sri Lanka folded up for 95 after Will Jacks' three strikes in the PowerPlay sent the chase into a tailspin.

After England was put in, Salt's attempt to clear long off against Dunith Wellalage off his third ball hinted at his mood to attack. But he was mindful to recalibrate after Jos Buttler's reverse hit went awry and pinned him in front.

Salt reverted to picking pockets of space in the outfield to collect doubles for a major part, bringing up his fifty off 35 balls. But the quick running between the wickets eventually cost him too. Running out of gas in humid conditions, his waft off Wellalage could only be hit with stationary feet and ended up only as far as long off. Jacks once again injected late momentum and prolonged the innings, going over covers for four fours.

Sri Lanka's response never really recovered from the five wickets it lost in the PowerPlay for just 34 runs. The in-form Pathum Nissanka was the first to depart, putting his flick from outside the off-stump against Jofra Archer straight to the trap laid at deep midwicket.

Jacks then pushed Sri Lanka to a point of no return with the wickets of Kusal Mendis, Pavan Rathnayake, and Wellalage.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka refused to throw in the towel. He smoked Jacks over midwicket and lofted Liam Dawson down the ground. But losing partners at the other end, he could only take Sri Lanka so far.

The scores: England 146/9 in 20 overs (Phil Salt 62, Dilshan Madushanka 2/25, Dunith Wellalage 3/26, Maheesh Theekshana 2/21) bt Sri Lanka 95 in 16.4 overs (Dasun Shanaka 30, Jofra Archer 2/20, Will Jacks 3/22, Liam Dawson 2/27, Adil Rashid 2/13). **Toss:** Sri Lanka; **PoM:** Jacks.

Turning point: Jacks' three strikes in the PowerPlay sent the chase into a tailspin. AP

SUPER EIGHT

Today's match

Mumbai, 7 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 4

Zimbabwe 1 | West Indies 3

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIOHOTSTAR

West Indies meets Zimbabwe in a battle between high-flying teams

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

It has been exactly a decade since Zimbabwe last played an international match in India. Back in 2016, while Daren Sammy-led West Indies scripted history by becoming the first team to win two World T20 titles, Zimbabwe exited in the preliminary round.

On Monday at the Wankhede Stadium, the two sides reunite in far different circumstances. Sikandar Raza's Zimbabwe takes on West Indies – with Sammy as the head coach – in the Super Eights of the Men's T20 World Cup.

For two teams that spent much of the past decade labelled as international cricket's also-rans, topping their respective groups and meeting at this stage marks a significant shift. It signals progress for both Caribbean and Zimbabwean cricket, and underlines the expanding footprint of the T20 game beyond its traditional power centres.

Zimbabwe has been the fairytale of the tournament. A stunning win over Australia sealed a Super Eights berth – and a rare return to Indian soil – before they underlined their credentials by beating co-host Sri Lanka to finish atop the group.

The challenge now is adaptation. Only Raza and left-arm spinner Wellington Masakadza remain from the 2016 squad that last toured India. The transition from the slower, lower pitches in Sri Lanka to the typically flatter Wankhede surface will test their adaptability. Unsurprisingly, despite the momentum, Zimbabwe will begin as underdogs.

It is also monitoring the fitness of left-arm pacer Richard Ngarava. West Indies, meanwhile, has been bolstered by the return of Romario Shepherd, who missed the final two league matches with a niggle. Sammy confirmed Shepherd is available for selection, with the all-rounder bowling an extended spell in training on Sunday.

West Indies may not have anticipated Zimbabwe in their Super Eights opener, but they have had time to recalibrate. The question now is whether Zimbabwe can script a third successive upset – or whether experience will prevail.

Back in the swing: West Indies will be eager to have Shepherd's services again. EMMANUAL YOGINI

> We are going to see if all of us can help one another with our notes from training and put our best foot forward against the West Indies
>
> **SIKANDAR RAZA**
> Zimbabwe skipper

Pre-seedings imbroglio: Sammy empathises with the organisers

The West Indies head coach says logistics was probably taken into consideration; he stresses that if his team has to win, it has to play what's in front of it and not take any rival for granted

T20 WORLD CUP

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

The system of pre-seedings has come in for widespread criticism with all the group toppers at the Men's T20 World Cup having been clubbed together in the same Super Eights group.

While doing his best to dead-bat the issue, Daren Sammy, the West Indies head coach, sounded empathetic with the organisers taking logistics into consideration.

"In sports, you seldom get the top teams in the same round. My team knows they just have to play (in) a World Cup.

"We have got Zimbabwe tomorrow, we have got South Africa and then India," Sammy said at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday, ahead of its Super Eight opener against giant-killer Zimbabwe on Monday.

"We have got finalists of the last World Cup (in the same group). If you are going to win, you have got to play what's in front of you. Not take it for granted, not take anybody lightly.

Clear-headed: Sammy says that if the teams start to discuss too many things, focus will be shifted. FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

"If you start to bring in other factors, it takes you off-track on your focus. For us, our focus is Zimbabwe tomorrow and (to) do everything in our power to come out victorious."

When asked whether the International Cricket Council (ICC) should reconsider pre-seedings in order to avoid top teams in the same group in future, Sammy said: "If you take the logistics that comes into it, trying to give the fans who probably travel, an opportunity to plan ahead," Sammy said.

"I am pretty sure Zimbabwe looking at that group there gave them motivation and inspiration to come out and play the way they played.

"But I do understand from the logistics standpoint. Trying to give the fans the surety. That's not my thing (to decide)."

Triumphant: The victorious India-A women's team. ACC

Tejal and Prema steal the show as India-A wins Rising Stars title

Press Trust of India
BANGKOK

Tejal Hasanbis made an impactful unbeaten 51 off 34 balls on a slow turner before leg-spinner Prema Rawat made the ball talk as India-A outplayed Bangladesh- A by a whopping 46 runs in a low-scoring final to defend the ACC Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here on Sunday.

At 44 for four, India was in trouble but Hasanbis, who has played ODIs for India, and captain Radha Yadav, another international, (36 off 30) shared an 89-run stand for the fifth wicket to lift their team to 134 for seven in 20 overs.

The Radha-led side comfortably defended by bowling out Bangladesh for 88 in 19.1 overs.

The star with the ball was Prema (three for 12), who was part of RCB's triumphant campaign in the recently played WPL.

The scores: India-A 134/7 in 20 overs (Tejal Hasanbis 51 n.o., Radha Yadav 36, Fahima Khatun 4/25) bt Bangladesh-A 88 in 19.1 overs (Prema Rawat 3/12). **Toss**: India-A . **PoM**: Tejal Hasanbis.

The Indian team wants to be consistent and dominate world cricket, says Smriti

Press Trust of India
ADELAIDE

Indian women's team wants to consistently stay at the top and dominate world cricket, said vice-captain Smriti Mandhana.

Riding high on their maiden 50-over World Cup triumph, the Women in Blue have now set their sights on winning the T20 World Cup later this year.

They began the year with a T20 series win against Australia, their first series triumph over the formidable rivals in a decade. "This Indian team is trying to be consistent. Don't think about the opposition or what's happened in the past," Smriti said on BCCI.tv.

"I think we are on the verge of a transition where we want to dominate world cricket. We just want to be consistent in beating them and being at the top,"

The women's T20 World Cup is slated to be held in England and Wales from June 12 to July 5.

"This year is a T20 year. Last year was a one-day year where we played a lot of one-day cricket. So coming into this year, for sure, I feel like we are a well-settled ODI squad, but we are still working on our T20 game and also what's our best XI and what's our best 15 in terms of T20s."

India-Australia T20I series in numbers

BATTING	M	Runs	HS	SR	50s
Smriti	3	129	82	134.37	1
Voll	3	116	88	161.11	1
BOWLING	**M**	**Wkts**	**BB**	**Econ**	**4W**
Arundhati	3	8	4/22	7.25	1
Shree Charani	3	5	3/32	7.40	0

Penalty shootout heartbreak for India against Australia

PRO LEAGUE

Press Trust of India
HOBART

The Indian men's hockey team dished out a much improved show but still went down to Australia in the penalty shootout in their FIH Pro League match here on Sunday.

The two sides were tied 2-2 after full time with Amit Rohidas (15th) and Jugraj Singh (43rd) putting India in front before a brace from Joel Rintala (47th, 56th) helped Australia get back on level terms.

In the shootout, though, Australia emerged 5-4 victorious.

This was after India lost five matches in a row in the FIH Pro League this year, including four in the home leg in Rourkela. It lost to Spain 2-0 on Saturday.

India was rewarded with a penalty corner late in the first quarter, and made the most of it as Rohidas scored.

Consolation: The draw meant India opened its account in the campaign, after five straight losses. FIH

The second quarter produced end-to-end action, with both teams creating chances.

Australia had 10 circle penetrations and a couple of penalty corners while India had nine circle penetrations, causing problems on the counter attack.

Australia continued to dominate possession after the restart.

The Indian defensive line remained resolute at the back though and doubled the lead with Jugraj converting a powerful drag-flick from a penalty corner.

The hosts managed to reduce the deficit early in the fourth quarter. With time running out, Australia eventually found the leveller from a set-piece.

It an intense shootout both teams converted their first four penalties.

However, Aditya Arjun Lalage was denied by Snowden, giving Australia a hard-fought win.

India will next take on Spain on Tuesday.

The result: Australia 2 (Joel Rintala 47, 56) drew with India 2 (Amit Rohidas 15, Jugraj Singh 43) (Australia won 5-4 on penalties).

Sahil, Ravina take the honours in Indian Open race walk

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Home boy Sahil stunned his more fancied rivals to clinch the inaugural men's half-marathon (21km) on the second and final day of the 13th Indian Open race walk competition at the Sukhna Lake on Sunday.

While Akshdeep Singh appeared to have initially won, the Punjab athlete was penalised four minutes, pushing him to seventh spot.

The 24-year-old Sahil clocked 1:25:48 to push Asian Championships medallist Servin Sebastian to the second spot, just two seconds behind.

Akshdeep Singh had won this race, but due to a penalty, four minutes were added to his timing.

Akshdeep's final timing was registered as 1:27:37.

Haryana's Ravina took the honours in the women's half-marathon, winning in 1:39:15.00 to extend her unbeaten run at home.

The 29-year-old had won the Indian Open last year (20km) along with the National Games and the Inter-State Championships to stamp her authority over the distance.

While Akshdeep appeared to have initially won, the Punjab athlete was penalised four minutes, pushing him to seventh

The results: Men: Half-marathon (21km) walk: 1. Sahil (Pun, 1:25:48), 2. Servin Sebastian (TN, 1:25:50), 3. Hardeep (Har, 1:26:03). **U-20 5km race walk:** 1. Tushar Panwar (Utk, 19:59), 2. Himanshu Panwar (Utk, 20:08), 3. Praveen (Raj, 20:12). **Women: Half-marathon (21km) walk:** 1. Ravina (Har, 1:39:15), 2. Munita Prajapati (UP, 1:39:26), 3. Mansi Negi (Utk, 1:42:58). **U-20 5km race walk:** 1. Manisha (Raj, 23:24), 2. Yogita (Har, 23:49), 3. Simran Gusain (Utk, 23:58).

City keeps snapping at Arsenal's heels; Inter zooms ahead

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Manchester City piled pressure on Premier League leader Arsenal after Nico O'Reilly's brace clinched it a 2-1 home win against Newcastle United.

Pep Guardiola's side wasn't at its best but it held on for a victory that moved it within two points of Arsenal. On Sunday, Alexis Mac Allister struck in the seventh minute of stoppage time to help Liverpool edge its host Nottingham Forest 1-0.

In the LaLiga, Raul Garcia's 90th-minute strike consigned leader Real Madrid to a 1-2 defeat at Osasuna on Saturday, in a blow to its title hopes. Atletico Madrid got back to winning ways with a 4-2 victory over Espanyol.

Heading it in: O'Reilly rises high to nod home City's second against Newcastle. REUTERS

Henrikh Mkhitaryan's second-half goal helped Inter Milan move 10 points clear at Serie A summit with a 2-0 win at Lecce.

Important results:
Premier League: Nottingham Forest 0 lost to Liverpool 1 (Mac Allister 90+7); Sunderland 1 (Le Fee 76-pen) lost to Fulham 3 (Jimenez 54, 61-pen, Iwobi 85).
Serie A: Atalanta 2 (Pasalic 61, Samardzic 81) bt Napoli 1 (Beukema 18).

On Saturday: Premier League: Manchester City 2 (O'Reilly 14, 27) bt Newcastle 1 (Hall 22).
LaLiga: Osasuna 2 (Budimir 38-pen, Raul Garcia 90) bt Real Madrid 1 (Vinicius 73).
Atletico Madrid 4 (Sorloth 21, 72, Simeone 49, Lookman 58) bt Espanyol 2 (Jofre 6, Exposito 80).
Serie A: Lecce 0 lost to Inter Milan 2 (Mkhitaryan 75, Akanji 82).
Bundesliga: RB Leipzig 2 (Baumgartner 20, 39) drew with Borussia Dortmund 2 (Romulo 50-og, Silva 90+5).

Greek Sakellaridis emerges champion in the Delhi Open

TENNIS

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Greece's Stefanos Sakellaridis claimed his maiden ATP Challenger singles title by beating fifth seed Oliver Crawford 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (6) in the Delhi Open final at the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) Complex here on Sunday. The 21-year-old from Athens was down a break and on the brink of defeat when he was trailing 2-5 in the third and final set, but the youngster, standing at six feet and six inches, hung in and fought back to clinch the tie after three hours and nine minutes.

The opening set witnessed five breaks of serve before Sakellaridis edged it 7-5. The unseeded Greek carried the momentum into the second set, breaking early to take a 2-0 lead. However, the Brit responded strongly, drawing on his experience to turn the set around and take the match to a decider.

Sakellaridis broke in the opening game of the third set, but was unable to consolidate his advantage. Crawford won six of the next seven games to surge ahead 5-2. Just when the match appeared to be slipping away from Sakellaridis, he managed to stage a stirring comeback.

With the win, he earned 75 ATP ranking points and $17,000 in prize money.

"It was a very big fight in the final. There were lots of ups and downs," Sakellaridis said after the win. "I was managing to play at a good level at many, many moments that managed to get me through."

The result: Singles (final): Stefanos Sakellaridis (Gre) bt Oliver Crawford (GBr) 7-5, 4-6, 7-6(6).

Vaishnavi goes down to Vandewinkel in final

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

Third seed and World No. 124 Hanne Vandewinkel of Belgium capped a dominant week with a 6-0, 6-1 victory over wildcard Vaishnavi Adkar in the final of the KPB Trust ITF Women's Open W100 tournament at the S.M. Krishna Stadium here on Sunday.

Vaishnavi, the 21-year-old from Pune who entered the tournament ranked 690, will rise up more than 200 places to be ranked in the 460s.

On Saturday, she had become the first Indian woman since Sania Mirza to reach an ITF W100 Final.

For her runner-up finish, Vaishnavi will gain 65 points and be richer by $8,147.

Vaishnavi with the champion Vandewinkel.

Inaugural edition of PGTI's 72 The League from tomorrow

GOLF

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The first official franchise-owned golfing league in the country had its opening ceremony here on Saturday night with the inaugural edition set to tee off on Tuesday at the ITC Classic course, Gurugram.

Launched by the PGTI, '72 The League' will have leading Indian golfers on the domestic professional circuit, including Manu Gandas, Ajeetesh Sandhu and Viraj Madappa, take on each other in match-play format comprising singles, four-ball and foursomes contests. The league features six teams of 10 professionals each.

Current PGTI Order of Merit leader Honey Baisoya is the most expensive buy at ₹20.50 lakh by Capital Lancers while the 16-year-old Kartik Singh, who turned professional only last September, will be the youngest on the course.

Different experience

Madappa, returning after an 18-month injury lay-off, admitted it would be a different experience.

"Golf is a very individual sport but now you have nine other guys behind you, your team strategist, a lot of people you want to do well for and to play for something bigger than ourselves is exciting," Madappa said.

Veteran Arjun Atwal, named the league's brand ambassador, hoped it would help make the sport popular.

"It's match play and it's a team format...I think it's a brilliant idea to market the game in our country, even to the grassroots," the 52-year-old USA-based golfer said.

The teams: Capital Lancers, Charminar Champions, Kolkata Classics, Mumbai Aces, Rajasthan Regals, UP Promethans.

LIVE TELECAST

Men's T20 World Cup: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7 p.m.
ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: DAZN, 11 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)
LaLiga: FanCode, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 1.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Red-ball deeds make J & K a dominant force: Rasool

The State's flag-bearer says the sport in the region changed for the better after Bedi was brought on board in 2011; as it approaches its maiden final, the team aspires to be part of the big league

RANJI TROPHY

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

A step away: J & K would hope to have the perfect ending to its fairytale run. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

When Parvez Rasool debuted for India against Bangladesh in an ODI in June 2014, he broke the glass ceiling. It was the first time a cricketer from Jammu & Kashmir was representing the country.

The latest breaking-the-barrier moment has come in the Ranji Trophy, with the State ready to play its maiden final, against Karnataka in Hubballi from Tuesday. And the former skipper, quite understandably, is chuffed.

Moment of pride

"It's a proud moment for all of us associated with J & K cricket," Rasool told *The Hindu*. "Coming from the smaller States, these things matter a lot. And red-ball cricket is real cricket - batting, bowling and fielding are all tested and for long periods."

J & K played the Ranji quarterfinals in 2013-14 and 2019-20 under Rasool's captaincy, but it was last year that it turned into a force to reckon with. It lost out on a semifinal berth after conceding an agonisingly narrow one-run first-innings lead to Kerala but has bounced back from that heartbreak sensationally.

"I will go back to the time when Bishen Singh Bedi sir came into J & K cricket (2011) and that's when our mindset changed," said the 37-year-old, who played 75 Ranji matches.

"Before that, participation was enough. But the great man told us '*beta*, go and compete. You have the skills'. Getting to the quarters, and then the final now, are all part of the same process.

"Earlier, we didn't have many inspirations because we didn't do much in domestic cricket and there were hardly any games back home. And unless you win, nobody cares. Now, entire J & K is following us and expectations are building. I hope we play the Vijay Hazare and Syed Mushtaq Ali finals too."

Rasool. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

One of the biggest drivers of J & K's recent success has been speedster Auqib Nabi, the Player-of-the-Match in both the quarterfinal (Madhya Pradesh) and semifinal (Bengal) games.

The 29-year-old pacer has bagged 55 wickets in this Ranji season, only four shy of leader Mayank Mishra.

Consistency is key

Nabi was the second-highest wicket-taker in the previous edition with 44 scalps. Admirably, he has been the only pacer in the top five both seasons.

"At one point, there was Nabi, and there was the rest of India," Rasool said, with a proud laugh.

"The way he has maintained his body to bowl 30 to 40 overs per game across two seasons is unbelievable. And he is also doing well against strong teams. He played the Duleep Trophy and took a hat-trick (four in four balls). He has been phenomenal and hopefully, we win the title".

Lalbiaknia secures a draw for NorthEast United against BFC

ISL

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

A fine piece of skill from Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia helped NorthEast United FC secure a 1-1 draw against Bengaluru FC in an ISL clash at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Sunday.

Lalbiaknia made an instant impact after coming on in the 64th minute.

The NorthEast striker controlled a long ball from Asheer Akhtar with a deft first touch, before unleashing a powerful strike to beat BFC custodian Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Lalbiaknia's clinical finish was in contrast to the shots hit by his nervy teammates, who missed chances aplenty.

Super sub: Lalbiaknia, left, scored just four minutes after coming on. J. ALLEN EGENUSE

Earlier in the evening, the home team drew first blood through a fantastic individual effort from Braian Sanchez.

In the 19th minute, the Argentine midfielder cut to his right and glided past his markers.

Sanchez finished the move with a low, hard strike from outside the 18-yard box, which nestled into the bottom left corner.

The match, played in front of 13,000-odd boisterous fans, witnessed several attacking plays from both teams. Parthib Gogoi's attempt from close range in the opening minute, Michel Zabaco's header and M.S. Jithin's powerful shot kept the visiting team's hopes alive in the first half.

NEUFC came close in the 62nd minute when Jairo Samperio latched on to a through ball, but once again, the quality of the finish was not up to the mark.

At the other end, BFC nearly found a late winner via Ryan Williams, whose effort bounced off the crossbar.

The result: Bengaluru FC 1 (Braian Sanchez 19) drew with NorthEast United FC 1 (Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia 68).

Chhangte earns full points for Mumbai

P.K. Ajith Kumar
KOCHI

The drama on field may not have quite matched what happened off it 24 hours earlier, but there was plenty of action in Kerala Blasters' first home fixture this ISL season.

But it was the visiting side that walked away with three points on Sunday night. Mumbai City won 1-0, with Lallianzuala Chhangte striking early in the second half at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

More than the match, it was the very stadium that made more news on Saturday. There was even a possibility of this game not going ahead at all, with the ground's owner Greater Cochin Development Authority asking for higher rent, and it was only late into the evening that the issue was settled.

Killer blow: Chhangte, right, found the target early in the second half. R.K. NITHIN

If the Blasters players were affected by all that avoidable anxiety, they did not show it. They pressed forward and created chances up front, but Mumbai also was just as keen, as the opening half produced some fine end-to-end football.

The men from Mumbai got a golden opportunity to take the lead midway through the first half.

They were awarded a penalty kick for a foul by Danish Farooq, but Jorge Pereyra Díaz, the prolific scorer, failed to convert; he was denied by goalkeeper Arsh Shaikh, who pushed the ball smartly away.

Chhangte, however, made up for that, as he found the target following a deflection from Brandon Fernandes. That was enough for Mumbai to post its second win in as many games, while Blasters is without a point.

The result: Kerala Blasters 0 lost to Mumbai City 1 (Chhangte 47).

AROUND THE CITY

Athish's ton powers Tamil Nadu to 399 against Punjab

S.R. Athish struck 113 as Tamil Nadu posted 399 against Punjab on day two of the Col. C.K. Nayudu Trophy elite quarterfinal match in New Chandigarh.

The scores: Tamil Nadu 399 in 111 overs (S.R. Athish 113, Kiran Karthikeyan 61, K.T.A. Madhava Prasad 64, R.K. Jayant 59, S. Rajalingam 45, Harjas Singh Tandon 4/91) vs Punjab 144/4 in 61 overs (Harnoor Singh 46, Yuvi Goyal 41).

Shreyas and Arush propel Mumbai

Shreyas Khilare's fine 65, supported by Arush Kolhe's valuable 41, propelled Mumbai to a competitive total of 246 against Andhra on the opening day of the the TNCA-Quadrangular invitational Tournament Boys' under-14 final at the Gojan Grounds on Sunday. In reply, Andhra was 15 for two at stumps.

The scores (final): Mumbai 246 in 90 overs (Shardul Fagare 32, Arush Kolhe 41, Shreyas Khilare 65, N. Lohith Raghavendhra 3/101) vs. Andhra 15/2 in 8 overs.

Vijay, Dharmadurai and Kamagodeeswaran shine in Social CC's big win

S. Vijay's unbeaten 117, along with a superb spells from left-arm spinner N. Dharmadurai (five for 29) and off-spinner R. Kamagodeeswaran (five for 32), powered Social CC to a 112-run victory over Sumangali Homes in the TNCA fourth division 'A' zone match held recently. In another contest, CUC registered a dominant 182-run win against Purasawalkam CC, riding on U. Jakvis Yosaph's century (113).

The scores: IV-A: Social 222/9 in 50 overs (S. Vijay 117 n.o., P. Naveen Kumar 5/51) bt Sumangali Homes 110 in 31.4 overs (G. Babu 32, N. Dharmadurai 5/29, R. Kamagodeeswaran 5/32).

Royapettah 263/9 in 50 overs (J. Sanjayprakash 48, L.B. Naveen Balaji 56, S. Venkadesan 38 n.o., K. Siva Kumar 6/62, D.M. Mithun 3/67) bt Twentieth Century Club 244 in 47.3 overs (A. Gangadharan 60, P. Arun 57, K. Siva Kumar 40, A. Dhanaraj 5/55).

Friends XI 189/5 in 50 overs (Ajay Singh 43, P. Dhanu Sathyan 64 n.o., S.V. Praveen 44 n.o.) lost to YMA 194/7 in 44 overs (L. Saravanan 50, P.S. Siva Ramakrishnan 55, R. Manikandan 32 n.o., S. Keshav 3/63).

GE T&D India S & RC 240 in 49.5 overs (Thejeshwar Ganesh 50, K.S. Gowthaman 56, B. Ashwin 31, G. Maharaja 4/58) lost to MUC 241/8 in 46.3 overs (S. Yathin 59, P. Sanjay Selvam 39, M. Anbu Selvan 31).

Bharathi CC 187 in 45 overs (N. Dhilipan 46, M. Manikandan 31, M. Ramesh 3/69, B. Harish 3/32) lost to Jubilee 190/6 in 46.1 overs (Vasisht Shankarraman 52, B. Harish 52 n.o., C.R. Sriram Prasad 38 n.o., K. Palanisamy 3/42).

CUC 266/9 in 50 overs (U. Jakvis Yosaph 113, B.B. Muguntha Vathanan 79, S. Anirudh 3/60) bt Purasawalkam 84 in 19.4 overs (M. Rajesh 3/15, G. Sriram 3/15).

V-A: Ethiraj S.A. 99 in 28.5 overs (M.S. Prajwol Nath 5/33) bt Dorairaj Memorial 72 in 21.3 overs (V. Narasiman 4/37, B.N. Kowshik Babu 4/10).

V-C: CCL 173 in 42.1 overs (M.K. Akash 46, V. Abhishek 36, M. Saran 6/26) bt GTUC 119 in 35.2 overs (V. Ramalingam 3/32, J. Karthiravan 3/28).

Universal 234/7 in 50 overs (N. Nishanth 75, B. Haasan 52, S. Porselvan 33, G. R. Manish 4/58) bt Eagle 99 in 30.4 overs (K. Ashwin 39, J. Allen Joseph 4/25, S. Porselvan 3/19).

V-D: Grove 197 in 43.3 overs (R. Abishek 30, Devesh 42, Raul Roshan 42 n.o., R. Nishanth 3/62, V. Vignesh 3/10) lost to TVS MSC 198/5 in 42.3 overs (R. Nishanth 63 n.o., Senthilvel 38, A. Ashwin Kumar 3/41).

Star Performers: *Top:* S. Vijay (Social, 117 n.o.); N. Dharmadurai (Social, 5/29); R. Kamagodeeswaran (Social, 5/32); A. Dhanaraj (Royapettah, 5/55); K. Siva Kumar (Twentieth Century Club, 6/62). *Bottom:* Saran (GTUC, 6/26); Prajwol Nath (Dorairaj, 5/33 incl. hat-trick); P. Naveen Kumar (Sumangali Homes, 5/51); Siva Shankar (Varadharaja Perumal, 5/25); U. Jakvis Yosaph (CUC, 113).

Easy for Standard Ambattur CC

Standard Ambattur CC beat MAS CC by nine wickets in a zone-A match of the Tiruvallur DCA first division league.

The scores:

I-A: MAS 137 in 36 overs (R. Nilesh Subramanian 44, M. Poiyamozhi 3/30) lost to Standard Ambattur 143/1 in 20.5 overs (M. Vijaykumar 59 n.o., B. Ajith 64).

I-B: United 167/9 in 30 overs (N. Manoj Kumar 39, G. John Stephen Francies 3/29) bt SRF RC 91 in 25 overs (A. Murali 3/15, J. Jithender Kumar Bohra 3/14, M. Devaraj 3/11).

IJL gets the better of EPFO

IJL defeated EPFO by three wickets in a Group-B match of the 21st Lucas TVS Thriuvallur DCA Trophy.

The scores: Group-B: EPFO 248 in 30 overs (S. Chocalingam 45, K. Sunil Kumar 42, R. Hariharan 50, R. Gokul 37, L. Kavarimaan 3/31) lost to IJL 251/7 in 28.4 overs (J. David Prasanna Raj 49, S. Ponabinesh 34, B. Aravind Raj Kumar 43, V. Nithyanandan 53).

Siva's five-for goes in vain for Eagle CC

Off-spinner Siva Shankar's five for 25 went in vain as Eagle CC lost to Varadharaja Perumal CC by 62 runs in the Kancheepuram DCA league.

The scores:

Varadharaja Perumal 127 in 29.2 overs (G. Madhanagopal 44, Siva Shankar 5/25) bt Eagle 65 in 21.2 overs (S. Sujathran 4/19, G. Madhanagopal 4/17).

Legal Eagle 167 in 27.4 overs (Ram Kumar 64, G. Balasubramanian 38, Kabilan 3/44, Nagulan 4/55) bt Vijay 88/9 in 30 overs (Ponmozhi 4/41, Ramakrishnan 3/14).

Budding Star 90 in 27.5 overs bt Varadharaja Perumal 45 in 18.2 overs (Sakthivelan 4/15, B. Yavaraj 3/17).

ENGAGEMENTS

Cricket: G.R. CA XL1 Super Sports u-14 inter-school tournament, Reddy's Sumangali-B (turf), 7 a.m.

I want everyone around me to grow: Miranda on teamwork among coaches

S. Shrivathsan
CHENNAI

For Chennaiyin FC head coach Clifford Miranda, teamwork is imperative to make the dream work. It is not just restricted to the pitch; it extends beyond the touchline where the backroom staff belt out instructions to the players throughout the matches.

While Miranda is Chennaiyin's designated chief coach, he has allowed assistant coach Anthony Fernandes and goalkeeping coach Rajat Guha to take up lead roles when required, as was evident in the 0-1 defeat to Mumbai City FC.

Miranda, on Sunday, stressed the importance of sharing coaching responsibilities during games.

"I am not a superman who can do everything by myself. I have people around me who help me, the team, and the players. At the same time, I want to grow and I want everyone around me to grow," the former India international said ahead of CFC's away encounter against Mohun Bagan Super Giant, scheduled in Kolkata on Monday.

Reporting for duty: Guha, Miranda and Anthony during training. CHENNAIYIN FC

During the match in Mumbai, there were instances when either Anthony or Guha stood closest to the field of play. "We have people who are looking after different areas. For example, Anthony is looking after attacking set-pieces.

"Rajat, being the goalkeeping coach, takes care of the defensive set-pieces. Everyone's role is well defined. The work is an extension of what we do, in both attacking and defending," explained Miranda.

The 43-year-old admitted that raising the bar in the attacking parts was the need of the hour.

"It is true that we had possession in good areas (against Mumbai City). We did create chances, but those were not very clear. It is the most difficult part, and I know that we have to improve as the league goes on. We need to work on our play in the final third."

It is time to get the ball rolling again.

Alcaraz storms to Qatar Open title

TENNIS

Reuters
DOHA

World No. 1 one Carlos Alcaraz cruised past Frenchman Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-1 to win the Qatar Open on Saturday and extend his perfect start to the year.

Alcaraz, whose second trophy of 2026 came 20 days after he completed the career Grand Slam at the Australian Open, dictated the match from the outset and won a remarkable 89% of his first-serve points while never facing a break point during the 50-minute encounter.

With the win, Alcaraz improved to 12-0 for the year and collected his ninth ATP 500 trophy, which drew him level with Andy Murray for fourth in the category since its inception, according to ATP.

Alcaraz with his big prize. AFP

Karkera. FILE PHOTO

Karkera wins New Delhi marathon, qualifies for Asian Games

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Kartik Karkera led all through the course distance to win the 11th New Delhi Marathon in two hours and thirteen minutes on Sunday, comfortably clear of the qualifying mark for the Asian Games later this year.

Karkera clocked 02:13:10 for the 42.2 kilometres, almost two minutes clear of the 2:15:04 set by the AFI.

The women, however, fell way short of the 2:31:52 required to breach the mark with Nirmaben Thakor being the best in 02:41:15.

Kuldip Kumar (01:08:51) and Genet Shikur Reshid (01:19:36) won the men's and women's half marathons.

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Is badminton willing to trade depth for speed?

The proposal to replace the 3x21 scoring system with a 3x15 format will go to vote at BWF's Annual General Meeting in April; if adopted, it will reshape how the sport is played and the shuttlers are coached

GETTY IMAGES

Devyanshi Bihani

The Badminton World Federation's proposal to replace the long-standing 3x21 scoring system with a 3x15 format is being regarded as a forward-looking reform – one that promises shorter matches, greater excitement, and improved player welfare, according to the sport's governing body.

The BWF president Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul described it as a move to ensure the sport "continues to grow, inspire, and thrive." She argued that the format will make matches more dynamic and help badminton "stand out in an increasingly fast-paced entertainment landscape." The proposal will go to vote at BWF's Annual General Meeting on April 25, but the direction of travel is already clear.

This is not merely a technical adjustment. It is a shift in the very grammar of badminton. How matches are constructed, how players win, and how the sport is experienced.

From endurance to immediacy

For nearly two decades, elite badminton has evolved into a sport of attrition. The 3x21 point system rewards not just skill, but patience, recovery, and the ability to navigate momentum swings over time.

The proposed format changes that balance. With fewer points in each game, there is less room for error and far less time to recover. A four or five-point run, which is routine in modern badminton, can become decisive. The emphasis shifts from managing the flow of a match to seizing early control.

This inherently favours fast starters who impose themselves quickly, attacking players capable of scoring bursts and strong serve-return exponents who can dictate early rallies. And it could be a disadvantage for defensive players who build pressure over time, tactical players who rely on mid-game adjustments and athletes who traditionally grow into matches.

In effect, the new system compresses matches into their most volatile phase – the closing stretch.

When matches get shorter...

Badminton's most memorable matches have rarely been about speed alone. They have been about how contests evolve – how players adapt, endure, and ultimately outthink and outlast their opponents.

Take the 2006 Malaysian Open final between era-defining rivals Lee Chong Wei and Lin Dan. Trailing 13-20 in the deciding game, Lee produced one of the most remarkable turnarounds in the sport's history by winning 10 consecutive points to clinch it 23-21.

Another case in point was the 2015 Japan Open final between Viktor Axelsen and Lin. The decider showed why Lin is often hailed as one of badminton's all-time greats. Trailing by a mile as Axelsen surged to an 11-3 lead at the interval, Lin mounted a stunning comeback, going on an 11-2 run to edge ahead 14-13.

The contest swung back and forth, with both players exchanging leads and relentless rallies until it was locked at 19-19. Lin held his nerve in the closing moments, taking the final two points to seal a thrilling victory. The Chinese was well past his physical peak and served a reminder that badminton is as much about intelligence as it is about intensity.

More recently, it was H.S. Prannoy's win over Koki Watanabe at the China Open last year. The Indian was down 15-20 in the deciding game before he shifted gears and saved five match points to win 23-21. It is considered a miracle win. A 50-shot rally near the end and an unshakable defence helped him save all match points. While this was a first-round match, Prannoy's comeback on a Super 1000 stage was widely praised given his age and recent struggles.

Players like Japan's Nozomi Okuhara have built success by sustaining pressure across long rallies, either through relentless defence or by forcing opponents into errors over time. One of the greatest women's singles matches ever played was the 2017 World Championships title decider between Okuhara and P.V. Sindhu. It lasted an hour and 50 minutes.

Okuhara's defence against the Indian's relentless attack created a match that ebbed and flowed, with neither player able to dominate for long. Okuhara could achieve victory only because the format allowed the match to stretch into a test of stamina and resilience. In the 3×15 system, that space to grind an opponent down is reduced.

Carolina Marin's victory at the 2019 China Open is another example. Returning from injury, she was initially down by a game and trailed 13-19 in the decider against Tai Tzu-ying. Yet, she fought back point by point, maintaining relentless pressure to turn the match around.

One can also revisit the 2015 World Championships quarterfinals and watch Indonesia's Lindaweni Fanetri. Down 14-20 in the second game after losing the opener, she saved multiple match points and reeled off eight straight points to force a decider, before closing out the match.

Doubles, already the fastest discipline, could become even more volatile. With games to 15, there is little scope to recover from a poor service sequence or a brief lapse in concentration.

The 2019 World Championships men's doubles final between Mohammad Ahsan/Hendra Setiawan and Takuro Hoki/Yugo Kobayashi was a contest of experience against pace with the Indonesians' control emerging over time.

In the 2024 China Masters mixed doubles event, Malaysia's Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei were 11-20 down in the second game of a match. They saved all match points, winning 23-21, before carrying that momentum into the decider. It was a reminder that even the fastest discipline relies on momentum built over time.

These contests were compelling because they allowed time for strategies to emerge, for weaknesses to be exposed, and for players to respond. The 3x21 system allows a slow starter to recover, a defender to turn the match into an endurance test, and a trailing player to rebuild. The proposed system shortens that arc. It does not eliminate comebacks, but it might make them rarer. Because the space for adjustment narrows, and with it, the layers that define elite contests.

The Indian context

Sindhu's biggest victories, including her Olympic runs, have come from her ability to stay in rallies, absorb pressure, and grow into matches. Prannoy, too, has made a career out of comebacks.

K. Srikanth might not mind the change. At his peak, his game was based on pace and attacking precision. In theory, a shorter format could suit that style provided he can consistently start fast. Lakshya Sen may be one of the Indian players best placed to adapt. His ability to take the early initiative could prove valuable.

In doubles, the picture is unclear. India's leading pairs: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, and Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand are capable of explosive starts but consistency remains a concern. There is little room to recover from lapses, and unforced errors will carry greater consequences.

Yet, there is also an opportunity. Shorter matches reduce the physical gap between players. Nations that have historically relied and invested heavily in endurance training, notably China and Japan, may lose some of their structural advantage.

A sport shaped by television

For a sport increasingly conscious of broadcast windows and audience retention, the logic is understandable. It is impossible to separate this proposal from the broader pressures facing modern sport.

This is not the first time the BWF has attempted to alter the scoring system. Previous proposals were debated and rejected, after failing to secure sufficient support among stakeholders. What is different now is the framing. The system is being presented not as an experiment but as a strategic necessity tied to player welfare, broadcast viability, and the sport's long-term growth.

Badminton, like many Olympic sports, is competing for attention in a crowded entertainment landscape. Shorter matches are easier to schedule and broadcast, and more accessible to new audience.

But there is a trade-off. The push for brevity often comes at the expense of complexity. Sports that compress their formats risk losing the very elements that made them distinctive.

In badminton's case, that distinctiveness lies in its ability to combine speed with endurance, precision with patience. It is one of the few sports where rallies can be both explosive and prolonged, where matches can swing dramatically over time. Reducing the length of games risks tilting that balance too far in one direction.

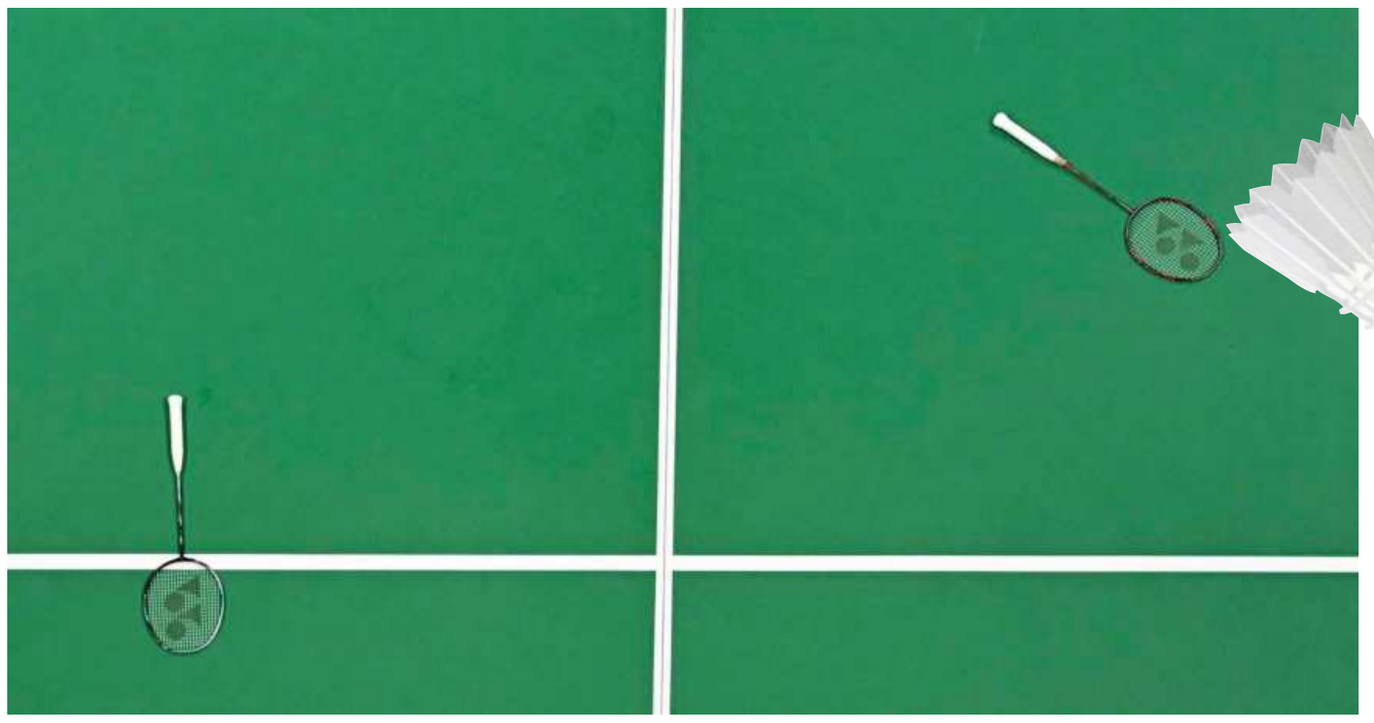
If the new system is adopted, it will reshape how badminton is played and the shuttlers are coached. Training methods will evolve. Tactical approaches will shift. The next generation of players will grow up in a different game.

THE GIST

- The new format is not merely a technical adjustment. It is a shift in the very grammar of badminton
- For a sport increasingly conscious of broadcast windows and audience retention, the logic is understandable
- The 3x21 system allows time for strategies to emerge, for weaknesses to be exposed, and for players to respond

Our responsibility is to ensure badminton continues to grow, inspire, and thrive at every level. After extensive testing and consultation, we believe the 3x15 system provides a strong foundation for the sport's future

LEESWADTRAKUL
BWF president



How proteins are being tweaked to be quantum sensors inside the body

Most existing quantum sensors are made from solid materials such as diamond, which are difficult to place inside cells.; however, cells can produce proteins naturally, with the correct genetic instructions, and they can also be fused to other proteins, allowing researchers to position them at precise locations inside a body

Manjeera Gowravaram

For decades, fluorescent proteins have been among the most powerful tools in biology. They glow when illuminated, allowing scientists to see where molecules are inside cells and how they move. From tracking cancer cells to mapping neural circuits, these luminous markers transformed the life sciences, work recognised with a Nobel Prize in 2008.

Now, two major studies published in *Nature* suggest that fluorescent proteins can do more than glow. Certain fluorescent proteins can be modified to detect magnetic fields and radio waves from inside living cells. In effect they behave as quantum sensors, devices whose operation depends on the behaviour of electrons at the smallest scales.

Until recently, quantum technologies were confined to ultra-cold laboratories filled with specialised equipment. Biology by contrast has been viewed as an unlikely home for quantum effects. Living cells are warm, crowded, and constantly in motion – conditions thought to destroy fragile quantum states.

The new results challenge that assumption, opening a path towards genetically encoded quantum sensors and a new class of hybrid quantum-biological technologies.

Hidden sensitivity

When a fluorescent protein absorbs light, one of its electrons is pushed into a higher-energy state. Usually, the electron quickly returns to its original state and releases energy as light. That simple process is what makes the protein glow.

In some proteins, however, this journey is more complicated. The excited electron can briefly interact with a nearby molecule inside the protein, forming what scientists call a radical pair, two molecules that each carry an unpaired electron.

For a short time, the spins of these electrons are linked. The outcome of their interaction depends on weak magnetic influences around them. Even weak magnetic fields can change how the pair behaves, which in turn alters how much light the protein emits.

Chemists have known about this effect for decades, and it has been proposed as a possible explanation for how some animals sense Earth's magnetic field. What had been missing was a way to reliably harness this phenomenon inside living cells.

Protein sensors

Researchers at the University of Chicago's Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering focused on a variant of enhanced yellow fluorescent protein (EYFP), a close relative of green fluorescent protein. They discovered that EYFP possesses a metastable triplet state – a temporary electronic configuration in which an electron's magnetic spin can be isolated and controlled.

Using carefully timed laser pulses, the team initialised the spin state of EYFP, manipulated it with microwave fields, and read it out optically, completing the full sequence required of a qubit.

They also detected optically driven magnetic resonance signals from EYFP inside living cells. These effects appeared in human kidney cells at low temperature and in *Escherichia coli* bacteria even at room temperature, showing that the protein's quantum behaviour survives in biology's noisy environment.

A second research group at the University of Oxford took a different approach. Working with a plant light-sensing protein, they used genetic engineering to create a family of magneto-sensitive fluorescent proteins called MagLOV. Through repeated rounds of mutation and selection, they produced versions with stronger and more stable magnetic responses.

The researchers showed that MagLOV proteins exhibit optically detected magnetic resonance in living bacterial cells at room temperature. In other words, radio waves at specific frequencies can predictably change fluorescence, directly revealing electron-spin behaviour.

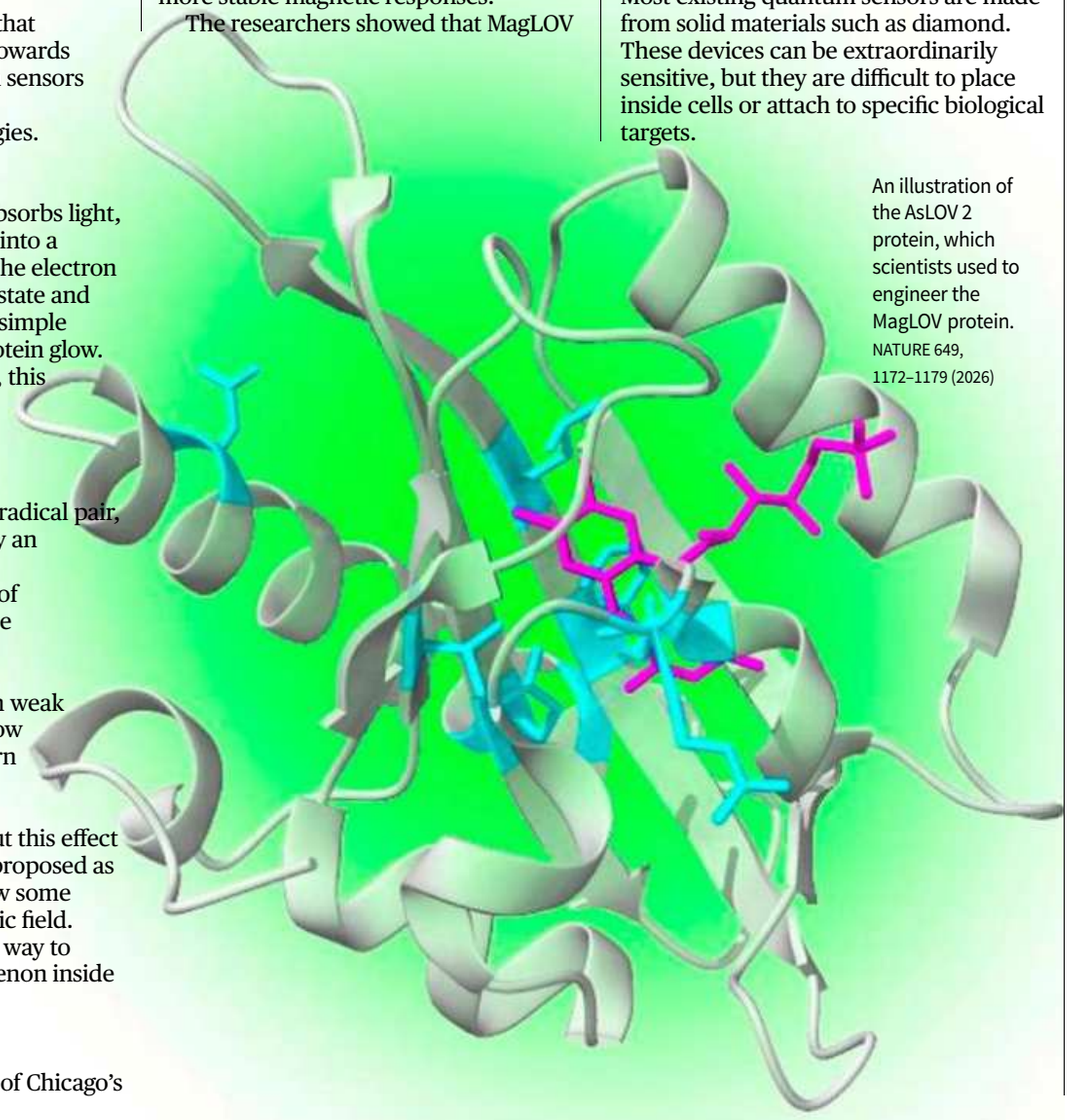
The studies demonstrate that proteins can be programmed through DNA to act as quantum sensors and point to a future in which these sensors reshape how scientists probe living systems enabling nanoscale measurements

Historically, biological candidates for quantum sensors were limited to purified, in-vitro systems, showed weak responses, or degraded quickly under light exposure. The engineered MagLOV proteins overcome many of these obstacles by combining stability, sensitivity, and genetic compatibility.

Together, the studies demonstrate that proteins can be programmed through DNA to act as quantum sensors.

Why inside cells matters

Most existing quantum sensors are made from solid materials such as diamond. These devices can be extraordinarily sensitive, but they are difficult to place inside cells or attach to specific biological targets.



An illustration of the AsLOV 2 protein, which scientists used to engineer the MagLOV protein. NATURE 649, 1172–1179 (2026)

Protein sensors are fundamentally different. Cells can produce them naturally once given the correct genetic instructions. The sensors can also be fused to other proteins, allowing researchers to position them at precise locations inside the cell.

This matters because many crucial biological processes involve subtle magnetic or electronic effects, including enzyme reactions with metal atoms, formation of short-lived free radicals, and electron transfer during respiration and photosynthesis.

Until now, studying these phenomena inside living cells has been nearly impossible. Protein-based quantum sensors offer a potential solution.

More than detection

The MagLOV researchers also showed that magnetic modulation can improve conventional fluorescence imaging. By switching a magnetic field on and off, they separated the MagLOV signal from background fluorescence and cellular autofluorescence. This technique, known as lock-in detection, enhances weak signals in noisy environments.

They further demonstrated a form of spatial localization based on magnetic resonance. Using magnetic-field gradients, they could determine the position of MagLOV-expressing cells within a three-dimensional sample, even when light scattering would normally blur the image.

The approach resembles some principles of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), but uses genetically encoded fluorescent proteins as the signal source.

New ways of seeing

These studies point to a future in which genetically encodable quantum sensors reshape how scientists probe living systems. As sensitivities improve, protein-based qubits and magnetic-resonance probes could enable nanoscale measurements of magnetic fields, electric fields, temperature, and chemical environments directly inside cells.

Such sensors might track protein shape changes, monitor biochemical reactions in real time, or reveal how drugs bind to their targets with unprecedented precision.

Important challenges remain, though. Protein-based quantum sensors are currently less sensitive than solid-state devices, coherence times are shorter, and photobleaching remains a concern. Yet fluorescent proteins themselves took decades to become routine tools, and similar improvement could steadily close the gap.

(Manjeera Gowravaram has a Ph.D. in RNA biochemistry and works as a freelance science writer. gmanjeera@gmail.com)

THE GIST

- Two major studies published in *Nature* suggest that fluorescent proteins can detect magnetic fields and radio waves from inside living cells. In effect they behave as quantum sensors
- The new results open a path towards genetically encoded quantum sensors and a new class of hybrid quantum-biological technologies
- Scientists found that engineered proteins could be sensors in *Escherichia coli* bacteria even at room temperature, showing that their quantum behaviour could survive a noisy environment
- Such sensors might track protein shape changes, monitor biochemical reactions in real time, or reveal how drugs bind to their targets with unprecedented precision

BIG SHOT

A closeup of a small section of the Helix Nebula, an expanding shell of gas and dust, by the James Webb Space Telescope. Winds of hot gas stream upwards from the bottom, like thin liquid blown up a sheet of glass. NASA, ESA, CSA, STSCI

QUESTION CORNER

Smoke vortex

Q: Why does wildfire smoke swirl only one way in the air?

A: Sometimes wildfire smoke in the stratosphere collects into a compact bubble of smoke that spins in a coherent vortex, clockwise in the northern hemisphere and counter-clockwise in the southern hemisphere.

Two new studies, published in *Weather and Climate Dynamics* and presented at a recent meeting of the American Meteorological Society, have found why. The smoke particles absorb sunlight and warm the air around them. That makes the air buoyant, and it rises through the smoky core, pushing the clump of smoke particles up over time.

Earth's atmosphere is rotating and has many layers. If you warmed one patch of stratospheric air and kept the warming at the same height, the air just above will start swirling one way and the air just below, the other way.

Because the smoke particles are rising, the heating pattern also moves up with the smoke. This matters because the atmosphere's 'push' to make the air rotate also moves upwards. As the warm core passes through a layer, it will briefly nudge the air into rotating one way. Once it has moved on, the later push in that same layer will undo much of the earlier change. As a result the most coherent rotation is wrapped around the smoke bubble itself, like a collar that travels upwards with it.

Wildfire smoke in the northeast Pacific Ocean, September 2020. NASA

The rotating bubble also acts like a container, keeping the warmer smoke concentrated near its centre, rather than mixing with the surroundings, and allowing it to keep rising.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The record high cargo handled by the Vizag port in 327 days

80 in million tonnes. This marks the Vishakapatnam port's fastest achievement in its 92-year history. VPA Chairperson M. Angamuthu said the port crossed the 80-million-tonne mark on February 21, setting a new benchmark in operational performance. PTI

Power investments in Bihar, Jharkhand reviewed by Adani

40,000 in ₹ crore. Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani visited sites in Jharkhand and Bihar, reviewing major power investments to the tune of over ₹40,000 crore, which underscore the company's presence in eastern India. PTI

Illegal properties to be demolished in anti-encroachment drive

1,489 The Rajkot Municipal Corporation, with the support of the police, will tear down 1,489 properties along the banks of the Aji River and on a municipal town planning road in Jangleshwar, Municipal Commissioner Tushar Sumera said. PTI

The estimated Indian tourist footfall to Israel by 2027

69,000 Israel, which saw a double crisis of COVID-19 and the war, is expecting to recover and reach the 2019 level of around 69,000 visitors from India by 2027, a senior representative of the Israel Ministry of Tourism said. PTI

Magnitude of the earthquake that hit Nepal's Koshi province

4.1 A mild tremor was felt in Nepal's Koshi province on Sunday morning. The earthquake was recorded with its epicentre located at Ritak area of Sankhuwasabha district at 7:31 am. There was no immediate report of any damage. PTI

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Why are apple traders in J&K worried?

Why are apple producers concerned about the trade deals with the U.S. and the EU? Why are countries in the West able to produce a better yield of apples? What about controlled-atmosphere cold storage prices? Why are party leaders urging the Union government to re-evaluate the deal?

EXPLAINER

Peerzada Ashiq

The story so far:
Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Leader of the Opposition in J&K Mehbooba Mufti have termed the India-U.S. trade deal as a death knell for the horticulture sector, especially for apple production in Kashmir. The criticism has grown shriller in the backdrop of India's decision to reduce basic customs duty on apples imported from the U.S. from 50% to 25%, even though the Minimum Import Price (MIP) was set at ₹80 per kilogram. Under the new India-European Union trade deal, import duty on fresh fruits was reduced to 20% under a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) system. Only 50,000 tonnes per year of apples will be allowed from the EU at this reduced duty, to avoid the sudden flooding of Indian markets. However, the deal agrees to increase the quota to 1,00,000 tonnes over the next 10 years.

How important is apple production?
According to the J&K Economic Survey 2025-26, apple production comprises 50% of the total horticulture production of J&K against pear, apricot, peach, plum, cherry, citrus, mango, walnut, almond etc. The horticulture sector produces roughly ₹10,000 crore in revenue and employs about 35 lakh individuals, either directly or indirectly, thereby supporting approximately seven lakh families, the official survey suggested.

In 2024, apple production in J&K stood at 21 lakh metric tonnes. Over 173.07 lakh hectares of land in J&K are under apple orchards. J&K contributes to over 70% of the total apple production in the country.

The apple is the fourth most important fruit crop in India.

Besides J&K, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nagaland, and Sikkim also produce apples.

Precarious trade: Workers separating rotten apples in Pulwama, Srinagar in 2025. IMRAN NISSAR

Why are there fears?
Kashmir cannot compete with apples produced in Western countries due to their farming practices, favourable government policy and technological intervention. One estimate suggests that orchardists in New Zealand, the U.S., and in the EU on an average operate on 50-plus hectare farms against an average of 0.40 hectares in J&K. Only 7-8 tonnes of apples per hectare can be produced in India, whereas 40-70 tonnes per hectare are produced in countries like the U.S., Iran, New Zealand and China owing to better geography, advanced technology and mechanisation, says Nasir Hamid Khan, former vice-president of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI), a pan-Valley traders body. Moreover, Western countries have already introduced AI system technologies for pruning, pollination, harvesting, infield-sorting and bagging.

How will it impact off-season pricing?
Nations in the West have also mastered many popular varieties of apples such as gala apples. India introduced the gala variety only very recently and it is yet to reach its optimum production quality in terms of colour, taste, juice, shape as well as yield. Orchardists in Kashmir fear apples from the West will enter India at cheaper prices and in turn hit controlled-atmosphere cold storage prices the most. With reduced import duty, fresh New Zealand apples will enter Indian markets at cheaper prices, directly undercutting Indian apples stored in cold facilities, says Izhan Javed, a senior member of the J&K Fruits and Vegetables Processing and Integrated Cold Chain Association. Kashmir stores 397.08 lakh metric tonnes of apples in 92 cold storages currently. Local orchardists in Kashmir have invested heavily in cold storage infrastructure. "The trade deals threaten to make these investments economically unviable, endangering the entire post-harvest ecosystem built with public and private capital. The trade deal has the potential to destroy off-season price stability and push farmers back into distress sales," warns Mr. Javed.

What are J&K parties demanding?
J&K parties and traders are urging the Centre to relook the deal and ensure safeguards for apple producers. In J&K, parties are clamouring for a joint strategy to pressure the Centre to exclude apples from the deal. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and legislator Waheed-ur-Rehmaan Parra has sought an all-party meeting "to devise a collective strategy". "Out of 30 lakh kanals of orchard land, only 30,000 kanals are under high-density cultivation. There is a need to have interest-free loans for farmers under Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) to compete globally," says Mr. Parra.

The PDP also pitched for the expansion of cold storage and controlled-atmosphere storage infrastructure "to prevent distress sales". It demanded the activation of dry port projects in J&K for the smooth ferrying of apples from the Valley to the markets outside.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has also echoed these concerns. He said the trade deal will "spell disaster for the horticulture sector if left unaddressed". Mr. Abdullah says time has come to invest in improving productivity and quality before the market is flooded by cheaper apples. We don't know what the benefits will be in the rest of the country, but we are seeing a loss, Mr. Abdullah warned. He underlined that the deals have paved an "uneven playing field for local orchardists and better-quality imports will dominate the market and the local produce will get devalued".

THE GIST

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- Kashmir cannot compete with apples produced in Western countries due to their farming practices, favourable government policy and technological intervention.
- J&K parties and traders are urging the Centre to relook the deal and ensure safeguards for apple producers.

Why did the U.S. drop a core radiation safety rule?

What is the ALARA principle? What has the U.S. Department of Energy said?

K.S. Parthasarathy

The story so far:
The Linear No-Threshold (LNT) model and the ALARA principle have served as the conceptual and operational foundations of the global radiation protection framework for many decades. But, on January 12, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) "eliminated" ALARA from its directives and regulations, departing significantly from longstanding national and international practices.

What is the LNT model?
The LNT model is a risk estimation framework that says any amount of ionising radiation, no matter how small, carries some risk of causing harm, especially cancer. In other words, there is no threshold below which radiation is considered completely risk-free. And the risk increases linearly with dose. ALARA, short for "as low as reasonably achievable", is the operational philosophy of radiation protection. 'Reasonably' is the most important condition. The philosophy balances safety with feasibility, cost, and societal need, and its aim is to improve continuously, including better shielding, administrative procedures, and training. Thus, in practice ALARA aims to reduce unnecessary exposure using engineering controls and encourages a safety culture. Unfortunately, when these principles are misapplied, as they have often been, they create a baggage of woes. The International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and other stakeholders are realising that modern radiological protection requires a different approach.

Why has the U.S. eliminated ALARA?
"The DOE's decades of nuclear facility operating experience confirms that DOE's mission to foster nuclear innovation and advanced nuclear technologies could be met more effectively if the current radiation framework were reformed," a Department memorandum said in a follow-up to U.S. President Donald Trump's orders. Critics have argued that the shift appears politically motivated and relies on non peer-reviewed internal reports, and risks undermining worker protection, public trust, and regulatory coherence. Indeed, the U.S is now at odds with international bodies such as the ICRP, the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the World Health Organization, etc. all of which continue to rely on LNT as a basis for radiation protection. No large-scale, high-quality epidemiological or mechanistic evidence has emerged to justify replacing LNT with alternative dose-response models, including hormesis (which says low dose radiation is okay). While hormesis remains biologically plausible, its variability across populations, ethical limitations, and lack of reproducible human data render it unsuitable for regulatory use.

What lies ahead?
The ICRP hasn't shown any indication that the dose limits will be revised. There may be a renewed effort to accept a low dose level below which no regulation is required. However, critics have emphasised the importance of public perception. Even if some experts believe higher dose thresholds could be justified scientifically, the optics of abandoning ALARA and LNT are problematic. For those living near nuclear facilities, the change may look like a lowering of safety standards rather than a refinement of scientific assumptions. Without broad scientific consensus, transparent communication, and meaningful public engagement, critics fear that the policy shift will deepen mistrust, and fuel opposition to nuclear projects and existing and future facilities.

Possible evidence of cancer and non-cancer effects at low doses have also appeared in more recent studies, such as the ongoing 'Million Person Study'. Another study of nearly a million young individuals revealed that a few of them may suffer blood related cancers at very low doses (*Nature Medicine*, 2023). One expects the ICRP will take note of such work.

India has been at the forefront of complying with internationally accepted radiation protection practices and must continue to do so.

K.S. Parthasarathy is former secretary, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.

THE GIST

- The LNT model is a risk estimation framework that says any amount of ionising radiation, no matter how small, carries some risk of causing harm, especially cancer. ALARA, short for "as low as reasonably achievable", is the operational philosophy of radiation protection.
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- Even if some experts believe higher dose thresholds could be justified scientifically, the optics of abandoning ALARA and LNT are problematic.

CACHE

AI and the brain: similar in scale, different in design

GPT-4 introduced mixture-of-experts architectures that activate only specialised portions of a network for a given task. This resembles the brain's selective recruitment of different regions

Sabyasachi Shivkumar

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has undergone a massive growth spurt. However, not so long ago, Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude were curiosities. You could trick them, confuse them, or make them contradict themselves. Today, they have evolved into versatile companions that can write software, assist scientific research, extract insights from a large set of documents, and offer structured guidance across a wide range of domains. Today's multi-modal AI systems no longer operate on text alone; they interpret images, analyse audio, generate video, and combine these streams in seamless ways. Language, reasoning, and creativity, capacities we associated with ourselves are now appearing, at least on the surface, in machines.

GETTY IMAGES

Scaling a neuron

Tracing the foundations of these AI systems, one can observe that the core idea behind them is not new. Artificial neural networks have existed since the late 20th century, and their conceptual roots go back even further. In 1943, Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts proposed a simple mathematical model of a neuron. The McCulloch-Pitts neuron takes numerical inputs, multiplies them by adjustable weights, sums the results, and applies a non-linear function to produce an output. This is similar to how one takes input from multiple people and makes a decision if enough people agree on a course of action. Individually, such units are extremely simple. Yet a powerful mathematical insight, known as the universal approximation theorem, shows that networks composed of enough of these simple units can approximate virtually any function connecting input to output. With sufficient scale, they can process remarkably complex patterns.

For a long time, that was the limiting factor. Neural networks existed, but the hardware and data required to make them powerful were not available. What changed over the past 15 years was not the invention of neural networks but the availability of enormous computational power and data. Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), originally developed for video games, enabled researchers to train networks with millions and eventually billions of parameters. At the same time, new architectural ideas improved how these networks were organised. Convolutional neural networks proved effective for image recognition by exploiting spatial structure. Recurrent neural networks were designed to handle sequences such as speech and text by allowing information to persist over time. The major breakthrough, however, came with the transformer architecture, which introduced attention mechanisms that allow models to dynamically weigh which parts of their input matter most at any given moment

GPT, short for Generative Pre-trained Transformer, builds on this architecture. It is trained on vast collections of text to predict the next word in a sequence. Although this objective appears simple, when implemented at an enormous scale and trained on extensive datasets, the model begins to capture grammar, facts, stylistic patterns, conceptual relationships, and even fragments of reasoning embedded in language. Intelligence, in this framework, emerges from the statistical regularities underlying the text the model is trained on.

On the artificial and biological

As these systems grow, they are beginning to rival the human brain in sheer numbers. GPT-3 contained 175 billion parameters, while newer models are estimated to reach into the trillions, approaching the roughly 100 trillion synapses in the human brain. Despite this apparent convergence in scale, AI and biological intelligence operate on fundamentally different principles.

To take advantage of modern computing hardware, models such as GPT-3 process information in a strictly feed-forward manner. Input enters the network, flows through stacked layers, and produces an output. Each layer transforms the representation and passes it forward without revisiting earlier computations during the same pass. This design enables efficient training across thousands of GPUs simultaneously and allows rapid scaling.

The human brain operates differently. Constrained by biology and metabolism, it cannot rely on brute-force parallel computation. Instead, it is built around dense feedback loops. Signals in the cortex flow forward from sensory areas to higher regions, but also backward and laterally. Perception is therefore not a one-way processing of the world but an ongoing dialogue between incoming information and prior knowledge. A simple example makes this clear. When you read the name "Harry" in a story about wizards, you probably think of Harry Potter. In a newspaper article about the British royal family, you would think of Prince Harry. Context shapes perception almost immediately. The brain does not first register a neutral word and then decide what it means. Meaning is built into perception itself. In ambiguous sentences, visual illusions, or noisy environments, expectations strongly influence what we see and hear. The brain constantly predicts and then updates those predictions based on incoming signals.

For example, when searching for a friend in a crowded space, the brain enhances features associated with that person while suppressing irrelevant details. Neuromodulatory systems carry out this selective attention by changing the input-output gains of the synapses instead of actually changing the hard-wired connections. Acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter tracks the uncertainty of different cues adjusting the reliance accordingly. Norepinephrine, another neurotransmitter, indicates when context changes abruptly and suppresses the feedback strength allowing the circuits to shift activity to a different behavioural mode. Dopamine conveys reward prediction errors, modulating synaptic plasticity to form behaviourally relevant representations.

At the cellular level, the brain achieves efficiency through event-driven signalling. Neurons communicate using brief electrical spikes. If a neuron does not spike, it consumes minimal energy. At any moment, only a small fraction of neurons are active. This natural sparsity ensures that energy is expended only when meaningful events occur. Memory and computation are co-located at synapses. The same molecular structures that transmit signals also store the history of past interactions. Learning occurs locally at individual connections rather than through a global optimisation signal sweeping across the entire brain.

This feedback-rich and chemically regulated architecture allows the brain to perform perception and reasoning using roughly 20 watts of power, roughly what a couple of LED bulbs consume. Large AI systems, in contrast, activate vast numerical matrices for every input and rely on high-precision digital arithmetic. Training and operating them requires data centres consuming megawatts of electricity. They are also far more data-intensive. Modern LLMs are trained on trillions of words, whereas humans encounter only a fraction of that amount over a lifetime, yet develop flexible understanding and generalisation.

Mirroring the brain

Researchers are increasingly attempting to borrow insights from biology. GPT-4 introduced mixture-of-experts architectures that activate only specialised portions of a network for a given task. This resembles the brain's modularity and selective recruitment of different regions for language, vision, or movement. Newer models now adjust computational effort based on task difficulty. Recent hardware developments include changes in the fundamental chip design to build neuromorphic chips that use spike-like operations to reduce energy consumption. At the same time, researchers are also exploring richer training methods that move beyond mere next-word prediction, allowing machines to learn complex concepts from far less data.

Yet these advances remain approximations. Neural networks implement sparsity through engineered routing rather than metabolic constraint. They approximate feedback using attention mechanisms and deep layering rather than through densely interwoven recurrent circuits. True recurrence, in which activity loops continuously between layers, is computationally difficult to train and challenging to parallelise efficiently at scale. As a result, most LLMs rely primarily on deep feed-forward structures that simulate certain effects of feedback without fully embodying it.

Moreover, biological neurons are far more complex than artificial ones. A single cortical neuron contains branching dendrites that perform intricate nonlinear computations before producing a spike. In some respects, the many stacked layers of a deep network attempt collectively to approximate the internal processing that fewer biological neurons accomplish individually. Artificial neurons are simplified mathematical constructs. Biological neurons are biochemical systems embedded in a constantly changing chemical environment.

Where this leads remains uncertain. Machines are not bound by the evolutionary and size constraints that shaped our brains. They can scale in ways biology cannot. It is possible that AI systems will gradually bridge and perhaps even surpass the brain in terms of computational power, energy efficiency and learning efficiency. But it is equally possible that machines will diverge further from biological intelligence, evolving architectures better suited to processing information at scales far beyond human experience. In the end, intelligent behaviour does not have to be implemented in brain-like circuits. A pacemaker supports the function of the heart without resembling cardiac tissue. Similarly, AI may one day mimic, extend, or augment human cognition without replicating its biological substrate. In the end, it is intelligence itself, not its resemblance to the brain, that matters.

Sabyasachi Shivkumar is a computational cognitive neuroscientist who recently completed his postdoctoral training at Columbia University working on understanding behaviour through computational models.

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

I whipped up some dessert for the evening

Don't take his replies too personally. I have heard he is a very dry texter

S. Upendran

"How was dinner at Sujatha's place? She's a fantastic cook, isn't she?"

"I don't really know! You see, she'd forgotten that she had invited Kirthi and me for dinner!"

"Really? That doesn't sound like the Sujatha I know! She's always organised."

"She was very embarrassed. She said she'd whip up something to eat.."

"Whip up? What are you talking about? How can she whip something..."

"The expression 'whip up' has several different meanings. In the context of cooking, it means to prepare something very quickly. For example, when my mother realised how hungry we were, she whipped up some upma."

"Did Sujatha whip up something delicious for the two of you?"

"She wanted to, but Kirthi said no. The three of us had dinner in a restaurant."

"I'd sent Kirthi a longish message last night. All I got was a one-word reply. "

"Don't waste your time typing long messages to Kirthi. He's a dry texter."

"Dry texter?"

"A 'dry texter' is someone who gives very short replies to your messages. It could be just one word or one sentence."

"Looking at the reply makes you feel very frustrated or angry."

"Exactly! The texter makes little or no effort to keep the conversation going. He doesn't ask any questions. Such short texts are called 'dry texts'."

"I see. Does it mean a person who sends dry texts is not interested in people?"

"Not necessarily! A dry texter could be someone who hates texting. He could be fun when you meet him face to face. He's not good when it comes to texting. Vinod is a dry texter. When you meet him face to face, he's a totally different person."

"Vinod's sister is not a dry texter. She knows how to keep a conversation going."

"Can you guess what the opposite of dry texting is?"

"Logic suggests that it should be 'wet texting'!"

"Very good! That's exactly what it is. A wet texter is someone who gives lengthy replies, and keeps the exchanges fun."

"By the way, what is the correct pronunciation of b..a..d..e? I've heard people pronounce it in different ways."

"The word can be pronounced in two different ways – both of which are acceptable. Perhaps the easiest way is to pronounce it like the word 'bad'."

"In which case, the 'e' is silent."

"No matter how you pronounce the word, the 'e' is always silent. Another way of pronouncing the word is to make it rhyme with 'made', 'shade' and 'paid'."

"So, the word consists of only one syllable?"

"That's right! It's a monosyllabic word."

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THE DAILY QUIZ

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

With the teaser for the much-anticipated Kamal Haasan-Rajinikanth starrer creating waves, a quiz on the films in which these thespians have acted together

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1

Easy one to start with. Name the first film where these two starred together, which was also Rajinikanth's debut film.

QUESTION 2

Ace Director Bharathiraja's first film *16 Vayathinile*, a groundbreaking flick in Tamil, saw both of them playing memorable roles. What were the names of their characters?

QUESTION 3

What was the Tamil version of the Telugu *Andamaina Anubhavam*, a musical blockbuster where a major portion of the film was shot in Singapore?

QUESTION 4

The last time the two shared the screen as full-fledged co-leads was a 1979 fantasy film made both in Tamil and Malayalam. Name the work.

QUESTION 5

Hrishikesh Mukherjee's all-time favourite *Gol Maal* made in Tamil by K. Balachander was Rajinikanth's first full-length comedy film with Kamal Haasan making a cameo as a lawyer. Name the flick.

QUESTION 6

In their only Hindi film to date, Kamal played the protagonist's brother and Rajini made a cameo as an inspector. Name the film and the legend who enacted the role of Kamal's sibling.

QUESTION 7

Who is directing and composing the music for the reunion film?

Visual question:

Name this acclaimed K. Balachander work, a remake of the Telugu *O Seeta Katha*, where Rajinikanth refuses to save Kamal Haasan from drowning.

Questions and Answers to the February 20 edition of the daily quiz: 1. Name the paper published by Google researchers in 2017 that introduced the Transformer architecture. **Ans: 'Attention Is All You Need'**

2. Name the specialised processing units within NVIDIA GPUs. **Ans: Tensor Cores**

3. Copilot grounds its LLM responses in real-time web data by using this proprietary orchestrator that connects to the Bing search index. **Ans: Prometheus**

4. Name the Israeli-Canadian scientist who co-invented AlexNet. **Ans: Ilya Sutskever**

5. Expand RNN and LSTM. **Ans: Recurrent Neural Networks and Long Short-Term Memory networks**

6. Define 'hallucination'. **Ans: The term for an error when a LLM asserts a fabricated or nonsensical piece of information as a fact**

Visual: Name this young IITM alumnus. **Ans: Aravind Srinivas**

Early Birds: Piyali Tuli| Tom Alan Faith| Neil Lall| Arjun Debnath| Jasvir Kaur Chahal

Word of the day

Peremptory: offensively self-assured or given to exercising usually unwarranted power; not allowing contradiction or refusal

Synonyms: autocratic, bossy, dominating

Usage: *He had a swaggering peremptory manner.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/peremptorypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /pəˈɹɛmptəɹi/

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