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Plea seeks to debar EPS from campaigning

CHENNAI
A writ petition has been filed in the Madras High Court seeking a direction to the CEC to take action to debar AIADMK chief Edappadi K. Palaniswami from campaigning for the 2026 Assembly election. » PAGE 8

Fishermen stage protest against DMK candidate

CHENNAI
Residents of Srinivasapuram, a fishing hamlet near Foreshore Estate, staged a protest against DMK's Mylapore candidate Dha Velu on Wednesday while he was campaigning. » PAGE 5

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States' seats will rise 50% after delimitation: Centre

No State will lose current proportional strength in Parliament, says govt. functionary; while not mentioned in the draft Bills, Home Minister has assured party representatives of rise, official adds

Varghese K. George
NEW DELHI

All States will have their number of Lok Sabha seats increase by half after delimitation, and no State will lose its current proportional strength in Parliament, a senior government functionary told *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

He said Union Home Minister Amit Shah would clarify this in Parliament during the debate on the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the Delimitation Bill. The debate begins on Thursday.

"If there is any requirement for change in the language of the draft Bill, that too will be addressed," the government functionary said.

Mr. Shah had assured party representatives that the strength of the Lok Sabha would increase by 50%, to be distributed across States in their existing proportions – that is, a 50% increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats from each individual State.

However, this is not mentioned in the drafts of the Bills circulated by the government. In fact, the Bills propose an inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats, which could make it impossible for current proportionate shares to be maintained.

The senior functionary said this was a misreading of the drafts. "Those who are reading bits and pieces and interpreting them as reducing the relative strength of the South are missing the big picture," the functionary said.

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INDIA bloc leaders after a meeting to discuss the proposed Bills on delimitation in New Delhi on Wednesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

'INDIA bloc will vote against delimitation'

NEW DELHI
The Opposition INDIA bloc have decided to vote against the delimitation provisions in the proposed Bills, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge said on Tuesday while underlining that the bloc's opposition was not against women's reservation. » PAGE 12

Iran says ceasefire is at risk, threatens to close Red Sea traffic

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran's military threatened on Wednesday to shut down Red Sea trade unless the U.S. lifted its naval blockade on Tehran's ports, saying the ceasefire was at risk.

The head of Iran's military central command centre said a U.S. failure to lift the blockade would constitute "a prelude" to violating the two-week ceasefire. Unless the U.S. relents, Iran's armed forces "will not allow any exports or imports to continue in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and the Red Sea," Iranian General Ali Abdollahi said.

The warning came after U.S. President Donald Trump indicated peace negotiations could resume this week, while Iran confirmed the sides had kept talking via Pakistan after a first round of negotiations fell flat. Iran on Wednesday welcomed a Pakistani delegation led by its Army chief Asim Munir.

Islamabad "has held discussions with the Americans and has also heard our stances. During this visit the views of both sides are to be discussed in detail," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said.

Pakistan's Army chief Asim Munir with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran on Wednesday. AP

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LEADERS FLOCK TO CHINA
» PAGE 16

Modi holds roadshow in Nagercoil

The Hindu Bureau
NAGERCOIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a roadshow at Nagercoil in Kanniyakumari district on Wednesday evening.

Though Mr. Modi had visited Kanniyakumari during the previous elections, this marked his first roadshow in the district. BJP cadre turned up in large numbers despite the sultry weather.

The Prime Minister arrived at the Armed Reserve campground in Maravankudiyiruppu by helicopter, and started the roadshow from Veppamoodu at 4:35 p.m.

He was accompanied by AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, BJP State president Nainar Nagenthran, BJP leader K. Annamalai and former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan.

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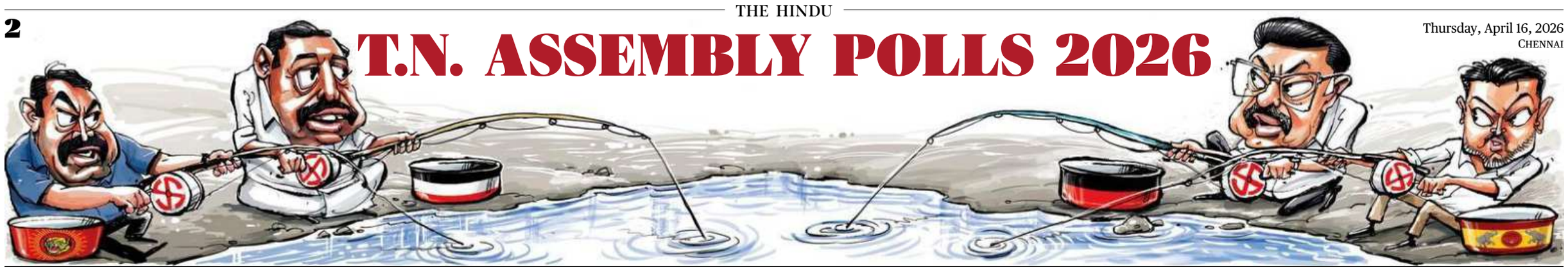
T.N. ASSEMBLY POLLS 2026



High-stakes battle: BJP president Nitin Nabin campaigning for Nainar Nagenthran in Sattur recently.

Will Nainar Nagenthran's gamble of shifting to Sattur pay off?

S. Sundar
SATTUR

The entry of Tamil Nadu BJP president Nainar Nagenthran – who has won thrice from the Tirunelveli Assembly constituency – has given star constituency status to Sattur, with BJP leaders, including its national president Nitin Nabin, landing here to campaign for him.

Mr. Nagenthran claims he had to shift out of Tirunelveli based on a request from the AIADMK. But not many are willing to buy his argument, as the move comes in the wake of his defeat in the Tirunelveli parliamentary constituency in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. Since 1989, the Tirunelveli constituency has chosen the AIADMK and the DMK alternatively, and Mr. Nagenthran is the sitting MLA on a BJP ticket.

There is another reason for him to prefer the Sattur Assembly constituency in Virudhunagar district, despite the fact that both he and his party are new to this arid terrain. AIADMK functionaries say Mr. Nagenthran has been eyeing the constituency for long, as it has a good vote base of Mukkulathors, particularly Maravars – the community to which he belongs.

Meanwhile, K. Esakki Raja of Pasumpon Desam Makkal Pathugappu Iyakkam, who also belongs to the Maravar community, has jumped into the fray. Hailing from Srivaikuntam in Thoothukudi district, he is contesting on the ticket of V.K. Sasikala's All India Puratchi Thalaivar Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AIPTMMK) to split the Thevar votes.

The DMK's local leaders are calling Mr. Nagenthran an outsider. "One can meet him only in Tirunelveli or Chennai, and not in Sattur," says DMK candidate A. Kadarkarairaj. Belonging to the Naicker community, the other dominant caste in the constituency, he is a familiar face in the region. He had earlier served as Sattur union councillor and Virudhunagar district panchayat president. His wife, Nirmala, was the Sattur union chairperson. He contested from Sattur in 2011, but lost to the then new face, R.B. Udhayakumar, who went on to become a Minister.

Other prominent candidates are D. Anandaraja (NTK), S. Velmurugan (Puthiya Tamilagam), and M. Ajith (TVK).

Illegal fireworks units

For years, Sattur has been notorious for illegal fireworks units, functioning from houses and sheds in Sattur and Vembakottai unions. After gaining experience in fireworks units, the workers set up their own units without a licence or safety measures in place. Accidents caused by the use of highly sensitive chemicals have claimed many lives.

"How can so many illegal units function for years without the support of the industry and the administration? How and where do these units get the raw materials," asks Bahujan Samaj Party candidate P. Kamalavel Selvan. These units also take up job work of certain processes in fireworks manufacturing on behalf of licensed units.

"Most of the workers in the fireworks industry belong to Scheduled Caste communities. The administration should come forward to help the oppressed set up their own fireworks units and make them entrepreneurs through generous assistance under TAHDCO scheme," Mr. Selvan says.

The BJP and the AIPTMMK have promised to set up a multi-speciality hospital with a burns ward for fireworks accident victims.

The draining of sewage from Sattur town and its neighbouring areas into Vaippar river has turned it into a cesspool. Infiltration wells dug on the riverbed to draw drinking water are surrounded by filth.

Seven years after the Centre sanctioned the construction of a flyover at Padanthal junction, the work has begun only now. The long-pending demand for a road overbridge in lieu of a railway gate on Sattur-Irukkangudi Road remains unmet.

VCK pulling out all stops to keep PMK at bay in Kattumannarkoil contest

While the VCK is seeking to consolidate its dominance, the PMK is looking to rewire the caste equations in the northern districts. The contest looks evenly balanced, with Adi Dravidar and Muslim voters aligning with the DMK alliance, and Vanniyars consolidating behind the AIADMK front

Udhav Naig

Kattumannarkoil, a hinterland around the sprawling Veeranarayanapuram (Veeranam) lake, is among the few constituencies where Dalits account for nearly 40% of the electorate, allowing them to determine the outcome, if properly mobilised. As Vanniyars are present in comparable numbers, the electoral contest in the Kattumannarkoil (SC) constituency could turn out to be a humdinger.

While the VCK is seeking to consolidate its dominance, the PMK is looking to rewire the caste equations in the northern districts that gave the party stellar wins before 2011. The contest this time looks evenly balanced, with Adi Dravidar and Muslim voters aligning with the DMK alliance, and Vanniyars consolidating behind the AIADMK alliance.

VCK president Thol. Thirumavalavan has won the Chidambaram Lok Sabha seat – under which this constituency falls – thrice (2009, 2019, and 2024).

The party also won the Assembly elections in 2006 and 2021, though it was defeated comprehensively in 2011 and narrowly in 2016. A sizeable Muslim population gives the party an edge.

Thirumavalavan's move

Mr. Thirumavalavan's decision to withdraw from the contest in the constituency has taken the fizz out of the campaign. "Had he contested from the constituency, the campaign would have been electric, and there would be palpable enthusiasm. That is missing," a VCK functionary said.

After he decided to drop out of the race, the VCK had approached filmmaker Pa. Ranjith, considering him a potential "charismatic" candidate for the seat. However, he declined the offer, citing prior film commitments, party sources said.

Then, the party decided to field a Congressman, L.E. Jothimani, son of renowned Congress leader L. Elayaperumal, who once protested against the presence of separate pots for Dalits and non-Dalits in schools by breaking them. It is, therefore, poignant that he is contesting on the 'Pot' symbol now.

Speaking to *The Hindu* in Keezh Paruthikodi during his campaign, Mr. Jothimani said, "It was a complete surprise. I had my doubts whether the party would accept me. When *Annan* [Mr. Thirumavalavan] called me and asked me to give a 'yes or no' answer, I agreed immediately."

Political pitch: VCK candidate L.E. Jothimani campaigning in the Kattumannarkoil Assembly constituency. JOHAN SATHYADAS J.

Though he could capitalise on his father's legacy, Mr. Jothimani cannot match the charisma and excitement that Mr. Thirumavalavan could bring to the contest, the partymen agree. Another crucial factor that could sway voters is the influence of Agriculture Minister M.R.K. Panneerselvam.

While VCK office-bearers acknowledge that winning the election may be difficult without the backing of Mr. Panneerselvam, his image as a local Vanniyar strongman – and the VCK leaders' closeness to him –has caused unease among a section of Dalit voters. When Mr. Thirumavalavan contested from here in 1999 and in 2004, non-Dalit communities united against his assertive politics. "The situation has changed substantially in favour of the VCK over the past decade-and-a-half. The PMK's assertive Vanniyar-centric politics has meant that non-Vanniyar communities (including Dalits) and minorities are mobilising against the PMK and its allies," a local Dalit activist said.

PMK's deep roots

The PMK has deep roots here – Kaduvetti, the home of its controversial leader, Guru, falls within the constituency, and PMK candidate Anbu Cholan is no pushover. A long-time PMK member, Dr. Cholan also contested in 2016, when the party went solo, securing 25,890 votes. Even as the VCK looks to hold its ground, the PMK faces headwinds from the S. Ramadoss - R. Anbumani rift, and is struggling to reverse the shift in caste equations that has weakened its electoral performance since 2011.

There is no visible campaigning by the TVK or the NTK in the deep rural pockets of the constituency

PMK men said the decision of Dr. Anbumani to shed the party's anti-Dalit image and mobilise support around a caste census and proportional reservation would bring non-Vanniyar OBCs back into the party fold. "There is no split in the party. Local leaders in villages across the northern belt have resolved to back the 'Mango' symbol and Dr. Anbumani," a PMK office-bearer said.

There is no visible campaigning by the TVK or the NTK in the deep rural pockets of the constituency, reinforcing the view that the TVK - as multiple surveys have noted - remains largely urban, and the NTK lacks organisational depth.

In contrast, the DMK and the AIADMK rely on an entrenched grassroots machinery, with union secretaries leading campaigns and personally mobilising voters. With the election a week away, both the VCK and the PMK are relying on the organisational strength of the Dravidian majors to garner votes.

'Vijay factor'

Interestingly, both the VCK and the PMK argue that the 'Vijay factor' would hurt the other. While the VCK claims the confusion in the PMK has pushed Vanniyar youth votes towards the TVK, the PMK argues that Dalit youth are unhappy with Mr. Thirumavalavan over his perceived failure to adequately address atrocities against Dalits.

TVK candidate S. Srinivasan, also the Cuddalore South district secretary, appeals to Dalit and minority voters. While Vanniyars in the DMK may hesitate to back the 'Pot' symbol when the PMK is contesting against it, Mr. Thirumavalavan's presence and involvement could become crucial in the final stretch of the campaign.

'The people will decide whether Tamil Nadu gets a hung Assembly'

DMDK leader says she is confident of winning in Vriddhachalam, where she is contesting as part of the DMK-led alliance. She adds that the alliance between the two parties is one based on ideology

INTERVIEW

Premallatha Vijayakant

S. Prasad
CUDDALORE

In a brief interaction with *The Hindu* at Vriddhachalam on Wednesday, DMDK general secretary and Vriddhachalam candidate Premallatha Vijayakant defended her party's ideological position and alliance with the DMK for the upcoming Assembly election, and discussed its prospects. Edited excerpts:

In his lifetime, DMDK founder Vijayakant had steered clear of supporting the DMK, despite having earlier maintained friendly relations with former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Why did you choose to align with the DMK this time?

Our alliance with the DMK was driven by the district secretaries and the party. It was the unanimous opinion of all that we should align with the DMK, and that solidified our decision.

> Our alliance with the DMK was driven by the district secretaries and the party. It was the unanimous opinion of all that we should align with the DMK

Several allies of the DMK, such as the CPI, the CPI(M), the VCK, and the MDMK are propagating that the Secular Progressive Alliance is an ideological one. What is your party's position on this? Is the alliance between the DMDK and the DMK ideological?

Definitely. The DMDK has risen above caste, creed, religion, and language, as had been emphasised by *Captain* (Vijayakant) since the beginning. He always advocated equal justice for everyone, and rejected any divide between the rich and the poor.

The quote of [national poet] Subramania Bharati, "*Thani oruvanukku unavillayenil jagaththinai azhiththiduvom*," which translates to "We will destroy the world if there is no food for even one individual," is the concept of *Captain*.

Do you agree with DMK leader and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's stand that this election is a fight between Tamil Nadu and New Delhi?

This election is between the DMK-led alliance and the AIADMK. With the BJP holding power (at the Centre), he [Mr. Stalin] made that remark – it is his view.

The upcoming election being a four-cornered contest with Vijay's TVK emerging as a likely disruptor, do you think the results will be close or lead to a hung Assembly?

Everyone seems to think the election results will produce a hung Assembly, but I can't say for sure because the final decision rests with the people. The people's verdict is, in effect, god's verdict.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami has commented on the DMDK's poor vote share...

I had already responded to this and given a detailed explanation during my visit to the Arunachaleswarar temple in Tiruvannamalai. Since then, he (Mr. Palaniswami) has not mentioned me, and I do not wish to speak about it any further.

You had previously lost in Vriddhachalam. What gives you the confidence that you will win now?

I am fully confident that I will win this time with a substantial majority of votes. We have been receiving strong and widespread support from everyone during the campaign. The foremost demand of the electorate is the formation of a new district with Vriddhachalam as its headquarters. There are also several other demands, including the revival of the ceramic industry to meet export needs.

Raising questions: Children waving party flags during an election campaign in the Erode East Assembly constituency. M. GOVARTHAN

Presence of children at election campaign in Erode causes concern

The Hindu Bureau
ERODE

The presence of children at an election campaign in the Erode East Assembly constituency on Wednesday has raised concern over a possible violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), which prohibits the use of minors in political campaigns.

The campaign was organised in support of Congress candidate Gopinath Palaniyappan. Several children were seen at the venue, with many of them waving party flags and appearing to participate in the gathering, despite the fact that political parties are expected to ensure that minors are not involved in election-related activities.

Parents who brought their children to the event defended their decision, citing the ongoing school vacation.

"We could not leave them alone at home, and hence we brought them along," a parent said.

A party functionary, however, denied engaging children in the campaign. He maintained that minors were not mobilised by the party, and that those present had accompanied their family members.

The meeting, which was scheduled to be attended by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, was delayed by more than three hours, forcing the attendees to wait for an extended period of time.

Meanwhile, the temperature in Erode touched 40° Celsius. Children, along with other attendees, were seen waiting in the sweltering heat, raising concern over their well-being.

The Election Commission of India has directed political parties to ensure strict compliance with child protection laws and court directives, while clarifying that the mere presence of children accompanying their parents, without active involvement in campaigning, does not amount to a violation.

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A CH-CHE

INBRIEF

S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

Hospital launches programme for high-risk heart patients

Kauvery Heart Institute at Kauvery Hospital launched Complex High-Risk Indicated Procedures (CHIP), a set of specialised cardiac programmes for managing complex and high-risk heart conditions, a release said. Ajith Pillai, chief cardiologist at Kauvery, said many patients arrived in critical condition due to an acute trigger such as a massive heart attack or long-standing heart disease that had gone undetected. In such situations, the team would be able to initiate treatment quickly. Aravindan Selvaraj, executive director, Kauvery Group of Hospitals, said the adoption of CHIP reflected the hospital's commitment to bringing global standards of cardiac care closer to patients.

Geriatric vaccination centre for senior citizens launched

Geri Care Hospital on Wednesday launched the Geriatric Vaccination Centre, for senior citizens at Geri Care's facilities in T. Nagar, Adambakkam, Adyar as well as in all of its clinics and skilled nursing facilities. The centre was inaugurated by Prof. P.S. Chandramouli in the presence of Lakshmipathy Ramesh, Founder and Managing Director, Geri Care. Elderly individuals can call 99444 59444 to schedule their vaccination appointments at Geri Care. Dr. Ramesh spoke.

Cleanliness, safety, housing top agenda of many women candidates contesting in city

NTK's Ayesha says traffic congestion has to be addressed immediately in Triplicane; AIADMK's Gokula Indira seeks increased patrol for women's safety and designated spaces for food carts

T.N. ELECTION 2026

Serena Josephine M.
CHENNAI

In Chennai's traditionally male-dominated political landscape, a handful of women candidates from four major political parties have stepped into the electoral fray, putting forward distinct visions for their constituencies and the city.

Only the AIADMK-led National Democratic Alliance and Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) have fielded women candidates across the 16 constituencies in the city. The AIADMK has fielded former ministers B. Valarmathi and S. Gokula Indira to Thousand Lights and Anna Nagar respectively, and Porkodi Armstrong from Thiru. vi. ka. Nagar. Its allies PMK and BJP have fielded M. Thilagabama (Perambur) and Tamilisai Soundararajan (Mylapore) respectively.

NTK has fielded the most number of women, as part of its agenda to allocate half the constituencies it contests for women, including a transgender person. The candidates are Vennila T. (Dr. Radhakrishnan Nagar), Saranya Imran (Egmore), Aysha (Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni), Srividya G. (Saidapet), Anusha V. (Thiyagarayanagar), Keerthana M. (Velachery), and S. Roshini (Villivakkam), the transgender person.

Top priority: PMK's Thilagabama says people live in congested spaces and there is a need for more housing facilities in Perambur.

For many of them, their vision is shaped by on-the-ground experience and from interactions, with a strong focus on keeping Chennai clean and safe.

Traffic congestion

Contesting from one of the high profile seats in Chennai – Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni – is NTK's Aysha. "There is plenty of traffic congestion in Triplicane. Visit any part of the constituency such as Ice House and Zam Bazaar, and there is traffic congestion anytime during the day. This is one of the issues that need to be addressed urgently," she said.

Another main issue that residents want to be addressed is sewage overflow. "The density of mosquitoes is also high in many residential localities such as Border Thottam. Many people have also asked for house *pattas*," she added. She said that her vision for Chennai is a clean city where waste is managed and cleared efficiently.

Her fellow party member, Keerthana Mohankumar, is contesting from Velachery. The constituency, she said, has diverse population segments including fishing hamlets, middle-income neighbourhoods, and high-rise residential complexes. "The Velachery Lake, which was spread over 265 acres, has shrunk due to unplanned urbanisation. There are several complaints about old sewer pipelines and sewage mixing with drinking water in areas such as Taramani, Thiruvanmiyur, and some parts of Velachery," she said. There are safety concerns too, she said.

A clean Chennai is among the key goals of AIADMK's Gokula Indira. "In Anna Nagar constituency, one of the primary concerns raised by residents is the need for house *pattas*. Over the past three to four years, many roadside shops and carts have sprung up, including in residential areas. While it involves their livelihood, this should be regulated. Such carts coming up in residential neighbourhoods and operating till late night leads to law and order concerns," she said. She suggested creating a designated space for food carts that do not disrupt traffic, parking or residents' daily lives and emphasised the need to identify suitable locations for them.

Additionally, she called for increased police patrols to enhance women's safety. Ms. Indira also said that she will look into the house *patta* demand of many residents in Aminjikarai, Arumbakkam, T.P. Chatiram, and NSK Nagar.

PMK's Thilagabama said in many parts of Perambur constituency, people live in congested spaces and there is a need to create additional housing facilities. "Congestion is high and residents do not have breathing space such as parks. There are also widespread drinking water issues," she said.

Hero's welcome: TVK president C. Joseph Vijay campaigning at T. Nagar on Wednesday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Vijay's campaign draws huge crowd, brings city to a halt

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Despite not uttering a word enroute, actor and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam president C. Joseph Vijay brought life in parts of south Chennai to a halt for a few hours as onlookers, admirers, and party workers lined up on the roads of T. Nagar, Egmore, and Thousand Lights constituencies.

Mr. Vijay waved to the young men and women who had congregated spontaneously on the road side from Nandanam Metro alongside ardent party supporters, occasionally running towards his campaign vehicle to greet him.

He appeared along with the party's general secretary, "Bussy" N. Anand, near Hotel Majestic, standing on top of the vehicle, waving to the crowds on rooftops and on the pavements. The police had to intervene many times to clear the crowds that swarmed around the van and ensure that it could move.

Wearing a whistle on his neck and flanked by his bodyguards and the candidate of the constituency, the campaign slowly glided through the main roads of the busy T. Nagar constituency.

Thousands Lights candidate J.C.D. Prabhakar, switched places with Mr. Anand as the convoy passed through Bazullah Road towards Valluvar Kottam and then towards the Egmore constituency.

TVK's candidate for Egmore constituency, Raj Mohan, switched places with Mr. Prabhakar. Mr. Vijay continued to wave and throw flowers on people, skipping a planned stop in Egmore, riding through the main roads of the constituency, before wrapping the campaign for the day.

As polling day draws near, political parties brave the heat and step up their campaign across city

FIELD POSITION

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

As April 23 draws near, the campaigning by various political parties across the city intensified on Wednesday.

DMK MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, who campaigned for her party's nominee for Harbour constituency and Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Minister P.K. Sekarbabu at Thambu Chetty Street, Mannady, said, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin promised ₹1,000 under Kalaignar Magalir Urimai Thogai Thittam and implemented it. "He also fulfilled the assurance of providing free bus travel for women and it has benefitted lakhs of people," she said.

Friendly spar: AIADMK leader D. Jayakumar during a voter outreach ahead of the Assembly elections on Wednesday. PTI

She also highlighted the poll promises of the DMK, including bringing in courses to upskill students in AI, providing laptops to 35 lakh students, extending breakfast scheme for students up to Class 8, providing loans up to ₹5 lakh, along with a subsidy, for members of women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) who want to start a business, and non-income tax paying homemakers will receive ₹8,000 coupon to purchase electronic home appliances. The government's 'Vada Chennai Valarchi Thittam' is also under way. She also spoke on various projects taken up by the government for north Chennai.

At Mylapore, BJP candidate Tamilisai Soundararajan travelled in a van and campaigned at ward 123, while DMK candidate for Mylapore Dha. Velu went on a door-to-door campaign in Pattinapakkam, Srinivasapuram, and its surrounding areas and met representatives from fisherfolk associations. He said he would implement schemes for the welfare of fisherfolks, including construction of concrete houses.

DMK candidate Karthik Mohan, who campaigned at Villivakkam, said he was overwhelmed with the reception from the people. AIADMK candidate for Velachery M.K. Ashok had darshan at Vedantha Eashwari Amman temple, met people in the surrounding streets and sought votes from them. AIADMK's candidate for T. Nagar B. Sathyanarayanan canvassed for votes through the streets of West Mambalam. AIADMK candidate for Thousand Lights B. Valarmathi reached out to voters.

At Triplicane High Road, as the AIADMK's Adhi Rajaram, who is the candidate for Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni constituency was campaigning along with his supporters, just a few hundred feet behind, Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) party cadre were seen driving a mini van with bright lights and loud music.

Colour coding introduced at polling stations to assist voters

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Colour coding is being implemented at polling booths in the city to assist voters at locations where more than 10 polling booths are situated within a single polling station campus.

In all 16 Assembly constituencies in the district, work is under way to install signages, guiding voters to their respective polling stations through designated coloured paths. Signboards indicating colour-coded routes will be placed to assist voters on polling day, according to officials.

As part of the model polling station initiative, a polling station centre installed at a private school in the Perambur Assembly constituency had painted pathways, and a training session was conducted for local citizens to raise awareness of the system. The training is on how to follow colour-coded indicators to locate their booths within large polling station premises, officials added.

Easy access: Officials said signboards indicating colour-coded routes will be placed at the polling stations on the day of voting.

The Presiding Officer can allow only electors, polling officers, each contesting candidate, and one election or polling agent of each candidate at a time into the polling station.

The initiative is intended to help voters identify their assigned polling station with ease, and to minimise confusion among voters at busy polling station centres, added officials.

Parties firm on moving education back to State list, retaining two-language formula

T.N. ELECTION 2026

Meghna M.
CHENNAI

As parties in the State continue to release their manifestos, the demand to bring education back to the State list has echoed strongly in most of them. From the DMK, AIADMK to NTK and VCK, most parties have continuously iterated that education be moved to the State list. This demand was also voiced during the 2021 Assembly election.

Similarly, many parties including the DMK, AIADMK, and VCK have stressed on the need to continue the two-language formula that is being practiced in the State.

While the CPI(M) has stressed on teaching in the mother tongue up until higher education and making Tamil mandatory in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools, the NTK stated that Tamil must be the medium of instruction for all levels, including professional courses such as medicine, law, and engineering.

STEM learning centres

In other measures, the AIADMK has promised to restructure the curriculum to include computer science as a sixth subject for Classes 6 to 10, and also set up STEM learning centres. They have also promised to revive the laptop scheme for government and government-aided school children. They have also promised to fill the vacant teacher and librarian posts, while the PMK has promised permanent appointments for temporary computer and special teachers in government schools.

The DMK has focussed on transforming Tamil Nadu into a zero-dropout State and extending the Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme till Class 8. They also plan to bring digital sections to 300 libraries in the State by 2030.

Educationists noted that these election promises seem superficial and do not tackle the real problems that the State faces - such as caste violence on campuses. "The real issues that education system faces today in the State needs to be featured, but the parties have not paid attention to them", an educationist noted.

Parties including the DMK, AIADMK, and VCK have stressed on the need to continue the two-language formula in the State. FILE PHOTO

CPI(M) and NTK has also given importance to education for children with disabilities from forming an inclusive environment to specialised centres for children with dyslexia and ADHD.

The BJP in its manifesto has promised to deposit ₹50,000 in the name of Class 8 girl students, redeemable only upon the successful completion of Class 12 in a bid to reduce dropout rates among girls from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.

The party pledges to provide first-generation undergraduate and postgraduate students with interest-free education loans of up to ₹10 lakh, which TVK has also promised of up to ₹20 lakh.

Drug-free campuses

TVK and BJP have both promised to enforce drug-free campuses in the State. However, the VCK has been the only party in the State to recognise the exorbitant fees paid to schools and has advocated for free education from the primary level to research level.

"There are two issues that political parties must pay attention to. One is the regularisation of teachers, especially in physical education and computer science. Only if the teachers are happy with their job, it will be passed on to students. Second is ensuring that neighbourhood schools are declared so that the public is encouraged to take up equitable education instead of Model and Vetri schools," said P.B. Prince Gajendra Babu, general secretary, State Platform for Common School System - Tamil Nadu (SPCSS-TN).

He also pointed out that none of the parties has addressed how they will tackle the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan (VBSA) Bill. "It will make the role of a higher education minister useless. The Bill is going to change the landscape of higher education and nobody has even addressed it," Mr. Gajendra Babu pointed out.

While the parties have all paid attention to education, child rights activists note that the buck ends there as most have skipped child welfare measures.

Special courts

Only CPI(M), DMK, and the BJP want to set up more special courts to fastrack POCSO cases.

CPI(M) has also proposed village-level monitoring committees to stop violence against children and the appointment of special officers to prevent child marriage.

Pointing out that the DMK's promise to work towards zero dropout in the State was a good move, child rights activist Devaneyan Arasu said that this would eliminate child marriage, child labour and abuse.

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State registers 99.92% pass rate in CBSE Class 10 exams

Tamil Nadu surpasses national pass percentage of 93.7; most students who felt their math scores were low due to a tough question paper are now preparing to take up the second exam this year

Meghna M.
CHENNAI

A total of 60,730 boys and 50,873 girls wrote the Class 10 exams in Tamil Nadu. R. RAGU

Tamil Nadu registered a 99.92% pass rate among students who appeared for the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class 10 board exams. This is a marginal increase from last year when the State registered 99.86%. The CBSE Class 10 results were announced on Wednesday, with the national pass percentage recorded at 93.7%.

This year onwards, CBSE will be conducting two Class 10 board examinations for students in an effort to give the students a chance to enhance their performance and reduce their burden. As the exams concluded in March, many students had decided to take up the second set of examinations as their Math question paper was tough.

The Chennai region climbed to third place in the country compared to last year's fourth with a pass rate of 99.58. The Class 10 exams began on February 17 and concluded on March 11.

In Tamil Nadu, 60,730 boys and 50,873 girls wrote the Class 10 exams. Girls outperformed boys in this year's examination, with a pass percentage of 99.96, while boys stood at 99.90% pass rate.

Most schools in Chennai city registered 100% pass rate. A total of 1,544 schools are registered and the exams were conducted in 360 centers across the State.

CBSE has announced that students willing to appear for the second exam have to register through their school by April 20

While schools in the city were happy about the results, many educators highlighted that students were interested in taking up the second examination for mathematics.

N. Vijayan, senior principal of Zion and Alwin Group of schools noted that due to the tricky five-mark question in the mathematics paper, centums have drastically come down. "Due to this most students have also shown interest to take up the second exam for mathematics as they are not happy with their scores," he said. He also added that this means added stress for all stakeholders and no vacations for teachers.

P. Vishnucharan, Correspondent, Shree Niketan schools said that talks were held with parents and students before the results to assure them about the marks and admissions. "But many students were inclined to take up the exams to score better even if it did not impact their admission in the schools," he added.

A Chennai-based parent said that while they had encouraged their child to write the second exam for mathematics due to the tough paper before the results they have now changed their minds. "But my child still wants to take it up as he really wanted to score above 95 but has only scored 85 now. We are trying to change his mind but he is disheartened with his scores despite preparation," she said.

CBSE has announced that candidates willing to appear for the second exams will have to register through their school by April 20. The dates of examination will be announced later.

Students can access their results through any of the four CBSE websites: www.cbse.gov.in; www.results.nic.in; www.results.digilocker.gov.in; or www.umang.gov.in. Students can access their result documents through the Digilocker app.

Fishermen of Srinivasapuram show black flags to Mylapore DMK candidate

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Residents of Srinivasapuram protesting at the Amma temple at the entrance to the hamlet on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Residents of Srinivasapuram (Mullikuppam and Mullima Nagar), a fishing hamlet near Foreshore Estate, staged a protest against DMK candidate for Mylapore, Dha Velu, on Wednesday when he went to canvass for votes. Waving black flags and wearing black masks, they stood at the Amma temple at the entrance to the fishing hamlet.

"We want the government to return to us the lands belonging to our village, where the housing board had constructed houses for government employees. The village owns those lands. We also want houses for those who don't have houses. The DMK, in its manifesto for the 2021 elections, had promised to construct houses for us," said Sekar of Srinivasapuram.

Community leader K. Bharathi said that it was the tradition of the community to take any MLA/MP or candidate visiting the village to the temple and perform an *archana*. "It was not performed today. The people are upset with the DMK. It has not kept its promises. As the ruling party, they have only attempted to harass our people and take away as much of the beachfront as possible for various projects such as the Blue Flag beaches, the Marina Loop beautification, the Mamallan Reservoir, and the proposal to construct an elevated corridor from the Marina Light House to Injambakkam," he said.

Local leader Nanjil Ravi said that dissent has been growing among fishermen and such protests will happen in more villages against parties that did not keep their promises. "Our people have considerable presence in 38 constituencies and they are all coming together to express their displeasure."

Sitting Mylapore MLA Mr. Velu said the government constructed houses for the fishermen as promised. "They need more houses. That will be done."

American Center to host student summer activities

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The American Center at the U.S. Consulate General, Chennai, has invited school students to explore 250 years of American excellence through free summer activities from April 20 to May 27.

The "Freedom 250: American Excellence in STEM and Space" initiative will be open for students aged 13 to 17 (grades 8-12) and aims to engage young minds through interactive Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learning experiences.

Sessions will be held Monday to Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., featuring hands-on activities with tools such as coding kits, electronic circuits, NASA Lego sets, 3D printing, and more. Students can also participate in daily quizzes and challenges, with prizes awarded to winners.

History-sheeter arrested for harassing woman

CHENNAI: A 24-year-old history-sheeter was arrested by the Puzhal police on Tuesday for harassing a woman. A senior official of the city police said Vikram, a resident of Lakshmipuram, had been regularly harassing the 23-year-old woman to marry him. Initially she ignored him, but recently he issued threats. Based on a complaint filed by the woman with Puzhal All Women police station, a case was registered. Police found that Vikram was involved in more than five criminal cases in Puzhal police limits. He was produced before a judicial magistrate and sent to prison.

Timings
CHENNAI

THURSDAY, APR. 16		
RISE	05:56	SET 18:22
RISE	04:45	SET 17:20
FRIDAY, APR. 17		
RISE	05:56	SET 18:22
RISE	05:29	SET 18:18
SATURDAY, APR. 18		
RISE	05:55	SET 18:22
RISE	06:15	SET 19:20

Chennai Weather	max	min
Tiruvallur	38	24
Chennai Airport	37	27
Chennai City	34	27

Chennai Airport Today
37°C Morning will be comfortable. Day will be very warm and uneasy. Night also will be comfortable. Dry weather to occur.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
37°C The weather will be dry. Day will be very warm. Night will be comfortable.

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THE HINDU
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16.04.2026 **Branch Manager**

CINEMA ❖ ARTS ❖ EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

The Music Academy, Madras
Today: 6.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. At the Kasturi Srinivasan Hall - The Music Academy Madras – HCL Concerts – Bharatanatyam recital by Nanda Kishore.

Arulmigu Sri Kapaleeswarar Temple, Mylapore, Chennai
Panguni Peruvizha and Vidaiaatri Music and Dance Festival. Today 16-04-2026 Thursday 6:30 PM,'Kaalam Urrutum Dhaayam', A Kathak Dance Theatrical Presentation by Students of Smt.Jigyasa Giri, Devaniya School of the Dakshin Gharana of Kathak. All are Welcome.

Naada Inbam, 24992672
Today 6.15pm SVK Birthday Concert by Dr Sumithra Vasudev, Charulatha Ramanujam, B Ganapathiraman. Ragasudha Hall.

Narada Gana Sabha
Ph: 24993201
Today Mini Hall (Swami Haridhos Giri Hall)- Music - 6.30 pm Swathi Thirunal Day - Music - Kiran and Nivi (Sai Sisters)-Vocal, Gayathri Vibhavari (Violin), Sarvesh Karthik (Mridangam). All are welcome.

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Consultant - Surgical Gastroenterologist and Advanced Laparoscopic Surgeon, Kauvery Hospital, Hosur

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INBRIEF

Bartimaeus Trinity Trust completes 20 years of service

Bartimaeus Trinity Trust, a group of like-minded professionals committed to providing holistic support to the visually challenged from economically weaker sections of society, conducted its 20th anniversary programme, 'Faith Beyond Sight', in the city on Saturday. President of the Trust, Kuruvilla Thomas, said Ikkadu in Tiruvallur was identified as a primary area of intervention. He added that the trust has, over the years, implemented vocational training programmes in trades such as bag making, chair weaving, and envelope production. To build on its ongoing efforts, the trust proposes to establish a tuition centre for underprivileged children in the area. Bands such as the Living Stones Quartet and Men Aloho, performed at the event.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carry explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (April 16, Thursday), the following articles are available:

- What changed in Hungary's election? **newsth.live/hungaryelection**
- New brain-inspired 'memristors' promise to cut AI energy use **newsth.live/energyreduction**

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

Parties converge on water but diverge on ecology in Tamil Nadu election manifestos

Most parties acknowledge climate change, but their responses take various shapes; citizen groups demand ground-level planning based on the ecosystem; a CWAC member calls for making public the Thiruppugazh Committee report on flood mitigation in Chennai Metropolitan Area

Geetha Srimathi
CHENNAI

From river restoration and wetland protection to climate governance and industrial accountability, environmental issues have found a place in the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly election manifestos.

A closer reading of the manifestos of the DMK, AIADMK, BJP, NTK, PMK, VCK, and CPI(M), however, shows that while parties partly identify similar problems, they differ in how they propose to address them.

Water security and river restoration run through almost every manifesto. The DMK proposes a long-term 'Tamil Nadu Water Protection Action Plan 2056', alongside projects such as the Clean Cauvery initiative. The AIADMK, too, centres its approach on river conservation, with promises to prevent sewage from entering rivers and to restore tanks and canals through the *Kudimaramathu* model.

The BJP promises large desalination plants and urban river clean-up projects, especially in Chennai. The NTK, on the other hand, frames the issue as one of poor management, and calls for better rainwater capture and a complete ban on industries along riverbanks. Most parties acknowledge climate change, but their responses take different shapes.

The DMK's approach is institutional, built around governance systems such as a dedicated department and AI-based weather monitoring. The AIADMK seeks to mitigate the effects of climate change with measures such as planting 10 crore saplings and introducing climate change into school curricula.

The BJP focuses on urban adaptation, proposing 'Project Heat Shield' to tackle rising temperatures in cities. The CPI(M) connects climate concerns to energy, pushing for renewable sources, and cleaner public transport.

Poll plank: While the DMK proposes a long-term water protection action plan, the AIADMK centres its approach on river conservation. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Forests and wildlife

When it comes to forests and wildlife, the differences become more pronounced. The NTK stands apart for its biocentric approach, arguing that policy must prioritise nature itself. Its proposals include creating biological corridors, restoring forest ecosystems, and strengthening tribal land rights.

The DMK and BJP take a more programmatic route, focusing on species conservation, wetland protection and, in the BJP's case, forest tourism. The AIADMK concentrates on reducing human-animal conflict and increasing compensation for affected families.

The VCK frames the issue differently, calling for greater control of natural resources by the State and pointing to gaps in the implementation of tribal rights. It also raises concerns about eviction in the name of conservation.

Parties also differ in how firmly they propose to act on industrial pollution. The PMK takes the strongest line, promising to shut down sand and stone quarries, ban single-use plastics entirely, and bring all wetlands under legal protection.

The NTK proposes stricter regulation through the 'polluter pays' principle, backed by real-time monitoring of industrial emissions. The DMK and CPI (M) focus on pushing industries towards zero-waste and circular economy models.

The BJP's proposals in this area are more tied to infrastructure, with relatively less detail on regulatory enforcement. What is also missing, however, is the kind of ground-level, ecosystem-based planning that citizen groups have been calling for.

A manifesto compiled by the Chennai Wetlands Action Collective (CWAC), drawing from residents across the Pallikaranai-Kovalam watershed, calls for basin-level water governance, strict floodplain zoning, and an end to construction and infrastructure within wetlands.

Raju, a member of the CWAC, called for the public release of the Thiruppugazh committee report on flood mitigation in the Chennai Metropolitan Area. "It is being said that the report identified several power transmission towers erected by State-run thermal plants on the Kosasthalaiyar bund, which leads to flooding. The report should be made public," he says.

Poovulagin Nanbargal has put forward a set of 10 demands, including a dedicated policy for climate-vulnerable communities and the establishment of a specialised meteorological department to develop State-specific mesoscale climate models. G. Sundarrajan of the organisation said, "Two decades ago, party manifestos did not even include sections on environment or climate change. This is progress, but it is still not enough."

Girl attacked after she raises alarm against robbery attempt by 2 men

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Minjur police have arrested a 25-year-old man and are on the lookout for his accomplice in connection with an assault on a college student and an attempt to rob a house in Minjur on Tuesday night.

The Minjur Police have formed special teams to nab one of the accused who fled the scene of crime

Rear entrance

The Avadi police said the college-going girl was in her room on the first floor of the house when two unidentified individuals entered the building through the rear entrance.

As they proceeded to the first floor in an attempt to commit theft, she spotted them and raised an alarm.

In response, the intruders attacked the girl with a knife before attempting to flee. She sustained cut injuries to her forearms and forehead.

One apprehended

Alerted by the girl's screams, her parents and brother caught one of the intruders who has been identified as Dillibabu.

The girl was rushed to the Government Stanley hospital for treatment.

The Minjur Police have formed special teams to nab the other accused involved in the case.

CENTRAL RAILWAY
CONSTRUCTION WORK
TENDER NOTICE

For & on behalf of President of India, Chief Engineer (C) RSP, Central Railway, G. M. Building, 2nd Floor, CSMT Mumbai 400 001 invites e-bids at e-Procurement website, **"http://www.ireps.gov.in"** for the following work. **Sr. No:- 1., Tender Notice No. & date:-** CONS-RSP-02-2026 dated 12.05.2026, **Name of work:-** Consultancy work for undertaking feasibility study, Detailed Project Report (DPR) preparation work, detailed design consultancy work including bid management in connection with the construction of 04 Nos ROBs on replacement of existing ROBs in PA Division on central Railway., **Approx cost of work in Rs.:-** 1,33,51,578.41, **Bid Security Rs.:-** 2,67,000.00, **Completion period:-** 08 months, **Date & Time of closing:- 12/05/2026 at 11:00 Hrs. 1.** Complete information of above e-tender notice is available on website **"http://www.ireps.gov.in". 2.** Bids other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against the above Tender. **3.** Tender documents and corrigendum issued from time to time are available on the website at least 15 days in advance of opening tender and may be seen on this website. 52

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RFP. No. 02/MD/CE/AGICL/2026/2nd Call, **Dt. 15.04.2026**
Name of Work: "AGICL-RFP for Selection of Firm for Design-Build of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji "Smruthi Vanam" at Amaravati Exhibition cum Museum, Interpretation Centre, Library and Park" -Phase-I.
The bid can be downloaded on Ap e-procurement portal from **16-04- 2026** to **23-04-2026** up to 14:00 Hrs. Due date for submission of Bid is **23-04-2026** up to 15.00 Hrs, Technical Bid opening date is on **23-04-2026** @16.00Hrs. For further details Please refer to **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** and **www.agicl.org.**

E PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

NIT No's:-
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(2) 130/PROC/MAU61-USI0HB(BG)/7/2026
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(4) 132/PROC/MAU61-USI0HB(OTH)/125/2026-HB
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The bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from **16.04.2026** to **08.05.2026** up to 14.00 Hrs. Pre bid meeting Date **22.04.2026.** Due date for submission of Bid is 08.05.2026 up to 15.00 Hrs, Technical bid opening **08.05.2026** @16.00Hrs. For further details Please refer to **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** and **www.agicl.org.**

Sd/- Managing Director, **AGICL,** Amaravati

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Letter. No: वा०सं०नि० (योजना) 09–17/2025 ***- 495*** ***Patna, Dated :-15.04.2026***

Corrigendum -02

(PR.27249 (CAD) 2025-26 & PR.000582 (Civil Aviation) 2026-27)

Subject: Corrigendum for "Air Services to New International Destinations " – Regarding

With reference to above mentioned subject, Due to unavoidable Circumstances, We hereby revise the last date of submission of tender on or before 28th April, 2026, 15:00 Hrs. Details of revised schedule is as below:-

1.	Bid subject/work	:	Selection of Air Services to New International Destinations
2.	Last date for submission of Bid	:	28th April, 2026, by 15:00 Hrs.
3.	Technical Bid Opening	:	29th April, 2026, at 15:30 Hrs. (Tentative date)
4.	Financial Bid Opening	:	Shall be intimated
5.	Tender Bid Validity	:	120 Days

Other terms and conditions of the tender published in PR.No. 27249 (CAD) 2025-26 and Corrigendum PR.000582 (Civil Aviation) 2026-27 shall remain unchanged.

Note : For details of tender and corrigendum, kindly visit the website; www.state.bihar.gov.in/cad

PR. No. 001112 (Civil Avaition) 2026-27

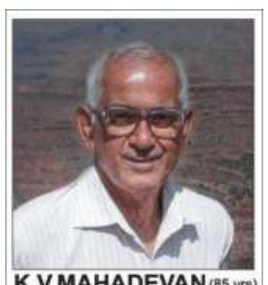
Secretary
Civil Aviation Department

This information is available on website **www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar** also

गर्भावस्था की पहली तिमाही में माँ की एच.आई.वी. और सिफलिस की जाँच जरूर करायें।

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH



K.V.MAHADEVAN (85 yrs)

Retd. civil engineer from PWD, College of Engineering Guindy class of '64, passed away peacefully at his residence on April 14, 2026, surrounded by his loved ones. He was incredibly warm and loving, and will be dearly missed by all.

Makka returns to the pavillion after a long and well bowled spell

Parvathi Mahadevan
Kaushik & Gopa — Karun & Sunaad
Padma & Ragavan — Zoe & Layla

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

THIRD ANNIVERSARY

Smt. LALITHA RAGHAVAN
D.O.B: 25.10.1933 D.O.D: 16.04.2023
We miss you .Continue to guide us as always.
FONDLY REMEMBERED BY
Son, Daughters, Sons in law, Daughter in law, Grandchildren, Great grandchildren, Relatives & Friends.

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Er.M. SHANMUGAM
25.03.1947 16.04.2025
You are always in our hearts
FAMILY & FRIENDS

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

DEATH ANNIVERSARY IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Devoted to serving Humanity
30.05.1935 - 16.04.2025
Lalitha Sethuraman
Wife of Epigraphist N. Sethuraman Raman & Raman, Kumbakonam Chairman, Eves Welfare Trust Stree Rathna Recipient

Forever in our Hearts
Sankar Raman
Chitra Chandran
Indra Mani
Durga Sethuraman
Nirmala Sankar Raman

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

98th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Smt.T.K.D. SAROJA
16.04.1928 - 15.01.2022
Wife of late Sri.T.K. Duraiswami, Retd. Sr. Accounts Officer, AG's Office, Madras, (Prathama Acharya Purusha, T.T.D.), Daughter of late Smt.M S Pattammal and late Sri.M Singarachari, Advocate, Chittoor (A.P.)
Fondly remembered by :
Smt.Vijaya & Sri.N.S. Mohanram
Smt.Vatsala & Sri.V A Raghu
Sri.T.K. Balaji & Smt.Sheela Balaji
Smt.Mala & Sri.S. Ramakrishnan
Brothers-in-Law
Sisters-in-Law
Grand Children, Great Grand Children & Great Great Grand Children

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES

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DEATH

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the peaceful passing of our beloved wife, mother, aunt and grandmother

REBECCA BEULAH LUTHER
Retd. Math Teacher
Monaghan Higher Secondary School
w/o Singaram Luther
09.10.1944 - 13.04.2026

Visitation
Thursday, 16th April 2026
7.00 AM - 10.00 AM
54, Ramaswamy Garden Street
Arunachalapuram, Adyar, Chennai - 20

Funeral Service
Thursday, 16th April 2026, 10.30 AM
@ Good Shepherd Church
CIT Colony, Mylapore, Chennai - 04

Burial
At St. Mary's Corporation Christian Cemetry
Ph: 8056276252

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

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UMA was truly 'One of a Kind'

Mrs. UMA MAHALINGAM
Fondly remembered by
Family, Relatives & Friends
TSM Group of Companies

DEATH

HOMAGE

January 8,1935 — *April 12, 2026*

Dr. Chalasani Radhakrishna

Past President of Indian Medical Association (Hyderabad North), awardee of "Leading Professionals of the world" by Cambridge University, U.K., "Eminent citizen of India" and many more.

"In memory of a life so beautifully lived...
a heart so deeply loved"
a distinguished Doctor, a patient listener,
a true humanitarian, loved beyond words.

Smt. Hemalatha Chalasani
Sridhar & Sujini Chalasani
Sridevi & Murthy Nekkanti
Radhika & Gnyandeep Kantipudi
and his beloved Grandchildren

"Chalasani House", 1133, Srinagar Colony, Hyderabad-500 073

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

OPEN TENDER
Date: 10.04.2026

E-tender is invited on behalf of the President of India acting through **Chief Project Manager, Gati Shakti Unit, West Central Railway, Jabalpur,** for the following work:- **T No.:** CPM/GSU-JBP/EPC-01-2026, Dated 10.04.2026. **Name of work with location: Major Upgradation of Jabalpur Railway Station of West Central Railway on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC). Approx. cost of the work:** ₹ 231,63,00,000/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 4,63,26,000/-. **Completion Period:** 30 Months. **Last date & time for submission of tender (up to 15.00 Hrs. on):** 28.05.2026. **Tender to be opened at 15.30 Hrs. on:** 02.06.2026. The complete information of the above 'e-tender' is available on website **https://ireps.gov.in** and also placed on the notice board of the Chief Project Manager, Gati Shakti Unit, West Central Railway, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against the above tender.

Assistant Divisional Engineer, Gati Shakti Unit, Jabalpur.

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

CENTRAL RAILWAY

ENGINEERING WORK

TENDER NOTICE

For & on behalf of President of India, Dy.Chief Engineer (Bridge Line) HQ @ Central Railway, G. M. Building, 2nd Floor, CSMT Mumbai-400 001 invites e-bids at e-Procurement website, **"http://www.ireps.gov.in"** for the following work., **SN:-** 1., **Tender Notice No. & date:-** CR-BR012026-27 dated 24.03.2026, **Name of work:-** Structural repairs and replacement of corroded/loose rivets & other steel members and painting of track girder bridges in various section(CSMT-CLA, CLA-TMBY, TNA-VSH) of Mumbai division. (09 bridges), **Approx cost of work in Rs.:-** Rs. 1,16,24,501.59/-, **EMD Rs.:-** Rs. 2,32,500/-, **Completion period:-** 09 months, **Date & Time of closing: 05.05.2026 at 15.00 Hrs. 1.** Complete information of above e-tender notice is available on website **"http://www.ireps.gov.in". 2.** Bids other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against the above Tender. **3.** Tender documents and corrigendum issued from time to time are available on the website at least 14 days in advance of opening tender and may be seen on this website. **48**

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CENTRAL RAILWAY

CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Open Tender Notice No. Dy.CE/ GC/KYN-ASO/02, dtd 13.04.2026

Office of Dy. CE(C) GC, Behind Reservation office, Jawahar Marg, Ghatkopar (E), Mumbai 400 077, Tele/ Fax 25010315/66006 for and on behalf of the President of India invites "e-tenders" from reputed Contractors for the following work: **1 Name of work:-** Construction of Service building residential quarters and various miscellaneous work in connection with provision of 4th line between Kalyan Asangaon project. "(TWO PACKET SYSTEM). **2. Approx Cost:-** Rs. 37,98,64,019.87, **3. Earnest Money:-** Rs. 75,97,300.00, **4. Completion Period:-** 12(Twelve) months including Monsoon, **5. Cost of Tender:-** Rs. 0.00 **6. Availability of Tender Documents:-** Tender document for the above work are available on website **www.ireps.gov.in. 7. Date & Time of submission & Opening of Tender :-** The e-tender duly completed in all respect should be uploaded electronically up to 11.00 hrs on 06.05.2026 on the above mentioned website and will be opened after 11.00 hrs. **8. Important Note for tenderers:- a)** Prospective Tenderer/s are advised that before tendering their offer electronically, they should refer to the Tender details regarding terms and conditions, eligibility criteria, mode of submission of cost of EMD & tendered document. **b)** Central Railway has recently introduced system of "e-tendering". All intending Tenderers need to first register with IREPS website **www.ireps.gov.in c)** Tender documents and corrigendum issued from time to time are available on the above website at least 15 days in advance of opening Tender and may be seen on this website. **47**

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CENTRAL RAILWAY

Rewiring works

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE No. 01/2026 OF 11.04.2026

For and on behalf of The President of India invites open E-tender through website **www.ireps.gov.in** from reputed contractors. **S.N.:- 1., NAME OF WORK:-** Rewiring works for repair and renovation of officer's cabins and staff seating areas in Old & New Annex buildings, TMS buildings and other miscellaneous works at CSMT. **Tender No. 01/2026** (BB.LG.W.CSMT.2026. 01), **Approximate Cost of the Work:-** Rs.2,35,99,216/-, **Bid Security:-** Rs. 4,72,000/-, **Validity:-** 60 Days, **Completion Period:-** 18 Months (C)., **Instruction: 1.** Tender closing date & time of aforesaid tender: Upto 13.00 hours of 04.05.2026 and will be opened after 13.00 hrs. **2.** The prospective tenderers are requested to visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in** for complete details of tenders & corrigendum, if any. **3.** Tenderer may participate in above e-tender electronically through website www.ireps.gov.in only & submission of manual offers against e-tender are not allowed. Manually, if submitted shall neither be opened nor considered. **4.** For further enquiry, may contact: Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (General Service), Annex Bldg., 1st floor, Central Railway, Mumbai CSMT. **5.** This tender complies with Public Procurement Policy Order 2017 dated 15.06.2017. **46**

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WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Commercial Branch, Bhopal.
No.: C/BPL/E-Auction/2026, Date: 15.04.2026

E-Auction for awarding contracts of Catering and Pay & Use Toilets

President of India, through Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, West Central Railway, Bhopal Division, has invited E-Auction for awarding contracts of Catering and Pay & Use Toilets. Catalogues are available on IREPS Portal (**www.ireps.gov.in**). Details of catalogues are as follows:

Catalogue Number	Type of contract	Lot No.	Contract Period
C-BPL-CATG-SMU-	Catering	Catg-BPL-SHRN-SMU-174-25-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-ET-SMU-409-26-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-BAQ-SMU-75-25-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-NDPM-SMU-402-25-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-BHS-SMU-408-26-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-GUNA-SMU-93-25-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-BPL-SMU-406-26-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-GUNA-SMU-91-25-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-BHS-SMU-66-23-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-GUNA-SMU-83-25-1	5 years
		Catg-BPL-NDPM-SMU-403-25-1	5 years
C-BPL-PNU-APRIL	Pay & Use	PnU-BPL-BPL-Toi-14-23-1	3 years
		PnU-BPL-GUNA-Toi-23-25-1	3 years

Date and time of start of e-auction for all lots: 24.04.2026 at 12:00 Hrs.

All other details, Standard Condition of Contract and Special Condition of Contract are available on **www.ireps.gov.in**. Participants can visit the portal for details.

Divisional Railway Manager (C), West Central Railway, Bhopal

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IIM BODH GAYA
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Online Applications Form for Joint Integrated Program in Management Admission Test (JIPMAT) - 2026

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will be conducting the JIPMAT-2026 for admission to 5 years Integrated Program in Management at IIM Bodh Gaya and IIM Jammu for the academic year 2026-27, as per following details.

Submission of Online Applications Form	**16 April 2026 to 10 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM)**
Last date for successful transaction of Examination fee	**11 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM)**
Correction in Particulars	**12-14 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM)**
Date of Exam	**07 June 2026**
Timing of Exam	**03:00 PM to 05:30 PM**
Mode of Exam	**Computer Based Test (CBT)**
Paper Pattern	**Multiple Choice Questions**

Scheme /duration/medium/syllabus of examination, eligibility criteria, tentative intake, reservation of seats, exam cities, important dates, etc., are mentioned in the information Bulletin hosted on NTA website **https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/**. Candidates who desire to appear in the exam may read the detailed information Bulletin for JIPMAT - 2026 and apply online only at **https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/**. Applicants should check the eligibility criteria of the respective IIMs. Candidates are advised to be in touch with the NTA website **https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/**. Candidates can write to NTA at **jipmat@nta.ac.in** or call **NTA at 011-40759000**

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Delhi Technological University invites applications for its Bachelor of Design Programme (B.Des) & Master of Design Programme (M.Des) for the academic session 2026-27. Application form for admission is to be filled online w.e.f. 16.04.2026 (Thursday) at 10:00 AM onwards till 15.05.2025 (Friday) 23:59 midnight through the University's website: **www.dtu.ac.in**.

Admission guidelines may be downloaded from the University website **www.dtu.ac.in**. For any query please mail to **bdes_admission@dtu.ac.in** for B.Des admission and **mdes_admission@dtu.ac.in** for M.Des admissions or contact at 011-27871017

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CENTRAL RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM No. 1

Tender No. CR-BB-TELE-2026-30

Corrigendum No 1 is been issued for tender no CR-BB-TELE-2026-30 **1. Tender closing date is extended up to 12/05/2026 15.00 Hrs.** Details can be viewed on Website at **www.ireps.gov.in** Rest all other terms and conditions remain the same. This tender complies with Public Procurement Policy Order 2017 dated **15.06.2017** **50**

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Vadavil Krishnakumaar S/O, Vijaya Nair R/o AC 36, 3B, 3rd Floor, 4th Street, Anna Nagar, Chennai- 600040 have changed my name to Krishna Kumaar Unnikrishnan for all purposes.

I, KANAKRANI wife of G.Perumal, Ex.sep.ASC (South) No13822353, resident of 7/5, Karumariyamman Koil Ist cross street, Annai Anjugam Nagar, Ayyapakkam, Chennai – 600077, have Changed my name from KANAKRANI to P.KANAGARANI vide affidavit dated 13.04.2026 at Chennai

I, MUBEENA. S daughter of Thiru Shaik Hussain, born on 26th December 1991 (District of Birth: Chennai), residing at Old No. 29, New No. 50, Jawahar Hussain1st Street, Royapettah, Chennai–600 014, shall henceforth be known as MUBEENA SAHIBA.Chennai, 27th June 2025. MUBEENA. S

I, Venkatasubramanian Lalitha Kumari aged 70 years wife of Shri. N R Venkatasubramanian (Late) residing at Flat No.610 (Block C2) Casa Grand Royal,Model School Road extension,Sholinganallur, Chennai-600119,Tamil Nadu,have changed my name from Venkatasubramanian Lalitha Kumari to Ms Lalitha Venkatasubramanian with effect from 14 April 2026 vide notorised Affidavit No.307 dt : 13-04-2026. Henceforth, I shall be known as Lalitha Venkatasubramanian for all purposes.

I, TOMY SEBASTIAN, S/o Late SEBASTIAN JOSEPH, aged 61 years, residing at Maha Flats, 15/17, Raghupathy Nagar, 1st Street, Nanganallur, Chennai – 600061, do hereby declare that my name has been wrongly mentioned as TOMY SEBASTIAN PULTHAKADIYEL in my passport. My correct name is TOMY SEBASTIAN as per my official documents such as Aadhaar Card, PAN Card, and Voter ID. Henceforth, I shall be known as TOMY SEBASTIAN for all purposes.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Hitherto known as Revathy Ravichandran D/o Ravichandran & W/o P.Joshwin Jabaraj Residing at No -4/18 , 5th Cross Street, United India Colony Kodambakkam, Chennai Tamilnadu- 600024, have changed my name and Shall Hereafter Be known as Agatha R Joshwin.

I, KESAVARAJ S/o.Raghupathy Date of Birth :24.09.1977 Residing at Plot 117, 6th Street, Ezhil Nagar Phase II, Ayappakkam, Tiruvallur – 600077 shall henceforth be known as Kesavarajan

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, J.INBARAJU S/o G.Jayaraj, residing at 42/1, DGQA Complex, Nanganallur, Chennai–61, my minor son Joseph Solomonraj Inbaraju, aged about 11 years,I declare that both the names, i.e., Joseph Solomonraj Inbaraju and I.Joseph, refer to one and the same person, shall be known and identified by the name I.JOSEPH for all purposes (Father) , Refer affidavit from Chennai high court dated 14 Apr 2026

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To the best of our knowledge and belief, the Film is free from any encumbrances, claims or demands, whatsoever. However, should any person(s) have claim against, to, or in respect of the Film, whether by way of any sale, lease, assignment, license, pledge, gift, mortgage, charge, sale, litigation, and/or transfer of any kind whatsoever or otherwise, such person(s) are hereby required to make the same known in writing along with documentary proof/evidence (certified true copies) of the aforesaid claim to the undersigned at the address given below, within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication hereof, failing which the transaction will be completed without reference to such claims and the claims, if any, will be deemed to have been waived. Claims without any documentary proof and /or any claims received after the expiry of the stipulated 7 (seven) days shall not be entertained.

SCHEDULE

Title of the Film : **TRAIN**
Languages : Tamil (Original), Telugu (dubbed), Kannada (dubbed) and Malayalam (dubbed)
Star Cast : Vijay Sethupathy, Shruthi Haasan & Others
Director : Mr. Mysskin
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Dated : 16.04.2026
Place : Chennai

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A CH-CHE

From Page One

Prime Minister holds roadshow in Nagercoil

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the roadshow in Nagercoil on Wednesday. N. RAJESH

The approximately 1.5-km stretch from Veppamoodu to MGR statue in Vadasery witnessed a sea of saffron, with a large number of BJP cadre gathering on both sides of the road to catch a glimpse of Mr. Modi.

Party cadre showered flowers on Mr. Modi. One of them presented the Prime Minister with a photograph depicting his mother applying a tilak on his forehead.

Mr. Modi, during the course of the roadshow, offered floral tributes to the portraits of late Chief Minister K. Kamaraj, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, and late Chief Ministers C.N. Annadurai and M.G. Ramachandran.

Interaction with candidates

The Prime Minister then met the NDA candidates lined up for the upcoming election. These included M.R. Gandhi, Thalavai Sundaram, S. Vijayadharani, P. Ramesh, T. Sivakumar, Nivin Simon contesting in Kanniyakumari district; K.R.M. Radhakrishnan in Tiruchendur; S.P. Balakrishnan in Radhapuram; and Ananthan Ayyasamy in Vasudevanallur (Reserved).

He also had a brief interaction with the candidates.

Sources told *The Hindu* that Mr. Modi had congratulated the candidates and exhorted them to win the upcoming election.

After the event, Mr. Modi, in a post on X, said: "Nagercoil's roadshow was filled with unparalleled enthusiasm. It is clear that Tamil Nadu doesn't want any more of DMK's misgovernance and corruption. The NDA will provide pro-people good governance to the State."

Delimitation will turn Tamils into second-class citizens, says CM Stalin

There can never be a Prime Minister from the South if the Delimitation Bill goes through in Parliament, he says. Mr. Stalin also criticises the AIADMK general secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, for claiming that the Chief Minister's rejection of the Bill reflected his opposition to women's reservation

The Hindu Bureau
DHARMPURI

"The Delimitation Bill that is being pushed through by the BJP-led NDA government in Parliament on Thursday would turn us into second-class citizens in our own country," DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Wednesday.

"When our MPs have no voice, will we have a voice? And if we do not raise our voice now, there will be no voice left for us to raise. The BJP should be given the drubbing it deserves," he said, addressing a massive gathering at a poll campaign in Dharmapuri.

Slamming the NDA government's move to push the Bill when the MPs are on the campaign trail, Mr. Stalin said, "there can never be a Prime Minister from the South if this Delimitation Bill goes through".

He called for a strong pushback from the people of Tamil Nadu that must "once and for all suppress the arrogance of the BJP".

Stiff resistance: Chief Minister M.K. Stalin addressing an election campaign in Dharmapuri on Wednesday. N. BASHKARAN

'Hoist black flags'

Urging the people of Tamil Nadu to hoist black flags in their homes, Mr. Stalin said, "At the same time that we hoist black flags at our homes, our MPs will be fighting it out [against the Bill] in Parliament on April 16".

Mr. Stalin also criticised AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami for claiming that the Chief Minister's rejection of the Delimitation Bill was his opposition to women's reservation.

It was Kalaignar who gave right to equal share in property for women and created SHGs for them, Mr. Stalin said. The Chief Minister added that he, as Kalaignar's son, was the one who had empowered women through a monthly income assurance; enabled their mobility through *Vidiyal Payanam* buses; encouraged their education through *Pudhumai Penn* and their labour participation through working women's hostels; and reduced their domestic burden through the free breakfast scheme.

Population policy

Mr. Stalin also told the people that the rationale behind a population policy after Independence was to address poverty and push development by reducing population growth. "But the Delimitation Bill that will accord more seats to the populous northern States is punitive; it penalises the southern States that made progress and development by controlling population," he said.

Mr. Stalin 'reminded' Mr. Palaniswami that this was a battle for Tamil Nadu and that he should stand with the State at least in this fight. "But then, when you (Palaniswami) had not backed Tamil Nadu during the Uniform Civil Code, the three-language fight and the FCRA bill, why would you stand up now," he said.

EPS defending 'owner'

"Mr. Palaniswami's intention is not to abuse me. His real intention is to protect and defend the owner riding on his back, and therefore, he cannot oppose them," the Chief Minister said, accusing the AIADMK leader of doing the bidding on behalf of his "owner".

"The NDA is an alliance of traitors and betrayers. There is Mr. Palaniswami, who had pledged his own back for the BJP to piggyback on in order to stab the State. Then there is another, who struts around like a saint, but joined the alliance fearing corruption cases," said Mr. Stalin, alluding to PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss.

Taking another swipe at Dr. Anbumani, Mr. Stalin said: "This person who calls himself a warrior of social justice is holding hands with the AIADMK, which shot dead 21 social justice warriors in this district in 1987 over their struggle for quotas, and the BJP, which is slowly dismantling reservations across the country. It was Kalaignar – when he came to power in 1989 – who provided 20% reservation for the most backward classes, giving them educational and employment opportunities. I, on the other hand, built a memorial for the 21 martyrs."

It was the same AIADMK that burnt to death three innocent girls, Gokilavani, Gayathri, and Hemalatha, here in this district, when its leader (Jayalalithaa) was convicted," Mr. Stalin said.

"The DMK-led alliance is overcoming many such betrayals to secure a win," he said, and urged the people to hand such a defeat to the BJP in a way that the party would never forget. "I'm ready to fight. Are you ready to stand by me?" the Chief Minister asked the people.

Vijay dubs proposed delimitation exercise a biased move by Centre

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam president C. Joseph Vijay, on Wednesday, termed the proposed delimitation exercise a biased move by the Union government.

In a post on X, Mr. Vijay said the Union government had proposed a significant change in the composition of the Lok Sabha through the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, which aims at increasing the number of Members of Parliament in the Lower House from 543 to 850.

While welcoming the provision for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, Mr. Vijay said if the Bill is passed, it would significantly widen the proportional disparity in representation between the southern and northern States.

> The passage of this Bill will be akin to punishing a State that has faithfully followed the Union government's directives for decades, while rewarding those that have failed to do so
>
> **C. JOSEPH VIJAY**
> TVK president

"If this Bill is passed, the representation of southern States in lawmaking related to language, culture, and State rights, as well as in the formulation of Union government policies, will diminish, while that of the northern States will increase. As a result, the voices of the people of southern States, particularly Tamil Nadu, which has adhered to the Union government's directives, may not be adequately heard in Parliament. This is a biased action by the Union government," Mr. Vijay said.

"The passage of this Bill will be akin to punishing a State that has faithfully followed the Union government's directives for decades, while rewarding those that have failed to do so," he added.

Financial devolution

He said the passage of the Bill may also impact financial devolution. The Tamil Nadu government had already been alleging that it faced losses in financial distribution. Even in the Union Budget, adequate funds and projects were not being allocated to the State, he said.

Mr. Vijay demanded that the Bill be withdrawn and the status quo be maintained.

We support CM's stand on delimitation: Shanmugam

The Hindu Bureau
VELLORE

CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam, on Wednesday, said his party strongly backed the stand taken by DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on delimitation.

Mr. Stalin had opposed the process based on population.

Speaking to the media here, Mr. Shanmugam said the BJP-led Centre had been following policies against the people of Tamil Nadu in recent years.

"Now, the BJP plans to introduce a Bill on delimitation that could reduce Tamil Nadu's representation in Parliament," he said.

Strong support: CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam speaks to media persons near Central Prison in Vellore on Wednesday.

He slammed the BJP leadership at New Delhi for hastily convening a session in Parliament at a time when States such as Tamil Nadu and West Bengal were going to the polls.

"The BJP has taken up Women's Reservation Bill to gain political mileage in the polls held in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. All political parties, including the Congress that has around 100 MPs, the DMK, the TMC and the Left parties, have opposed the BJP's proposed delimitation," he said.

T.N. has more Tasmac shops than PHCs: Sarath Kumar

The Hindu Bureau
SATTUR

BJP leader Sarath Kumar flayed the DMK for creating a situation where there were "more Tasmac shops in the State than Primary Health Centres (PHCs)".

Seeking votes for BJP State president Nainar Nagenthran here on Wednesday, Mr. Sarath Kumar said that while there was only one PHC for every 30,000 persons in Tamil Nadu, there was one Tasmac shop for every 15,000 people. "It is difficult to get medicines, but it is very easy to get (liquor) bottles," he said.

That the DMK should be dethroned is the need of the hour, he added.

Bar EPS from campaigning for polls, says plea in Madras HC

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

A writ petition has been filed in the Madras High Court seeking a direction to the Chief Election Commissioner to take appropriate action on the basis of a representation made to him to debar AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami from campaigning for the 2026 Assembly election.

Va. Pugazhendi of Puratchi Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam had filed the petition on the ground that Mr. Palaniswami was making personal attacks against Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin of the DMK, and therefore, he must be debarred from campaigning and also from contesting the April 23 election.

The petition is expected to be listed for hearing before the first Division Bench of Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G. Arul Murugan after it gets numbered. In an affidavit, filed through his counsel R. Thirumoorthy, the petitioner claimed that the speeches delivered by the AIADMK general secretary during his campaign in Chennai and Cuddalore went against the model code of conduct.

He said Mr. Palaniswami, while addressing a gathering in Chennai, had trumpeted about his AIADMK government having handled the COVID-19 pandemic with finesse and had stated that the State had not witnessed any natural calamity such as a drought, storm, cyclone or coronavirus (COVID-19) during the DMK regime in the last five years.

Similarly, while addressing an election campaign meet in Cuddalore, Mr. Palaniswami had made personal attacks against the Deputy Chief Minister, the petitioner said.

He claimed that the speeches would attract Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which prohibits the promotion of feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of citizens on the grounds of religion, race, caste, community or language.

Udhayanidhi Stalin's assets: HC directs Director General of Income Tax to respond by April 20

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court, on Wednesday, sought the response of the Director General of Income Tax (Investigation) following the filing of a writ petition seeking an inquiry into alleged material discrepancies in the assets declared by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin during the 2021 Assembly polls and for the elections scheduled for April 23 this year.

First Division Bench of Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G. Arul Murugan asked Additional Solicitor General AR.L. Sundaresan, assisted by Income Tax department senior standing counsel A.P. Srinivas, to ensure that the DGIT's response was filed by April 20, as the petitioner had insisted that voters must know the true assets of every candidate before the day of polling.

Udhayanidhi Stalin

The court also permitted Central government senior panel counsel V. Chandrasekaran to accept notice on behalf of the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and ordered notices, returnable by April 20, to Mr. Udhayanidhi, Red Giant Movies Private Limited and Snow Housing Private Limited. All the respondents were directed to file their respective replies to the writ petition by the next date of hearing.

Senior counsel V. Raghavachari, assisted by V.R. Shanmuganathan, argued the case on behalf of writ petitioner R. Kumaravel, 56, of Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni constituency, from where Mr. Udhayanidhi is contesting for the second consecutive time. The counsel said the voters had a right to know the details regarding the assets of every candidate before exercising their franchise.

However, in the case of Mr. Udhayanidhi, a comparison of the election affidavits filed by him before the Returning Officers in 2021 and 2026 reveal several discrepancies such as the disappearance of previously declared assets, unexplained variation in loans, mischaracterisation of financial transactions, and contradictions between affidavit disclosures and official corporate filings, Mr. Raghavachari said.

Advocate Niranjan Rajagopalan, representing the Election Commission, said though the candidates were expected to make true and full disclosure of their assets in accordance with the directives issued by the Supreme Court, the Returning Officers would not be able to conduct an inquiry as to whether each candidate had done so.

He brought to the notice of the court that Section 125A of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 lists the penalties for filing false affidavits at the time of filing nominations to contest elections.

However, Mr. Raghavachari said his client was not on the point of initiating criminal prosecution after the conduct of election, but wanted to know the correct details about the assets of the candidate contesting in his constituency before exercising his franchise. Therefore, it was essential to order a probe into the discrepancies by the DGIT and the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs, he added.

Women's Reservation Bill will be passed: Naidu

Appaji Reddem
AMARAVATI

The meritorious, educated and enterprising Indian women are growing in leaps and bounds, and they are ready to harness politics, says Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu while commenting on the proposed Women's Reservation and Delimitation Bills.

In an exclusive interaction with *The Hindu*, Mr. Naidu said, "I am very confident that the Bill will be passed. Those who oppose it will be exposed. Today, women are educated and enterprising. They are ready to take the lead. If you give them the opportunity, the quality of leadership will increase. I started promoting women's leadership in 1995, and it was very successful. Even the former Chief Minister of undivided A.P., N.T. Rama Rao had encouraged educated women by giving them seats in the TDP."

'No more proxies'

Mr. Naidu wrote to leaders of various political parties and MPs from the State, urging them to extend support to Bill.

Speaking about India's changing economic and political landscape, Mr. Naidu said women could prove their mettle in all sectors. "India is mature. No more proxies now. Even parties are forced to allocate seats to women based on merit. With reservation, several problems, including dowry, will be sorted out," he said.

Five killed, 15 injured as blast rips through house in A.P.

Explosion took place at a road construction worker's residence, where four detonators were stored; most of the injured are neighbours who rushed to douse a minor fire that broke out first

The Hindu Bureau
KADIRI

Five persons were killed and 15 critically injured after an explosion rocked a house and its neighbourhood at Kummaravandlapalle village in Sri Sathya Sai district of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday.

The explosion took place at the residence of a road construction worker, where four detonators had been reportedly stored.

"It is not clear whether the detonators or the LPG cylinder in the house went off first. The sequence of events is under investigation," the police said.

Superintendent of Police S. Satish Kumar, who rushed to the spot, said four members of the family noticed a minor fire in the house around noon. They immediately rushed out and called the neighbours for help. As people gathered and tried to douse the flames, a blast occurred, leading to the casualties, he said.

Police personnel inspecting the blast site at Kummaravandlapalle village in Sri Sathya Sai district on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The deceased were identified as Viswanath Reddy, Mabunni, Madhu, Aslam Basha, and Fakruddin.

"There is some brisk activity on road-related work in the vicinity, and the police will examine that angle too," Mr. Kumar said. Contractors and workers were likely to be questioned. Clues and forensic teams were pressed into service, he said.

District Collector Shyam Prasad instructed the medical teams to provide advanced treatment to the injured. Residents and police first rushed the to the government hospital in Kadiri, about two km away. Doctors said some of the injured were later shifted to hospitals in Penukonda, Puttaparthi, and Anantapur.

Karnataka Congress MLA convicted in murder case

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

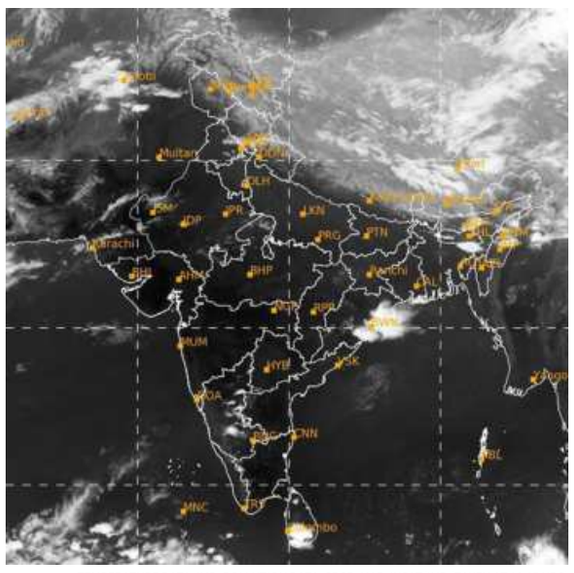
A special court in Bengaluru on Wednesday convicted Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni and 16 others for the 2016 murder of BJP leader Yogeshgouda Goudar.

Yogeshgouda, a 26-year-old BJP zilla panchayat member, was hacked to death at his gym in 2016. Dharwad MLA Kulkarni was named the main conspirator by the CBI, which took over the probe in 2019.

The CBI alleged that Kulkarni, who was the district in-charge Minister at the time of the murder, perceived Yogeshgouda as a growing political rival in Dharwad, and hired contract killers to eliminate him.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday


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

Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, West Bengal, Odisha and Karnataka. Hot and humid weather likely at isolated places over Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	35.0	26.6
Ahmedabad	—	40.7	27.0
Aizawl	21	32.8	16.5
Allahabad	—	43.0	21.8
Bengaluru	—	35.8	23.6
Bhopal	—	39.5	20.8
Bhubaneswar	—	35.9	26.9
Chandigarh	—	36.8	16.4
Chennai	—	37.7	27.6
Coimbatore	—	38.6	24.9
Dehradun	—	35.4	16.7
Gangtok	9	16.0	12.5
Goa	—	34.2	26.6
Guwahati	—	29.1	21.5
Hubballi	—	38.0	22.0
Hyderabad	—	40.6	27.4
Imphal	13	29.0	17.5
Jaipur	—	39.2	28.2
Kochi	—	33.2	28.2
Kohima	—	23.0	13.0
Kolkata	—	36.4	26.5
Kozhikode	—	37.0	29.0
Kurnool	—	42.9	30.2
Lucknow	—	39.3	21.4
Madurai	—	40.2	26.2
Mangaluru	—	34.8	27.0
Mumbai	—	34.5	24.6
Mysuru	—	36.2	21.4
New Delhi	—	39.1	19.4
Patna	—	38.9	22.8
Port Blair	—	32.3	25.2
Puducherry	—	35.2	26.4
Pune	—	41.8	24.0
Raipur	—	41.7	27.3
Ranchi	—	37.8	19.0
Shillong	—	24.5	13.9
Shimla	—	27.0	13.0
Srinagar	—	26.8	7.6
Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.8	27.1
Tiruchi	—	40.1	25.6
Vijayawada	—	38.2	25.8
Visakhapatnam	—	32.9	27.5

(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	91	86	28	107	113	
Bengaluru	24	28	25	52	109	
Chennai	17	6	41	14	36	
Delhi	32	100	41	241	294	
Hyderabad	13	13	36	60	83	
Kolkata	7	42	37	71	71	
Lucknow	17	53	54	76	120	
Mumbai	1	27	36	54	119	
Pune	—	29	103	66	97	
Visakhapatnam	51	50	21	35	128	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 296 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Bhiwani, Haryana recorded a healthy AQI score of 30

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

Telangana govt. releases caste survey findings

Ravi Reddy
HYDERABAD

A detailed caste backwardness index compiled from the Social, Educational, Employment, Economic and Political Caste Survey (SEEEPC) survey has highlighted sharp disparities across social groups in Telangana. The analysis shows that the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are three times more backward than the general castes, while Backward Classes (BCs) are 2.7 times more backward.

Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, Animal Husbandry and Sports Minister Vakati Srihari, TPCC chief Mahesh Kumar Goud, Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao and others announced that the SEEEPC survey report, along with the findings of the Independent Expert Working Group (IEWG), was available in the public domain from Wednesday night.

According to the survey report, the total BC population in the State stood at

It says SCs and STs are three times more backward than general castes

56.36 per cent, followed by SCs (17.42 per cent), STs (10.43 per cent) and other castes (15.79 per cent).

14 lakh with no caste

Interestingly, 14 lakh people (four per cent) preferred no caste column. The survey covered 1.12 crore families in the State out of the total population of 3.55 crore.

The IEWG, in its key findings, has noted that the State's weighted average caste backwardness index score stands at 81. Of the 242 castes surveyed, 135 fall below this benchmark, accounting for 67% of the population. These include 69 BCs, 41 SCs and 25 STs. In contrast, all 18 castes in the general category, representing 12% of the population, rank well above the State average.

The report observed that "every backward caste is not equally backward." Among the 107 castes deemed less backward than the State average, there are 64 BCs, 18 SCs, seven STs and all 18 General Castes.

On population share, 99% of STs, 97% of SCs and 71% of BCs are more backward than the State average. Disparities are evident in education, employment and living conditions. Nearly half of the SCs in the workforce are daily wage labourers compared to 10% among general castes.

INBRIEF

Nara Lokesh elevated as TDP national working president

Andhra Pradesh IT and HRD Minister Nara Lokesh was elevated as the national working president of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the party said on Wednesday. He was serving as the party's national general secretary. His father and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu continues as the national president of the party. The TDP reappointed Palla Srinivasa Rao as its State president. The party also announced a new Polit Bureau, its highest decision-making body, as well as national and State committees.

Stand-up comedian held for remarks on Pawan Kalyan

The Andhra Pradesh Police have arrested Hyderabad-based stand-up comedian, Katikala Anudeep, from Uttar Pradesh, for his alleged derogatory remarks on the personal life of Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party (JSP) leader K. Pawan Kalyan during a performance. Mr. Anudeep was reportedly picked up by the police on April 14. "He will be produced before the media on Thursday in Kakinada," District Superintendent of Police G. Bindu Madhav said on Wednesday. The police took the action based on a complaint filed by a JSP supporter.

Wild elephant dies in Kerala after iron pipe pierces chest

A wild elephant died after an iron pipe pierced its chest while it was damaging a car shed at Muthukad in Kozhikode district of Kerala on Wednesday. According to forest officials, a herd strayed into a residential area near the catchment of the Peruvannamuzhi reservoir. As the forest team tried to drive the herd back, one of the elephants charged at the personnel, who took shelter inside a house. It tried to destroy a car shed on the premises, when an iron pipe pierced its chest. Forest officials said elephant intrusions were common in the area. PTI

Congress suspends MLC after bypoll row

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka Congress has suspended K. Abdul Jabbar, a three-time MLC, citing anti-party activities during the recent byelection to the Davanagere South Assembly seat.

On April 11, Mr. Jabbar resigned as chairperson of the minority wing of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee over similar allegations. His suspension comes a day after MLC Naseer Ahmed was sacked as political secretary to the Chief Minister.

Mr. Jabbar was keen to contest the bypoll, but was denied ticket. Sources say Mr. Jabbar, Mr. Ahmed, and Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan stayed away from the campaign and backed rival candidates.

Searing heat

Unmindful of the scorching sun, labourers and staff go about their work at a construction site in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Aurad in Kalaburagi district recorded the highest temperature of 45°C in Karnataka over the past 24 hours. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Implement menstrual leave policy, Karnataka HC tells govt.

Krishnaprasad
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday directed the State government to "strictly and faithfully" implement the menstrual leave policy – which mandates that registered establishments grant one day's leave per month to women employees, aged between 18 and 52, during their menstrual cycle – till the proposed law on the policy is enacted.

In the interregnum, the court said, it shall be incumbent upon the State to ensure effective operationalisation of the policy through suitable guidelines and administrative instructions for its uniform and rigorous implementation across organised and unorganised sectors.

Hotel worker's plea

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order on a petition filed by 41-year-old Chandravva Hanumant Gokavi, who works in a hotel in Belagavi district.

Upon enactment of the proposed law – Karnataka Menstrual Leave and Hygiene Bill, 2025 – the State shall, without any undue delay frame appropriate rules to give meaningful effect of the mandate, it said.

Meanwhile, the petitions filed by the Bangalore Hotels' Association, the Karnataka Employers' Association, the Bangalore Employers' Association and 15 women professionals, challenging the legality of the menstrual policy notification, are pending before another judge in the Principal Bench of the court in Bengaluru.

Entry of 'fertile women' antithetical to the identity of Sabarimala deity, says temple board in top court

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said everybody is entitled to their individual conscience and no religion is superior to the other, even as the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) argued that the entry of "fertile women" between 10 and 50 years of age would be antithetical to the very manifestation and identity of the "special deity" at the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

Appearing before a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, for the TDB (which manages the shrine), said there were about 1,000 temples dedicated to Lord Ayyappa in India. The shrine at Sabarimala was the only one with the deity in the form of a *Naishtika Brahmachari* (perennial celibate).

Mr. Singhvi argued that the very foundation of the fame and prowess of the deity lay in the fact that Lord Ayyappa was in the *Naishtika Brahmachari* form. "The only reason people revere him is that he has eschewed all forms of *grihastashram* and embraced penance of a very high order. Worshippers observe *vratham*," Mr. Singhvi submitted.

Lord Ayyappa is in the *Naishtika Brahmachari* form at Sabarimala, says counsel.

He denied that women were excluded in toto. He said a "sub-classification" of women, that is, those aged between 10 years and 50 years, could not take the Sabarimala pilgrimage.

He submitted that the entry of "fertile women in this age group would be antithetical to the very manifestation and identity of the deity... They can visit Lord Ayyappa in the other 999 temples".

Justice B.V. Nagarathna orally observed that Article 25(2)(a) of the Constitution required "religious practices" to be left untouched.

She said Article 25 (freedom of conscience and religion) invoked equality for all religions. "No religion is superior to the other. Persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience. The truth is one. Scholars interpret it in different ways. That is why everybody is entitled to their individual conscience. Article 25 (1) recognises that no path or conscience is superior to any other path or conscience... You may follow any path you wish," Justice Nagarathna said.

Justice M.M. Sundresh said belief was at the core of religion. Even a religious denomination was only an entity which gave effect to the religious belief of individuals, he said.

Dry days

As India faces a rainfall deficit, it must make preparations for the worst

After the crest, the trough is inevitable. Following two years of surplus rainfall, India is likely staring at a significant shortfall in the coming monsoon. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in its April forecast has predicted an 8% deficit, or "below normal" rainfall, coming June-September. There is a five percent margin of error in this estimate but going by IMD's track record, there are many more times it has expected a 'normal' monsoon only for India to end up with a drought than it has forecast a drought and been proved wrong. In fact, when IMD warns of a deficit in April, history shows that India often experiences a drought. The agency, in its official lexicon, never uses the term 'drought' and only refers to a deficit below 90% as "deficient." In the April of 2015, IMD issued a "below normal monsoon" forecast for the 2015 southwest monsoon season, predicting seasonal rainfall at 93% of the long-term average, again, 'below normal.' India ended up much worse at 86% Long Period Average (LPA). IMD expects a depressed monsoon this time in the second crucial half of the monsoon (August and September) on the back of weather models indicating an El Nino, the cyclical phenomenon where a heating of the central equatorial Pacific Ocean beyond 1 degree Celsius has corresponded nine out 16 times since 1950 to a deficient monsoon.

The timing of an El Nino matters. If the temperature rise happens outside of the monsoon months, its impact on the monsoon is not as threatening. In 2019, for instance, the IMD expected less than normal rainfall in April because El Nino-like conditions were on the horizon. Paradoxically, India ended up with above normal rainfall because that heating was not as strong as expected. This year too, the IMD expects the Indian Ocean Diapole would counter the desiccating impact of the El Nino. In a year where the most concerning clouds as of now are the warlike ones over West Asia, shortage of gas and fertilizer could worsen farmer sentiment on top of the weak rains. The government should immediately begin preparations to shore up fertilizer stocks, equitable water distribution, particularly in reservoirs that are likely to be stressed, and provide timely advisories to farmers on optimal sowing practices.

Devious menace

Loan apps function in a regulatory dark area and promise easy credit

In the case of Nithin Raj, the first-year dental student in Kannur who died last week after falling from atop a five-storey building, the police have identified harassment over a loan that he secured via an app as a contributing factor. His death is the third high-profile suicide linked to loan apps in Kerala within four months. Since January, over 35 complaints related to these apps have been registered in Thiruvananthapuram Rural alone. In Raj's case, parallel investigations are also probing allegations of caste-based discrimination at his college and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes has sought a report from the State police in under a week. Once installed, these apps extract contact lists, photo galleries, and GPS data from the user's device and export them to servers often located in North India or overseas. If repayment is delayed, recovery agents steadily ramp up harassment, including repeated abusive calls to the borrower, harassing persons listed as references on the loan application, and inflicting reputational damage. Kerala in particular has high smartphone penetration and digital literacy, but not necessarily financial literacy, and a large student population with urgent small-credit needs. Despite the RBI's Digital Lending Guidelines, predatory apps lend without regulated status, fabricate Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) partnerships, route funds through opaque gateways, conceal fees and disbursal deductions, and provide no grievance mechanism.

The apps are able to operate because while the RBI regulates financial entities, the harmful entity operates in the app and data layers. As a first step, smartphone makers must consider an OS-level sandbox in which any app categorised as "financial" is technically barred from accessing contacts, photos, etc., even if the user grants permission. The apps' call centres are also often traced to other States or countries, beyond the reach of local police. Second, India needs to enact legislation with prison sentences and heavy fines for illegal digital lending. When an app is removed from a store or directory, its developers relaunch immediately under new names. Third, the government can mandate all financial apps to have a cryptographically signed certificate of association from a regulated bank or NBFC and app stores to check listings against a Reserve Bank of India whitelist. This is also why the Kerala government is mulling new legislation to regulate digital lending platforms and empower local police to act against apps operating from outside the State. Fourth, the country needs rigorous disclosure standards on effective interest rates and fees, strict rules on recovery conduct, stricter KYC (Know your Customer) obligations on payment aggregators, and risk flags on UPI IDs associated with lending operations associated with a high complaint rate.

A curated selection of articles on the Editorial and Opinion pages on women's reservation and delimitation

Women's reservation and delimitation should be delinked

Brinda Karat

is a senior leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

Parliament is scheduled to discuss two far reaching Bills ostensibly for the implementation of the one-third reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. The Bills are the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill which seeks to raise the number of seats in Parliament to 850 seats with one-third reserved for women "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose", and The Delimitation Bill, 2026, which sets up the Delimitation Commission to redraw boundaries of existing seats on the basis of the "latest Census figures published on the date of the constitution of the commission", which is the 2011 Census. The government expects the Opposition to turn itself into a rubber stamp and approve utterly flawed proposals or be damned as being anti-women.

Unnecessary linkages

In September 2023, to blunt mounting criticism of its failure to legislate on women's reservation, the government hastily pushed through the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (NSVA) in a so-called "special session", just months before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This legislation was markedly different from the Bill which had been adopted by the Rajya Sabha in 2010. If that Bill, which had gone through several rounds of parliamentary scrutiny, had been presented by the government, as it should have been, women's reservation could have been implemented from the 2024 elections itself. Instead, the Modi government, through the NSVA, linked women's reservation to the proposed Census and delimitation. During the ensuing debate almost all Opposition parties expressed concern that these unnecessary linkages would not only deny women the right of reservation in the 2024 Lok Sabha and subsequent Assembly elections but would put its implementation in limbo contingent on other factors. The government responded that Opposition fears were unfounded and that a Delimitation Commission would be set up after the 2024 elections and that the Census would be completed in time. None of this happened.

What did happen is that the number of women in Parliament after the 2024 elections decreased from 78 to 74 which is just 13.6% of the total House. Additionally, in 2024 and 2025, State Assembly elections were held in 10 States with a total of 1,276 assembly seats. Only 123 women, which is less than 10%, were elected. This is the real consequence of the unwarranted linkages introduced by the government.

The 131st Amendment Bill not only retains the flawed linkages of the NSVA, it adds a third linkage of increased seats. Thus in the name of women's reservation, the government wants to achieve three aims – first, it wants to scrap the principle of delimitation based on present population criteria by using the outdated 2011 Census as the base; secondly, by using the 2011 Census, it wants to take pressure off the urgency for a caste census; and finally, it wants women's reservation to be implemented only as part of a delimitation exercise whose aim is to redraw boundaries of seats to suit the ruling regime. That is, women's reservation is once again being held hostage to the fulfilment of other agendas.

> Women's reservation is a stand-alone step which requires a stand-alone law

The importance of Census data

Till now in India, all the four major national exercises of delimitation of the boundaries of seats have been based on the last available Census data. The number of Scheduled Castes (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST) reserved seats are based on the proportion of SC/ST communities in the total population. As per the 1971 Census, the absolute number of seats reserved for SCs and STs was 79 and 41 respectively. This increased by 11 seats after the 2001 Census and subsequent delimitation with 84 seats reserved for SCs and 47 for STs with their combined proportion in the population being 24.4%. From 2001 to 2026, the population would certainly have registered a bigger increase. In the name of urgency for women's reservation, implementing a delimitation exercise which ignores the current population of SCs and STs will be a *manuvadi* injustice to oppressed communities, denying them a fair increase in the proportion of reserved seats. It will negatively impact the women of these communities, since the numbers of seats constituting one-third of reserved seats for SC/ST women will also be less than their rightful share.

Delimitation is a highly politically and sensitive issue. The last national delimitation exercise took around six years to complete, from 2002 to 2008, and was implemented in the 2009 elections. Since then, two State-level delimitation exercises have been done for Assam and J&K, directly under the Election Commission of India. Both of these have been strongly criticised for the highly undemocratic and sectarian way in which the boundaries of the seats were redrawn violating the principles of the Delimitation Act, 2002. To put it plainly, in both States the interests of the central ruling regime were advanced by manipulating the creation of seats in such a way as to minimise the impact of voters of particular communities seen as being opposed to the ruling regime. It can be reasonably anticipated that the coming delimitation will be highly contested. Why should women's reservation be linked to such an exercise? Further, even if the proportion of the present number of seats in different States is to be maintained according to the present government proposal, questions still remain as to the disadvantages of States where population growth is less. All this needs further discussion and cannot be pushed through.

Betrayal of women's reservation

Women's reservation is a stand-alone step which requires a stand-alone law. The 2010 Bill adopted by the Rajya Sabha and supported by the then Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had no such linkages. I remember Sushma Swaraj, then the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, rushing to congratulate us, then in the Upper House, for the historic passage of the Bill even though she knew that her party would get no credit. But there are no women leaders in the BJP today who would have the courage to call the government out for this; the second betrayal of the women's reservation issue. The only reason that the government is insisting on such a linkage is because it wants to rush through the delimitation process in the name of implementing women's reservation. The onus of delay will be shifted to all those who object to the delimitation boundaries suggested by a Commission packed with government supporters which is what the composition of the proposed Bill suggests.

It is time to say no to the instrumentalisation of the issue of women's reservation. Women's reservation has been fought for by millions of women across India, for decades, to strengthen democracy, not by the denial of rights of SCs and STs and not by bulldozing democratic norms. Those committed to women's reservation must vote against these Bills. The solution lies in going back to the 2010 Bill without linkages to delimitation and the Census. A simple amendment to the 106 Constitution Amendment law passed in 2023 will suffice: in Clause 334A, delete the sentence, one-third reservation for women will commence "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the relevant figures for the first census taken after commencement of the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Act, 2023 have been published". This will break the link. As far as increase of seats and delimitation is concerned, these are separate issues which should be discussed. As and when Parliament decides on an increase in seats, automatically the framework of women's reservation too will change. Our message to the government is: stop your manipulations, one-third reservation for women without linkages now.

Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha

M.R. Madhavan

Co-founder and President of PRS Legislative Research

The government has circulated a set of three Bills related to delimitation and women's reservation. These Bills are expected to be taken up in the extended Budget session from April 16-18, and could affect the working of Parliament in several ways. The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill proposes the following. The limit on the size of the Lok Sabha will be increased from 550 to 850. The number of seats for each State in the Lok Sabha will be based on its proportion in the population of all States. This population will be based on such Census (not necessarily the latest) that is specified by Parliament by passing a law. The Bill also clarifies that the reservation of one-third of seats for women will be effective after a delimitation, and will be valid for 15 years. The Delimitation Bill sets up a Delimitation Commission, and its provisions are similar to the last one set up in 2002. Importantly, it requires the latest published Census to be used. Therefore, the next delimitation is proposed to be based on the 2011 Census. The third Bill extends these provisions to the three Union Territories with legislatures: Delhi, J&K, and Puducherry.

Huge impact

There are several implications of these proposals. First, the freezing of seats until the first Census after 2026 has been removed. Instead, seats will be decided based on the 2011 Census. An immediate implication is that the relative share of seats in the Lok Sabha for each State will change. The biggest losers are Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while the main gainers are Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. While the proposal will equalise the value of the vote of every citizen regardless of their State of residence, it will lead to MPs from U.P. and Bihar (25% of total seats, up from 22%) having significant power to shape national policy.

Second, the Constitution Amendment Bill provides Parliament the flexibility to determine the periodicity of delimitation and the Census that will be used for the purpose. Currently, the Constitution requires delimitation after every Census, and to be based on that Census (currently, there is a freeze on this until 2026). The Amendment requires just a simple majority to determine whether to do delimitation, and which Census to use. The government of the day, as it would command the majority in the Lok Sabha, can effectively make this decision. They would need to pass it in the Rajya Sabha too, but that House will be weakened by the same Bill, which brings us to the third implication. While the size of the Lok Sabha is being increased, there is no proposal to change the size of the Rajya Sabha. This affects the relative importance of the two Houses. For example, if the two Houses disagree on a Bill, the President may summon a joint sitting. In such a scenario, each member of Parliament has one vote, so the Lok Sabha with 543 seats has 2.2 times the votes of the Rajya Sabha with 245 seats. If we assume that the Lok Sabha will now have 815 seats (an increase of 50%), it will have 3.3 times the strength of the Rajya Sabha. The effect can be seen with an example. Say, the government has 53% seats in the Lok Sabha (433 out of 815) and just 40% in the Rajya Sabha (98 out of 245 seats). The government will still be able to get its Bills through a joint session as it has a majority of total seats. This imbalance will also play out in elections to the offices of the President and the Vice-President, where each MP across both Houses has an equal vote.

> These Bills will have significant impact on the composition of Parliament and its functioning, and are being introduced with no public discussion

A fourth implication is that the limit on the size of the Council of Ministers will increase. The Constitution was amended in 2003 to limit the Council's size to 15% of the Lok Sabha. If Lok Sabha is expanded to have 815 MPs, the limit on the size of the Central cabinet also increases from 81 to 122. Fifth, the increased size of the Lok Sabha reduces the opportunity for an MP to participate in the deliberations of the House. MPs ask questions to Ministers to hold them to account, and raise important issues in the zero hour. Questions and zero hour interventions are chosen by lottery, and an increased size of the Lok Sabha reduces the probability of getting balloted. The issue is exacerbated by the fact that Parliament sits for less than 70 days a year.

Global precedents

Other countries also have large legislatures. For example, the U.K. House of Commons has 650 members. It has evolved processes to provide opportunities to MPs to participate in discussions. It averages over 150 sittings a year, and also has a robust committee system. Parliamentary committees can supplement deliberations. However, the Indian Parliament is found lacking in this respect. For example, every Bill in the U.K. Parliament has to be examined by committees of both Houses. In India, less than a fifth of the Bills are referred to Committees.

Sixth, there could be a similar impact on State legislatures. Though these Bills do not have any provisions regarding the size of State legislatures, that decision will be taken by the Delimitation Commission. If they decide to follow the same rationale and increase the size by 50%, some States could have oversized legislatures. U.P. could end up having over 600 seats while West Bengal and Maharashtra could reach about 450.

These Bills will have significant impact on the composition of Parliament and its functioning, and are being introduced with no public discussion. It is imperative that such Bills go through intensive deliberation, both outside and inside Parliament. At the very least, they should be referred to a parliamentary committee, which can engage with experts and the wider public before giving its recommendations.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Enact reservation now

Thirty years. That is how long Indian women have been waiting for this moment. Thirty years of promises and political calculations that always found reasons to push women's representation to the next session, the next government. The Women's Reservation Bill was first introduced in 1996. Congress held power for a full decade after that. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill in 2010. And then, for four consecutive years, under a government that Sonia Gandhi herself chaired, the Bill was never brought to the Lok Sabha floor. Not once. She now calls PM Modi's urgency "extraordinary hurry" (Editorial page, April 13 — "Delimitation, and not women's reservation, is the issue"). Every party voted for the Adhiniyam in 2023. Now, as the government moves to make the reservation effective from 2029, the Congress has reversed each one of those positions. The urgency they demanded has become the mischief they condemn. The timeline they insisted upon has become the process they oppose. Sonia ji raises delimitation as her central concern. She is right that it deserves careful handling. No southern State should lose political ground because it responsibly controlled its population. PM Modi has given an explicit, on-record assurance that no State, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, or Telangana, will see a reduction in Lok Sabha seats. The 2011 Census, the last verified count, forms the basis for this exercise. This is not an assault on the Constitution. It is a correction of a delay. Then there is the OBC sub-quota question. It deserves a serious answer and will get one in time. But let us be honest about its history. The parties that raised it loudest between 1998-2010 were not making a social justice argument. They were running a delay operation.

Annpurna Devi
Union Minister for Women and Child Development

To read more letters online, scan the QR code.
Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Placing women at the core of democracy

Vandana Mishra

Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

For decades, the need for making women agents of empowerment rather than just recipients of welfare has been acknowledged and discussed by various governments. But the credit for bringing on board all dissenting and delaying voices goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who, by passing the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (or Women's Reservation Act) 2023 has established a milestone in India's constitutional trajectory. The legislation guarantees 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures, but its significance goes far beyond the appeals of representation, equality, and inclusion. The lenses of institutional design, epistemic diversity, and developmental rationality establish this Act as a remarkable structural innovation in Indian democracy, which will go a long way in reaffirming that the reform is aimed not merely at reservation but also at the very intelligence and resilience of our constitutional order.

There is no doubt that the Adhiniyam will function as a mechanism that deepens democracy. There will be an expansion of the social and perceptive base from which democracy draws political authority, thus further strengthening representative democracy. It will also broaden the state's decision-making intelligence by incorporating previously overlooked and ignored standpoints. Recruitment in Indian politics has been confined by politics of dynasty, caste, and networked masculinities. The Act has the potential to break this ecosystem and will force political parties to reorganise their structures and shift their focus from 'just getting elected' to 'searching and nurturing the talent that can be elected'. The increased numbers of women in legislatures will broaden the horizons of legislative debate in content, tone, and ethical range. Governance will become more effective when deliberations are informed by multiple experiences. Women legislators, drawing upon their distinctively lived social realities, are likely to articulate different conceptions of justice, liberty, and fairness. Domestic violence, childcare infrastructure, public sanitation, and access to public services will no longer be peripheral or 'soft issues' as they will be reasoned differently. This can be rightly understood as a shift from procedural democracy, where the focus is on structures, institutions, and processes, to deliberative democracy, where the focus is on collecting competing arguments and the quality of the process rather than its outcome.

This law also finds reasonable justification in the grammar of political economy. It ensures that policy making is informed by real lives rather than statistics alone. Over the decades, women have made their mark in India's informal economy. From agricultural labourers, self-help group leaders, and teachers to street vending and domestic work, women constitute the unacknowledged and hence uncounted macroeconomics of survival. When this dispersed expertise translates to formal decision making and policy formulation, it allows different stake-holders –political parties and the state – to listen to an entirely different set of micro-rationalities. The public policy discourse has already established that when decisions are made by those in the first line of consequence bearing, the feedback loop between the government and the citizenry shortens and becomes more effective.

> The first challenge to implementing the law is institutional as it is chained to the timely completion of the Census and the delimitation

Administrative readiness

However, guaranteeing the Act's transformative potential will be a difficult nut to crack. It will largely depend on how well the ecosystem of politics, party organisation, and public discourse adapts to it. The centuries-old habits of thought, social hierarchies, inhibitions, and material constraints may resist or distort its content, thus delaying the democratic renewal. The first challenge is institutional as the Adhiniyam is chained to the timely completion of the Census and the delimitation of constituencies. It needs administrative readiness to translate the Act into action. Secondly, genuine reform would require redesigning internal political party structures so that women can be recruited at all operating levels. It calls for a realistic acceptance of them as co-political actors and not figurative placeholders. Parties also have to ensure that the voices not yet heard - of the marginalised as well as of the mainstreamed - do not remain excluded in practice. The challenge here is to not be consumed by the already existing and overtly active elitist political oligarchies. Thirdly, affective restructuring will be required because the institutions, which habitually display performative aggression, may instinctively look through the ideas of empathy and social reasoning. Fourthly, women themselves have to stand up to the constraints of social norms and gender roles which still limit their mobility, time, and autonomy. Fifthly, the Indian society must rise to the need of the hour. This entails a thorough reconfiguration of social attitudes to confer women the space, dignity, and respect essential for profound and autonomous engagement in public life.

The reform should be seen as a long process of political refinement wherein we must develop the habit of recognising, listening, and accommodating different perspectives as it will lead to intelligent policy making and deepening of democracy.

BJP's failed Christian outreach attempt

Union govt.'s push for amendments to FCRA Act deals the latest blow in Kerala

STATE OF PLAY

K.S. Sudhi
sudhi.ks@thehindu.co.in

Nothing seems to be working for the Kerala unit of the BJP, especially when it comes to the party's attempts to woo Christian voters. Its efforts to win over the Christians have backfired on multiple occasions and that too at defining political moments.

A series of force majeure events has spoiled the party's bid to win the trust of Christian voters, whom it considers essential to ending its electoral drought in the State. The latest in the series is the proposed amendments to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) pushed by the Union government, which are supposed to give wide-ranging powers to a government-appointed designated authority to take control of the assets and properties acquired using foreign contributions, in the event of failure to renew or cancellation of FCRA licence. The move came at a time when the State was heading for Assembly polls.

Though the Union government has put the amendments on the back burner, apparently under pressure from Kerala BJP leaders, the damage has already been done.

Various church factions have vociferously come out against the proposed amendments as they felt that the Union government was attempting to choke their financial supply lines and usurp their properties under the cover of the legislation. The statements of BJP leader Shon George that only those who are engaged in shady financial deals need to be worried about the proposed amendments and the Church has no reason to be worried have not gone down well in the community.

The last few days witnessed the rickety relationship between the party and the community, which is a decisive voter segment in the State, reaching its lowest ebb with the reported call of some Church heads to the faithful to vote for the Congress-led United Democratic Front in the State through the community mouthpiece Deepika. The diatribe of Mr. Shon and his father P.C. George, BJP's candidates in Christian-dominated Poonjar and Pala Assembly constituencies, against some of the church heads, holding them accountable for campaigning in favour of the UDF has further strained the carefully mended relationship between the party and a section of Church heads.

Earlier, the arrests of Sister Preethi Mary and Sister Vandana Francis, two Kerala-based Catholic nuns belonging to the Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate on July 25, 2025, four months before the civic body polls, in Chhattisgarh on charges of forced religious conversion and human trafficking of a tribeswoman had set off a political storm.

While the Chhattisgarh unit of the party insisted that the nuns were involved in trafficking and forced conversion, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the Kerala unit president, stood with the nuns as he had much to lose politically in the State.

A few months later, a Kerala priest and seven others were arrested in Amaravati in Maharashtra on December 30, 2025, again on allegations of forced religious conversion. The arrests, which invoked fierce criticisms from Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and State Congress leaders, came when all the political formations were busy engaged in the preparatory works for the upcoming Assembly polls. The BJP had to dispatch a team of its Christian leaders to Mumbai to liaise with the State government to secure their release.

The two instances had put the party leadership in a fix and forced it to go the extra mile to contain the damage caused by the allegations that Christian missionaries were being harassed in BJP-ruled northern States.

Similarly, the party's move to win the trust of Christian residents of Munambam, an alleged Waqf property, who were pitted against a few Muslim outfits demanding the restoration of alienated Waqf holdings, through the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025, had failed to deliver desired results. Eventually, it was revealed that the amended Act could do little to solve the imbroglio.

Besides the impact of the failed outreach programmes, the party now also faces the bleak prospect of antagonising its core Hindu voters over its "minority appeasement measures." Many in the party consider Christians as the "natural vote bank" of the Congress and efforts to pursue them is futile.

The BJP may have to rework its social engineering strategies for creating a political space for itself in Kerala in the wake of these developments.

How proposed delimitation would redraw political map

On reallocation based on 2011 Census, southern and northeastern States stand to lose the most in seat share; Hindi-heartland States gain disproportionately

DATA POINT

Srinivasan Ramani
Sambavi Parthasarathy

If the Lok Sabha's strength is expanded to 850 and seats are allocated on the basis of the 2011 Census population, as the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the companion Delimitation Bill to be tabled in Parliament envisage, the southern States and the North-East would see a sharp erosion in their share of parliamentary representation, while the Hindi-heartland States of northern India would be the overwhelming beneficiaries.

The two Bills, to be introduced in Parliament from April 16, seek to do a) raise the Lok Sabha ceiling from 543 to 850 seats (815 from States, 35 from Union Territories), b) replace the constitutional freeze that pegged seat allocation to the 1971 Census with an open-ended formula allowing Parliament to choose the Census basis by ordinary law, and c) constitute a Delimitation Commission that would use the latest published Census, currently the 2011 Census, to redraw boundaries and reallocate seats. The stated purpose is to operationalise women's reservation under the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023.

It is to be noted that Home Minister Amit Shah said in Coimbatore in February 2025 that southern States would not lose a single seat on a "pro rata basis". Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal told *The Hindu* on April 13, 2026 that concerns about southern States were a "silly concern", asserting there would be a "proportional increase across the country".

However, the Bills contain no mechanism to guarantee existing seat proportions. Article 81(2)(a) mandates population-proportional allocation and not a uniform percentage increase. In other words, delimitation will be based on population proportion according to the latest available Census.

Who gains and who loses

Using 2011 Census population to allocate 850 seats proportionally and comparing against a uniform proportional increase (which preserves existing seat shares), the disparities become stark. The five States/UTs that gain the most seats compared to a proportional increase belong to the Hindi heartland. Four of the five States/UTs that lose the most belong to the South or the East. **(Table 1)**

Aggregated by region, the pattern is unmistakable. The Hindi heartland's (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Delhi) share in the 850-seat House would rise from 38.1% to 43.1%. The South's share would fall from 24.3% to 20.7%. The North-East would decline from 4.4% to 3.8%. The Eastern States would slip from 14.4% to 13.7%. **(Table 2)**

The demographic roots of this asymmetry are visible in the latest fertility data. According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), all five southern States have total fertility rates between 1.5 and 1.8, well below the replacement level of 2.1 **(Chart 3)**. Bihar (3.0), Meghalaya (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.4), Jharkhand (2.3), and Manipur (2.2) remain above replacement. The gap that drove the original 1976 freeze on seat allocation has narrowed over the decades, but it persists.

States that invested in health, education, and family planning would see their share of parliamentary power shrink, while States that lagged on these indicators would gain the most. The data lays bare the core tension in the delimitation exercise: Article 81(2)(a) rewards demographic weight, not developmental achievement.

Revising representation

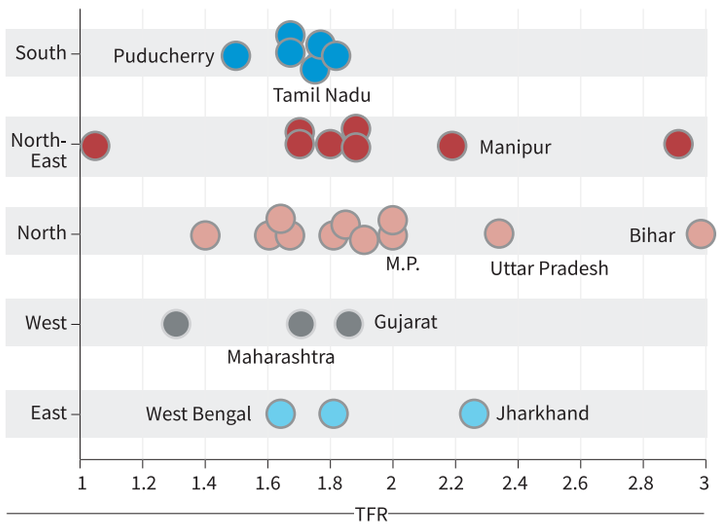
The data for the tables were sourced from Census of India, 2011; NFHS-5 (2019-21); Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026; Delimitation Bill, 2026

TABLE 2: Region-wise increase in seats, and region-wise share of seats in the current composition and as per the proposed delimitation exercise

Region	% increase in seats	As a share of 543 seats	As a share of 850 seats
East	48.7%	14.4%	13.7%
Hindi-heartland	76.8%	38.1%	43.1%
North-East	33.3%	4.4%	3.8%
North-non-Hindi	58.3%	4.4%	4.5%
South	33.3%	24.3%	20.7%
West	56.4%	14.4%	14.3%
Grand total	56.5%	100%	100%

The South's share in the post-delimitation Parliament will fall from 24.3% to 20.7%, while the Hindi heartland's share will rise from 38.1% to 43.1%

CHART 3: Total fertility rates (TFR) across various States



The data for chart-3 is based on NFHS-5 (2019-21). As shown in the chart, all five southern States have TFR between 1.5 and 1.8, below the replacement level of 2.1

Calculations by The Hindu Data Team

TABLE 1: The table shows seats gained/lost due to the proposed delimitation exercise based on Census 2011 population, when compared with that of a proportional increase in seats. In the table, red depicts States that could lose seats, blue shows those with gains

States/UTs	Change in seats
Uttar Pradesh	13
Maharashtra	3
Bihar	10
West Bengal	-2
Madhya Pradesh	5
Tamil Nadu	-11
Rajasthan	8
Karnataka	-2
Gujarat	2
Andhra Pradesh	-5
Odisha	-3
Telangana	-2
Kerala	-8
Jharkhand	1
Assam	0
Punjab	-1
Chhattisgarh	1
Haryana	2
Delhi	5
Jammu & Kashmir	3
Uttarakhand	-1
Himachal Pradesh	-1
Tripura	0
Meghalaya	-1
Manipur	-1
Nagaland	-1
Goa	-2
Arunachal Pradesh	-2
Puducherry	-1
Mizoram	-1
Chandigarh	-1
Sikkim	-1
Dadra & NH and Daman & Diu	-3
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-1
Ladakh	-1
Lakshadweep	-1

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 16, 1976

Hotel-goers complain of decline in quality

Madras, April 15: Price reduction at the cost of quality and quantity. This is the complaint against the eatables supplied in hotels after the Government passed an order fixing prices of 10 popular dishes. Comments of hotel-goers were generally caustic–no flavour in coffee; sambar and chutney bad enough before are now worse devoid of any trace of dhal or coconut; onions dominated potatoes in "masala"; dosais are thinned out; iddlis, even though flattened and stale, are still scarce.

Iddlis and dosais served throughout the day in most of the hotels now make their appearance only for certain hours in the morning and evening. Pongal and medu vadai, dishes much sought after, are not available as before. The usual alibi flaunted is "sold out." Both the twin culinary supplements–sambar and chutney–served along with iddlis and dosais are no more together. Only sambar or chutney is now served and that too only once. Extra is simply billed. Besides, chillies predominated in chutney and tamarind in sambar, many consumers said.

Bachelors and those dependent on hotels, who were quite enthusiastic about price reduction, are the most disillusioned lot now.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 16, 1926

Efficiency of British railways

Rugby, April 15.: A large party of American hotel proprietors, who are now in England on the first stage of their European tour, are finding much to say in praise of British railways. Last night they travelled 189 miles from Manchester to London in 3¼ hours. The train at times reached a speed of 83 miles per hour and 60 miles per hour was averaged throughout the journey. A few days ago their journey from Plymouth to Paddington of 227 miles in a train weighing 273 tons in 2 hours 33 minutes, although beneath the record for the line, was a surprise to them.

It is explained that the high speed of British expresses, coupled with immunity from accidents, is mainly attributable to the quality of the rolling stock and of the permanent way. The Americans appear particularly impressed by the smooth running of the British trains.

From Page One

‘States seats will rise 50% after delimitation’

Asked how this position squares with the proposed amendments to the Constitution and the provisions of the Delimitation Bill, the functionary said everything would be explained during the parliamentary debate. “There is no change in the assurance given by the government that all States will have their number of seats in the Lok Sabha increased by 50%. If Tamil Nadu has 39, it will have 58; Kerala has 20 and it will have 30,” the functionary said, asking to wait for the mechanics of it to be explained in Parliament.

The drafts of the Bills have raised concerns that the States which have stabilised their population are set to lose their relative strength when the composition of the Lok Sabha is reapportioned between States as per the latest Census figures.

Iran threatens to close Red Sea traffic

Washington has sought to turn the screws on Tehran with the blockade, with U.S. Central Command saying that American forces “have completely halted economic trade going into and out of Iran by sea”.

Speaking to the *New York Post* on Tuesday, Mr. Trump said a new round of talks with Iran could take place in Pakistan “over the next two days”, while telling Fox Business the war was “very close to being over”. On the Iranian side, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said “several messages” had been exchanged via Islamabad since the talks wrapped up on Sunday, while Tehran received a Pakistani delegation led by its Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir on Wednesday.

INDIA bloc rejects delimitation move

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge reiterates Opposition’s stance that it is not against women’s reservation, but will not allow provisions in the amendment Bill to pass; Rahul Gandhi urges all MPs from the alliance to attend the Special Session, tells Trinamool that any absence will help BJP

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with members of the INDIA bloc after a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The Opposition Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) took a unanimous decision to vote against the delimitation provisions in the Constitution (131st) Amendment Bill, 2026, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said after a meeting of the alliance on Tuesday.

He said the Opposition was not against reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies.

According to several members who attended the meeting both in person and online, the Trinamool Congress conveyed the message that not all its MPs might be able to be present in Parliament, drawing criticism.

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said their absence “will help the BJP”.

Detailing the “dangers of delimitation”, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said barring one seat in Jammu, all went to the BJP.

Assam’s recent delimitation was also cited as an example of possible gerrymandering in the garb of redrawing constituencies.

On Union Territories

CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, who joined the meeting virtually, highlighted the “alarming” rise in representation from Union Territories, from 20 to 35 members.

He said that the government could be planning to divide Bihar and West Bengal to carve out Union Territories from Muslim-majority districts.

The Trinamool Congress was represented by its deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha, Sagarika Ghose.

Objecting to Ms. Ghose’s remarks on the party’s inability to ensure 100% attendance, Mr. Gandhi said such a position was not acceptable. He urged all Opposition members to be present and to vote to defeat the Bill. “Their absence will come at a political cost, and will be seen as helping the BJP,” he said.

The DMK, represented by T.R. Baalu, said that all its MPs would attend despite the ongoing election campaign in Tamil Nadu. Parties from Kerala pointed out that they were present for the debate on the FCRA law even amid the Assembly election in the State.

Ms. Ghose, sources said, argued that the Trinamool Congress alone is facing a head-on battle with the BJP, unlike the DMK or the situation in Kerala.

At this point, sources said, Mr. Gandhi urged former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who had joined via video call, to speak to West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee on the issue. Hours after the meeting ended, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha leader Derek O’Brien wrote on X, “We are doing all that it takes to defeat the stunt being presented as a Bill in the Lok Sabha.”

The extended Budget Session in Parliament, reconvening on Wednesday, will deliberate on a legislative package comprising the Constitution (131st) Amendment Bill, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026.

The government has said these are aimed at expediting the implementation of 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.

“All of us are in favour of the women’s reservation Bill, but have concerns about the way it is being brought. It is politically motivated. Just to gag and suppress Opposition parties, the government is doing this,” Mr. Kharge told reporters, reiterating the Opposition’s position that reservation should be implemented within the existing strength of 543 Lok Sabha seats for the 2029 Lok Sabha election.

“They (the BJP-led government) are playing tricks with delimitation,” he said.

Delimitation move will affect Punjab, says Akali Dal

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday opposed the proposed move on delimitation.

The exercise is “brazenly discriminatory against Punjab”, he said.

Mr. Badal said, “Punjab is predominantly a minority-character state. We will be the biggest victim of this population-based delimitation. Compared with a nominal increase in seats for Punjab, Haryana will witness a nearly 100% increase [in constituencies] and get double the number of seats in the Lok Sabha. Where does that leave us? We are already a victim of systematic discrimination and injustice.”

BJP trying to ‘gerrymander’ all Lok Sabha constituencies in ‘anti-national’ act: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Narendra Modi government of engaging in an “anti-national act” in its bid to use the 2011 Census data to operationalise the women’s reservation law and carry out the delimitation exercise.

In a video statement, Mr. Gandhi argued that the move would deny Other Backward Classes (OBC) their rightful share of seats under the women’s quota, since the 2011 Census data did not have caste enumeration, unlike the 2026 Census.

In a separate X message, Mr. Gandhi said the BJP was trying to “gerrymander” all Lok Sabha constituencies to its advantage for the 2029 election. “Having captured the Election Commission, PM Modi is confident that he can capture the Delimitation Commission too. The Congress will not allow this to happen,” he said.

“They are doing a dishonest thing. Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] doesn’t want women’s reservation done on the basis of caste census, new census, or the OBC census. He wants the 2011 Census in which the Backward Classes do not figure. He wants to take away your share,” Mr. Gandhi said.

“They don’t want you to get reservation on the basis of your actual strength. This isn’t just against the Backward Classes but an anti-national activity,” he added.

Rahul Gandhi

The Congress leader said that the enhanced Lok Sabha numbers and the allocation of seats after delimitation would adversely affect small States, southern States and northeastern States.

He said if the government was sincere about implementing women’s reservation, they should do it within the existing framework.

The Opposition leader alleged that the women’s reservation amendments were not just an attempt to push through delimitation but also a diversionary tactic because of the Epstein Files, referring to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. “Modi *ji*, I know that you want to send the message that you are pro-women. But you are scared of Epstein Files,” Mr. Gandhi alleged.

The Congress sharpened its attack against the government over its delimitation proposal on Wednesday, with the party’s communications chief Jairam Ramesh accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of engaging in “deliberate deceit” on the issue.

In a post on X, Mr. Ramesh said the Bills circulated by the government ahead of the special sitting of Parliament contradicted the “so-called assurances” given earlier by the Prime Minister on delimitation and a uniform proportionate increase in the strength of all States in the Lok Sabha. “The Prime Minister is a so-called leader whose only distinguishing feature is his unmatched ability to be a misleader,” Mr. Ramesh said, alleging that the proposed exercise would reduce the relative strength of southern States as well as smaller States in the northwest and the east in the Lok Sabha.

The Congress also accused the government of trying to sidestep the demand for a caste census. Party leaders claimed that delaying or avoiding such an exercise would prevent the availability of updated caste data.

Hoist black flags to protest delimitation move, says Stalin

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

M.K. Stalin

Describing the proposed Constitution amendment on delimitation as a “conspiracy” and a “black law”, DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday called upon the people of the State to hoist black flags in every home and in public places on Thursday.

“We will hoist black flags in our homes to express our protest and opposition to the amendment to be introduced in Parliament – a black law. Hoist black flags against the BJP, which is leading India into a dark period,” said Mr. Stalin, who convened an urgent meeting of party MPs and district secretaries.

In a video message, he said the BJP had consistently proved his point that the Tamil Nadu Assembly election on April 23 was a fight between Tamil Nadu and Delhi.

“It has understood the true meaning of our statement. It does not want Tamil Nadu to prosper, nor does it want the representatives of Tamil Nadu to be heard in Parliament. It is introducing an amendment to give shape to this conspiracy. How can we accept a conspiracy as law?” he asked.

“Hoist black flags against this black law in every home and public place. Let me warn you again: delimitation cannot be based solely on population. This black law must not be enacted. It is the single demand of eight crore Tamils. Let us transcend political barriers and raise our voice for the rights of the State. Tamil Nadu will fight and win. Let us win unitedly,” he said.

Mr. Stalin accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of reducing the southern States and their people to the status of secondary citizens.

“The time has come for us to tell the BJP in Delhi who the Tamil people are. The time has come to show opposition from every family to the BJP, which seeks to strangulate the voice of Tamil Nadu,” he said.

He wondered whether this was a punishment for controlling population growth. “Will you snatch away our political rights even though we stand for the welfare and unity of the nation? Nothing could be more cruel than this,” he said.

The Chief Minister alleged that after claiming that the number of seats in the southern States would increase, the BJP government was planning to substantially raise the number of seats in the northern States, where it enjoys greater support.

“By this measure, it would make representation from the southern States less significant. We consider this a grave injustice,” he said.

Mr. Stalin said the BJP government, “which does not listen to good advice from anyone, is not listening to us either”.

Disparity in numbers

“They are bringing in an amendment to suppress the voice of Tamil Nadu in Parliament. It will create a disparity in the number of MPs representing the northern and southern States,” he added.

In the name of delimitation, the BJP government is overstepping its limits and betraying the interests of the southern States.

“Tamil Nadu will not remain idle if more political power is heaped on the northern States while the powers of the southern States are reduced. I have said that every family will take to the streets and protest,” Mr. Stalin said.

Samrat Choudhary sworn in as Bihar’s first BJP CM

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

The newly elected leader of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Samrat Choudhary, was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Bihar on Wednesday, marking the end of Nitish Kumar’s record tenure in the post.

Two senior leaders from the JD(U), Bijendra Prasad Yadav and Vijay Kumar Choudhary, took oath as Ministers. Both have been designated as Deputy CMs in the new BJP-led NDA government in the State.

Before being sworn in, Mr. Samrat Choudhary visited a famous Hanuman temple in the State capital, Patna, to offer prayers and seek blessings.

Senior BJP leaders, including party chief Nitin Nabin, Union Minister J.P. Nadda, and national general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santosh, along with Mr. Kumar, were present.

After taking oath, Mr. Samrat Choudhary went to the party headquarters to meet party workers and leaders. “With the blessings of Nitish Kumar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I will take forward the work of development and growth in the State,” he told presspersons.

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary with former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in Patna on Wednesday. ANI

Administrative issues

In his first meeting as Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Choudhary directed State officials to implement a policy of “zero tolerance” against corruption with absolute firmness.

He also told officials to ensure that the general public received proper facilities and that their issues are resolved promptly at the block, circle, and police station levels. He asserted that corruption would not be tolerated at any cost, from the highest levels of administration to the grassroots.

“Whenever an issue concerning the public arises within any department, ensure that immediate action is taken to address it. There should be no bureaucratic complexities regarding the resolution of land-related disputes; instead, streamline procedures to ensure their speedy disposal,” Mr. Choudhary said.

‘50% increase in seats is an illusion, a plan to mask fall’

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Veteran Congress leader and former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Wednesday alleged that the proposed increase in Lok Sabha seats, followed by delimitation would reduce the proportional representation of southern States and weaken their voice in Parliament.

Addressing presspersons in Coimbatore, he said the plan to increase the total number of seats by 50% before carrying out delimitation was “an illusion” that would mask an actual decline in representation for States such as Tamil Nadu.

He said a direct delimitation exercise would have reduced Tamil Nadu’s seats from 39 to 32, which would have been evident to the public.

However, under the proposed method, he said, Tamil Nadu’s seats would first appear to rise to 58 before falling to 46 after delimitation.

P. Chidambaram

“People are expected to see only the increase from 39 to 46, but not the underlying reduction in proportional share,” he said, adding that voters in southern States would understand the implications.

He contrasted this with northern States, stating that Uttar Pradesh’s current 80 seats could increase to around 140 after the same process, widening the gap between States. “The disparity will grow from 80 versus 39 to about 140 versus 46,” he said.

Mr. Chidambaram said the combined share of the five southern States – Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana – in the Lok Sabha would decline from 24.3% to 20.7%. “The voice of the southern States, which is already not adequately heard, will be further suppressed,” he said.

Urgency questioned

Mr. Chidambaram also raised concerns over the timing of the upcoming parliamentary session scheduled for April 16 to 18. He said Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had questioned the urgency in convening the session when the next general election is due in 2029.

Alleging a planned move, he said the timing coincided with peak election campaigning, making it difficult for MPs from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal to attend.

He claimed this was intended to limit opposition to certain amendments.

Despite this, he expressed confidence that MPs from the DMK-Congress alliance would attend the session.

ASSEMBLY POLLS

'People denied benefits due to Mamata govt.'

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday alleged that several welfare schemes introduced by the Narendra Modi government have not reached the people of West Bengal due to Mamata Banerjee's reluctance to allow their implementation in the State. She said people in the State are being deprived of schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, PM Kisan and Awaas Yojana. "West Bengal has been destroyed by the party," she said.

"Your money was ready in Delhi, but the Trinamool government has not allowed that to be spent here," she claimed. "The poor people of the State are not getting the benefits of free ration given by the Centre under the PDS scheme, but the State's Minister is eating away with the funds meant for it," she said. PTI

Nirmala Sitharaman

Suvendu alleges 'Arabic culture' push in Bengal

Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the Trinamool Congress government, accusing it of imposing "Arabic culture" on West Bengal while asserting his party's commitment to protect the State as a "homeland for Bengali Hindus."

Speaking at the launch of the 'Matri Shakti Bharosa Card' on Bengali New Year, he alleged that the current dispensation is systematically undermining the State's Sanatan heritage.

"We are witnessing an attempt to impose Urdu language and a culture that keeps women veiled," he said.

He described the party's 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) as a document of "trust" aimed at restoring the "lost glory" of West Bengal as the country's cultural capital. PTI

National Democratic Alliance is winning for sure, DMK is losing for sure and we have to vote for a better Tamil Nadu, *viksit* Tamil Nadu

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

Smriti promises monthly aid for Bengal women

Senior BJP leader Smriti Irani launched the 'Matri Shakti Bharosa Card', promising ₹3,000 monthly aid for women in West Bengal if the BJP comes to power, while attacking the Trinamool Congress government over corruption, financial mismanagement, and women's safety concerns. PTI

Central Ministers are bringing in money. The Finance Minister is distributing cards. The EC should take strong action

MAMATA BANERJEE
West Bengal Chief Minister

Home Minister Amit Shah during a public meeting ahead of the Bengal Assembly polls in Manikchak. PTI

Shah says BJP will prioritise solving Gurkha issues in Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday that once the BJP comes to power in West Bengal, it will resolve the issues of Gurkhas living in Darjeeling as a priority within the framework of the Constitution.

Mr. Shah also promised to withdraw all cases registered against community leaders and workers for violent agitations in the past.

"Once we form the government in Bengal, our priority would be to resolve the Gurkha issue as quickly as possible within the constitutional framework. We will withdraw all pending police cases against Gurkha leaders and workers after we come to power in the State, and members of the community will get justice," he said.

The Home Minister was unable to reach the upper reaches of Lebong in the Darjeeling hills due to unfavourable weather conditions, and addressed the gathering through a recorded video message. Mr. Shah expressed regret that he could not attend the meeting but promised that he will attend a scheduled public meeting at Sukna in Kurseong on April 21.

Political solution

The demand for a permanent political solution to the Gurkha issue, which essentially means that the administrative control of the Darjeeling hills should wrest with the Gurkha people, has dominated the politics of the Darjeeling hills for several decades since the 1980s. The demand for a separate State of Gorkhaland to be carved out territories of the Darjeeling hills and the foothills has not found support from any mainstream political parties in the State, but the BJP has promised a permanent political solution for the people in the Darjeeling hills within the framework of the Constitution.

Mr. Shah also referred to the non-participation of the West Bengal government in the tripartite talks held by the interlocutor appointed by the Government of India. The Centre had in October 2025 appointed Pankaj Kumar Singh, former Deputy National Security Adviser, as "interlocutor and government representative" on the issue of "Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai".

Mr. Shah said that despite multiple attempts in the past year and a half to resolve the Gurkha issue, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her representatives skipped all three meetings held in Delhi to address the problem. "I chose to reach out to Bengal and appointed an interlocutor to mediate with all stakeholders concerned. But even there, Mamata Banerjee gave no time to the mediator. That's because she doesn't want justice for Gurkhas who are true patriots living in the Darjeeling hills," Mr. Shah said.

Ms. Banerjee had opposed the appointment of the interlocutor and written to the Prime Minister to reconsider the move. She had said the State government was of the view that any initiative concerning the Gurkha community or the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration region must be undertaken in full consultation with the State government to preserve the "hard-earned peace and tranquillity in the region".

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) president Bimal Gurung, who is an ally of the BJP, welcomed the remarks made by the Home Minister and expressed hope that the BJP would deliver on the promise of permanent political solution.

A plate of fish, a dash of pride: polls, Poila Boishakh prove to be heady mix

Election serves up a delectable fare during Bengali New Year celebrations as parties and candidates make use of the opportunity to prove their affinity to the culture and tradition of the land; candidates across political parties campaigned with fish to signal their connect to the ground

IN FOCUS

Shrabana Chatterjee
Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Fish on the menu: Trinamool Congress candidate Aroop Biswas leads a New Year procession in Garia on Wednesday. ANI

Bengali identity was on full display in poll-bound West Bengal on Poila Boishakh, the Bengali New Year, on Wednesday, as candidates across political parties campaigned with fish to signal cultural affiliation ahead of the Assembly election.

In Kolkata, senior Trinamool Congress leader and Tollygunge candidate Aroop Biswas participated in a campaign carrying a fish in his hands. A similar campaign was launched by Kaustav Bagchi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Barrackpore, who went door to door greeting residents with a fish dangling from his hand.

Mr. Biswas's campaign banner read "*Maache-Bhaate Bangali* (Fish- and rice-eating Bengalis)". "We cannot function without fish. But they are trying to stop that fish itself. In the BJP-ruled States, people selling fish are getting beaten up. This is our way of protest," Mr. Biswas said.

The prominent Minister in Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Cabinet was seen carrying a large fish decorated with ornaments as he walked with party workers.

Mr. Bagchi sought to counter the perception of the BJP as being opposed to non-vegetarian food habits."*Kheye maach raat din, BJP ke vote din* (Eat fish day and night and vote for the BJP)," Mr. Bagchi told people in his constituency.

He added that BJP workers across the State would celebrate Poila Boishakh by eating fish across party offices.

This is not the first time that fish and fish-eating habits have taken centre stage in the election campaign. On March 22, the BJP candidate from Bidhannagar, Sharadwat Mukherjee, canvassed with a fish to convey that the saffron party would not impose any restrictions on non-vegetarian food if voted to power in West Bengal.

The narrative around vegetarian and non-vegetarian dietary preferences has dominated the election campaign, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee trading barbs over the issue.

Taking centre stage

Across the State, leaders and candidates from political parties dressed in traditional attire offered prayers at temples to mark the Bengali New Year. Ms. Banerjee was seen offering prayers at the Kalighat temple near her residence on the eve of Poila Boishakh. In a video message, she emphasised that Bengal is the seat of culture and tradition.

The Leader of the Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, along with four other BJP candidates, participated in a roadshow after offering prayers at a Kali temple in north Kolkata.

Swapna Barman, an athlete and Trinamool candidate from Rajganj, was seen dancing with supporters during her campaign trail. BJP leader Dilip Ghosh, contesting from Kharagpur Sadar, joined supporters during a *kirtan* recital.

Bengali culture and identity have remained central to the campaign of the Trinamool, with the ruling party often dubbing the BJP as a party of "outsiders" that is unfamiliar with the culture and traditions of West Bengal. The BJP has been desperately trying to counter this image.

The Poila Boishakh celebrations offered an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their affinity with Bengali culture.

'Uniform Civil Code will erase tribal identity; won't accept it'

West Bengal Forests Minister, who is contesting from Binpur, says 'tribals have our own systems, traditions, and cultures'; says development of small-scale industries could be helpful in State

INTERVIEW

Birbaha Hansda

Shrabana Chatterjee

X@BIRBAHA_HANSDA

West Bengal Minister for Forests, Self Help Groups and Self Employment Birbaha Hansda, who is contesting the Assembly polls from Binpur, says the proposed Uniform Civil Code threatens tribal traditions and autonomy. She speaks about representation, job scarcity, forest-based livelihoods, and why she believes small-scale industries and local knowledge must drive employment. Edited excerpts:

The BJP has said it will implement the UCC within six months if voted to power. As a tribal leader, how do you view this?

We the tribals have our own systems, traditions, and cultures. Our practices are the gift of our forefathers, and it is our way of keeping our history alive through our everyday lives. But the BJP is trying to force us into giving up our traditions with the UCC implementation. We will not accept this.

Much of our worship and everyday life is rooted in nature, because that is part of our identity. They want to snatch away our individuality. We are strongly opposing this forced imposition.

Has your presence improved the representation of the marginalised, or is it tokenism?

There has definitely been some improvement. Whenever I speak with the Chief Minister, I raise demands of tribals, such as recognition of our religious code. She tries to understand these issues with me for better policy decisions. When I spoke about the issue of fake Scheduled Tribe certificates, I mentioned the gaps in the information reaching her. After that, she instructed officials to look into it carefully.

Since you are contesting from Binpur, what promises do you have for your voters?

I don't go around saying "I will do this" or "I will do that." My work depends on the needs of the people. I can never, on my own, promise that I will do something specific. Because I have to engage with the people of that area, understand their priorities, and act accordingly.

How do you respond to concerns over job scarcity in West Bengal, with the Opposition promising more jobs and industrial growth?

Job scarcity exists at both the State and the Central levels. In West Bengal, the development of small-scale industries could be helpful because larger industries do not always employ local people, as they often bring workers from outside. Therefore, instead of only focusing on big industries, it is better that we also think about smaller, local-level employment opportunities for widespread employment.

The BJP has also fielded SC/ST candidates. How do you differentiate yourself?

People in the villages here still see me as a neighbourhood woman. I have not changed my humble lifestyle just because I am a Minister.

What is your view on the human-elephant crisis in Jhargram?

With plantations and constructions coming up in the forest, the natural habitat gets disturbed, and it scares elephants. So, if people in these areas become a little more aware, the situation can improve.

What are the key demands you are hearing from people?

The biggest demand is housing. Currently, the Union government has stopped the housing scheme, and for poor people, having a roof over their heads is their primary need; they do not ask for much beyond that.

We are reassuring people that even though the Centre has stopped funding, the State government will provide money for housing.

'DMK-Congress set to secure a two-thirds majority in T.N. poll'

The Hindu Bureau
ERODE

D. K. Shivakumar

Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka and Congress leader D.K. Shivakumar, on Wednesday, stressed the need for unity, stating that the DMK, Congress, and INDIA bloc must remain united to ensure good governance and peace in the country. He alleged that the BJP was attempting to create divisions in South India, particularly on linguistic and religious lines, and called upon voters to reject such efforts.

Seeking votes for Congress candidate Gopinath Palaniyappan in the Erode (East) Assembly constituency, Mr. Shivakumar referred to the role of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge in building the alliance, and said the coalition represented a strong platform for inclusive governance.

Highlighting the contribution of southern States, he said Tamil Nadu and Karnataka played a significant role in India's development and cautioned against the Centre's "neglect".

Projecting the alliance as industry-friendly, Mr. Shivakumar said it would ensure a conducive environment for all sectors while prioritising the welfare of the common people.

He also urged voters to be cautious about newly formed political parties, questioning their policies and track record.

Invoking the legacy of former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, he said the "Dravidian model" had laid a strong foundation for development.

Addressing pressperson after his campaign, Mr. Shivakumar said he had travelled across several constituencies in Tamil Nadu, and reiterated that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led alliance, along with the INDIA bloc, remained robust. He said the people of Tamil Nadu had already made up their mind to vote for the DMK government. The alliance would secure a two-thirds majority, he stated.

Mr. Shivakumar said the DMK government had performed exceedingly well over the past five years and had implemented several welfare schemes for the people.

INBRIEF

SC stays HC order protecting Pawan Khera from arrest

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed an order of the Telangana High Court granting interim protection from arrest to Congress leader and spokesperson Pawan Khera in connection with an FIR filed by Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, wife of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, over his allegations made a press conference on April 4 that she held multiple passports. A Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and A.S. Chandurkar said it was "surprised" by the High Court's April 10 order granting Mr. Khera one-week interim relief, and issued notice to him on a petition filed by the Assam Police challenging the grant of such protection.

HC permits IVF procedure for soldier in vegetative state

The Delhi High Court has permitted the continuation of IVF (in vitro fertilisation) procedure for an Indian Army soldier, who is in a persistent vegetative state with no scope of neurological recovery in the near future. In the order passed on April 13, 2026, the court said the soldier's earlier consent, which was given when he started the IVF procedure, was sufficient even now, and the wife's consent would be treated as valid on his behalf for the purposes of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act. The wife of the soldier had approached the court seeking directions for extraction of her husband's genetic material for IVF.

Unemployment rate shows a slight increase in March

The unemployment rate (UR) for persons aged 15 and above stood at 5.1% in March, up by 0.2 percentile points from February, largely due to urban joblessness, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey prepared by the National Statistics Office on Wednesday. The report said UR in rural areas was 4.3%, while in urban areas it was 6.8%. Among women aged 15 and above, the UR was 4.1% in rural areas and 9% in urban areas. The female Labour Force Participation Rate declined to 34.4% in March from 35.3% in February. The Worker Population Ratio for persons aged 15 and above was 52.6% in March.

Justice Shekhar Yadav retires amid pending impeachment

The Allahabad High Court judge Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav retired on Wednesday, amid a pending motion seeking his removal in Parliament, in relation to a controversial speech made in 2024. With his retirement, all pending motions against him will be nullified as such motions are only applicable in the case of sitting judges. Addressing an event organised by the legal cell of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on December 8, 2024, Justice Yadav made several veiled attacks against the Muslim community while speaking about a Uniform Civil Code. He was accused of engaging in "hate speech" and "incitement to communal disharmony" in violation of the Constitution.

Bageshwar Dham gets govt. nod to receive foreign funds

Dhirendra Krishna Shastri, leader of the religious body, advocates establishment of a 'Hindu Rashtra'; FCRA registration mandatory for NGOs or associations to receive foreign donations

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has granted registration under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) to Baba Bageshwar Dham, a religious body led by Dhirendra Krishna Shastri, a Madhya Pradesh-based godman who seeks to establish 'Hindu Rashtra'.

Mr. Shastri, 29, is often courted by politicians and is known for his provocative statements on religious matters. His website has a separate section to collect donations from within India.

Despite repeated attempts, the religious body could not be reached for comments.

Bageshwar Dham Sarkar Acharya Dhirendra Krishna Shastri at a religious event at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata. ANI

Six of 38 NGOs given FCRA registration till Wednesday are in the 'Religious (Hindu)' category

Mandatory registration

Registration under the FCRA is mandatory if a non-government organisation (NGO) or an association wants to receive foreign donations.

NGOs can receive foreign contributions for social, educational, religious, economic, and cultural programmes and can be registered for at least one or multiple categories.

The Shri Bageshwar Jan Seva Samiti Gadha at Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh has been registered under the 'Religious (Hindu)' programme, other than cultural, economic, educational and social categories.

Till April 15, 38 NGOs have been granted FCRA registration, out of which six have stated 'Religious (Hindu)' as one of the programmes for which foreign funds are required. Other than Bageshwar Dham, those registered under the category are Ramakrisha Missions at Bolpur in West Bengal and Purnea in Bihar, Divya Jyoti Jagriti Sansthan in Delhi, The Institution at Dharmasthala in Karnataka, and Radha Soami Satsang at Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

Five-year validity

A FCRA registration is valid for five years, after which the NGO has to apply for a renewal. Since 2015, the FCRA registrations of more than 18,000 NGOs have been cancelled. As on April 15, there are 14,538 FCRA-registered NGOs active in the country.

During the Budget session of Parliament, which concluded on April 2, the Union government proposed to introduce the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 to amend the 2010 Act. However, following an uproar by Opposition parties, its discussion and passage were deferred.

The Chief Ministers of poll-bound Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and Christian groups opposed the Bill as it empowers the Ministry to take over the property and assets of an NGO if its FCRA registration is cancelled or suspended.

Door-to-door visits for Census start in 8 States, U.T.s today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

From Thursday, enumerators will begin door-to-door visit in eight States and Union Territories seeking response to a set of 33 questions for the first phase of Population Census, 2027 – the House Listing and Housing Operations (HLO).

The field operations will begin in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Odisha, and Sikkim, along with the New Delhi Municipal Corporation area and Delhi Cantonment Board in the National Capital Territory, following the conclusion of the 15-day self-enumeration period, a statement by the Union Home Ministry said.

The exercise will be carried out over a 30-day period till May 15.

The self-enumeration facility, introduced this time, saw the participation of nearly 12 lakh households through the official portal (se.census.gov.in).

The facility was made available prior to the field enumeration period to enable residents to submit their details online, the Ministry said.

"Residents who have completed self-enumeration are requested to keep their generated self-enumeration ID (SE ID) ready and share the same with the enumerator during the field visit to complete the HLO process," it added.

During the HLO phase, enumerators will collect information relating to housing conditions, household details, amenities available and assets possessed by the households.

Next phase

In the next phase, the self-enumeration facility will start in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh on Thursday, and will be available till April 30. The house-to-house houselisting in these States/Union Territories will be conducted from May 1 to 30. In Bihar, the 15-day self-enumeration period will commence on April 17 and continue till May 1, followed by field operations from May 2 to 31.

CBSE 10th: girls outshine boys; Thiruvananthapuram, Vijayawada are top regions

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Continuing a long-standing trend, girls outperformed boys in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class 10 examination results declared on Wednesday. The pass percentage for girls stood at 94.99% – 1.3 percentage points higher than the 92.69% recorded by boys.

South India continued to dominate the regional rankings, with Thiruvananthapuram and Vijayawada regions sharing the top spot with a 99.79% pass rate, followed closely by Chennai (99.58%) and Bengaluru (98.91%). Delhi West and Delhi East followed close behind, with 97.45% and 97.33%, respectively.

The overall pass percentage for 2026 stood at 93.7%, reflecting a marginal improvement over last year's 93.66%. Of the 24,71,777 students who appeared for the exam, 23,16,008 were declared to have passed.

Students cheer after the release of CBSE Class 10th results in Prayagraj on Wednesday. PTI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan stated on X, "Those who have succeeded deserve commendation for their hard work, discipline and perseverance in reaching this milestone. At the same time, it is important to recognise that a single examination does not define one's potential."

According to official data released by the CBSE, 55,368 students scored above 95% and 2,21,574 above 90%.

This year's announcement is particularly significant as it marks the roll-out of the new two-exam system.

To facilitate the early release of results – nearly a month ahead of the earlier mid-May schedule – the CBSE said it deployed seven lakh evaluators, 46,000 head examiners, and 2,08,991 invigilators for evaluation of approximately 1.6 crore answer books.

Second exam

For students placed in the "compartment" category (approximately 1.47 lakh candidates) or those looking to improve their scores, the second Board exam is scheduled to begin in mid-May.

Students should notify their interest between April 16 and 20.

Career conversations to enable students make better choices

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

SRM Institute of Science and Technology and *The Hindu* will organise 'The Future Career Conversations' series to help students and professionals explore emerging career pathways. The series is designed for undergraduate aspirants, postgraduate students, and working professionals who are looking to upgrade their skills.

The third online session in the series, titled 'Future of Multidisciplinary Learning', will be held on April 18 at 11.30 a.m. and will explore how the convergence of humanities and sciences is shaping the future of education and careers. The discussion will highlight how learners can leverage this approach to remain relevant.The panel will feature A. Vinay Kumar, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Science & Humanities, Management), SRMIST; A. Duraisamy, Dean, Faculty of Science and Humanities, SRMIST; Poorna Pushkala Ayyappan, Technical Professional Advisor - Technology, KBR India; and Viswanath B. Kasi, Mentor, Investor & Advisor - Global Commodity Trading and Advisory Panel member for ITT. The session will be moderated by journalist Soma Basu. To register please visit https://newsth.live/THSRMME or scan the QR code.

The session, 'Future of multidisciplinary learning', will be held from 11.30 a.m. on Saturday

Toll in power plant blast in Chhattisgarh climbs to 20

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

The death toll in Tuesday's boiler tube explosion at a power plant in Sakti district in Chhattisgarh climbed to 20 on Wednesday, while 16 remain hospitalised, a senior police officer said.

Till late Tuesday evening, 14 workers were reported dead. The deceased included six workers from West Bengal and five from Chhattisgarh.

The Opposition Congress, meanwhile, demanded registration of a first information report. The party also demanded higher compensation for the deceased and the injured.

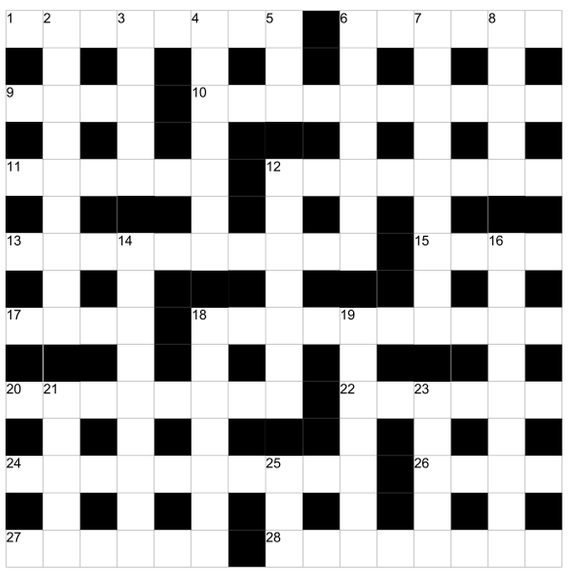
In a related development, Vedanta Power, which owns the plant, announced ₹35 lakh in compensation for the families of each deceased worker. The company will also provide ₹15 lakh to each injured person.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD + 14769

(set by Gussalufz)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1. Development environment that boss nearly destroyed to grasp a bit of programming (4,4)
6. Surprise for woman expecting escort? (6)
9. Setter going for a social media interaction with Victoria, perhaps (4)
10. Some elaborate trap to teach obscure grammatical term? (10)
11. Oh, let's go back for a campus gathering (6)
12. Gang, in memoir, was regularly retreating for sport (8)
13. Writer got sharply panned (10)
15. Cocaine, son, right away! (4)
17. Collect fingerprint pattern after returning (4)
18. Old bird circling cloud or a kind of delivery service? (4-2-4)
20. Set out quinoa around five following chef's first dish (3,2,3)
22. "Outcome of naughty pout?" "Keeping quiet" (6)
24. Made dry Indian crispy chicken starters, gobbled up with daughter (10)
26. Welcome husband's distress (4)
27. Disentangle gunk and snot after blowing noses (6)
28. Spooner's young boy, batter with poor judgement (3,5)

Down

2. Quite a fort! Wonderfully hosts a small party (3,3,3)
3. Fold coat, bottom to middle (5)
4. Essentially, can't I logically use this operation to convert, say, 1 to 10? (7)
5. How to prune butts, becoming attractive (3)
6. Unoriginal southern liberal (7)
7. Made improvements in newspaper column about model I.I.M.s, with editing (9)
8. Scoffed at faceless men on ecstasy (5)
12. Squabble over private resort area (3,4)
14. All muddled, old language includes old pronunciation of R as L (9)
16. One studying mountains is ordinary for university doctor (9)
18. Voted crankily to accommodate company housing for pigeons (7)
19. Lacking advanced auxiliary supports, ramshackle hut collapsed noisily (7)
21. Main article chases CEO's replacement (5)
23. Uh, sound missing in a chainsaw's clattering? (5)
25. Save up for boat (3)

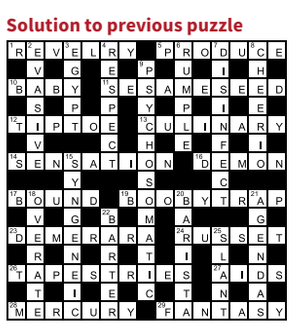
SUDOKU

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

No.SS6852 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Decoding the Ramayana

The question arises: why did Lord Narayana chose to incarnate as Rama along with His brothers rather than appearing alone? Sri Desika Srinivasa Tathacharya Swami, while explaining the subtle meanings embedded in the Ramayana, revealed that each brother had a distinct divine purpose. Rama incarnated to demonstrate unwavering adherence to His father's word; Lakshmana to exemplify how a devotee should worship and serve the Lord; Bharata to highlight the supreme importance of reverence towards the Acharya (through the worship of the divine sandals which symbolise Acharyas) and Shatrughna to illustrate the ideal of serving the Lord's devotees.

When Rama sought to cross the ocean, He performed *saranagati* (surrender) to Samudra Raja and lay on a bed of grass for three days, humbly pleading for a way. Yet, Samudra Raja did not respond immediately. The deeper reason, as explained by our Acharyas, lies in the true nature of surrender. A person who performs genuine surrender must possess two essential qualities: the realisation that "I have nothing" (*akinchanyam*) and "I have no other refuge or means" (*ananyagatitvam*). However, Rama is the Supreme Being, the very source of all strength and power. Therefore, Samudra Raja did not initially accept this.

Sita, through her conduct in the Ramayana, demonstrated how a truly surrendered soul should remain steadfast, thinking of God alone at all times, with unwavering faith, patience, and complete dependence on the Lord. Hanuman is portrayed as the Acharya, serving as the guiding force who facilitates and exemplifies the doctrine of *saranagati* (surrender), leading the soul towards the Lord.

INBRIEF

Amazon signs $11.57 bn deal for satellite firm Globalstar

Amazon.com said on Tuesday it would acquire Globalstar in an $11.57 billion deal, bolstering its fledgling satellite business as it tries to catch up with Elon Musk's Starlink. Tech companies are pouring in billions of dollars to capture the lucrative market for satellite-based connectivity, but it will be a tall order to match Starlink's 10,000-unit-strong network. Through the deal, Amazon adds Globalstar's two dozen satellites to its existing network of more than 200. Amazon has been working to ramp up its network by deploying about 3,200 satellites in Earth's low orbit by 2029, with roughly half required to be in place by a July regulatory deadline. It is also preparing to roll out its satellite internet services later this year. Globalstar's satellite network is designed for reliable, low-data connections directly to mobile devices, or Direct-to-Device (D2D). REUTERS

WPI inflation rises to 38-month high of 3.88%

Wholesale price inflation rose sharply to an over 3-year high of 3.88% in March, driven by a sharp spike in rates of fuel, power and manufactured items amid the West Asia crisis. Government data on Wednesday showed Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rose for the fifth straight month in March as core inflation accelerated, amid softening of primary food items. As higher energy prices eventually generalise to other commodity prices, we expect WPI inflation to rise further in the coming months. The high WPI inflation in March reflects elevated global commodity prices and the impact of the energy price shock since the beginning of the West Asia conflict. WPI inflation was 2.13% in February, and 2.25% in March last year. Inflation in the fuel and power basket spiked to 1.05% in March, from a deflation of 3.78% in February. REUTERS

Illegalities alleged in Sir Dorabji Tata Trust

Appointments made in violation of Maharashtra Public Trust Act, alleges Mehli Mistry, seeks appointment of administrator; contests his non-renewal as Tata Trusts Trustee, argues it violates resolution for mutual perpetual reappointments among trustees of SDTT and Sir Ratan Tata Trust

Raghuvir Srinivasan
CHENNAI

Mehli Mistry, who stepped down from the Tata Trusts as a Trustee in November last year after being denied reappointment, has alleged grave illegalities in the administration of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) and prayed for the appointment of an Administrator to run the trust.

In a filing before the Charity Commissioner, Mumbai, seen by *businessline*, Mr. Mistry questioned the legality of the Board of Trustees arguing that appointments in the recent past were made in violation of Section 30A of the Maharashtra Public Trust Act 1950. The Board of Trustees now comprises of Noel Tata (Chairman), Venu Srinivasan (Vice Chairman), Vijay Singh, Darius Khambata, Bhaskar Bhat and Neville Tata. The last two were appointed in place of Mehli Mistry and Pramit Jhaveri, who stepped down in February.

Trust deficit: Alleging that the governance of the trusts has been seriously compromised, Mr. Mistry named two trustees. FILE PHOTO

Interestingly, Mr. Mistry has declared that he has "no desire" to rejoin the Trust board but that it should be run by "able, honest Trustees or an Administrator". Earlier this month, Mr. Mistry had filed an objection with the Charity Commissioner against the presence of Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh as trustees on the Bai Hirabai Jamsetji Tata Navsari Charitable Institution on grounds of their not being Parsis and residents of Mumbai, as required by the trust deed.

Objecting to the Change Report filed by SDTT after his exit and the entry of new trustees, Mr. Mistry has contested his non-renewal as a trustee, arguing that it violates a 2024 resolution for mutual perpetual reappointments among trustess of SDTT and the other major trust, Sir Ratan Tata Trust.

Mr. Mistry has contended that the board that voted him out was illegal as the appointment to perpetuity of Noel Tata and Venu Srinivasan on the board was in violation of Section 30A of Maharashtra Public Trusts Act. The said section was introduced into the Act by the Maharashtra government on September 1, 2025 and it placed statutory restrictions and prescribed governance norms relating to the manner of reappointment of trustee, limits on tenure and limitations on appointment of perpetual trustees.

An email sent to Tata Trusts CEO Siddharth Sharma for his reaction remained unanswered until the time of going to press.

Alleging that the governance of the trusts has been seriously compromised, Mr. Mistry has named two trustees in his filing for what he calls "illegal acts". The first pertains to Vijay Singh, who is alleged to have pocketed commissions and sitting fees from Tata Sons and other Tata group companies totally ₹20.13 crore.

"A trustee is bound by strict fiduciary duties to act solely in the best interests of the Trust and to avoid any conflict of interest. The receipt of substantial financial benefits by a Trustee from entities connected with the Trusts is prima facie inconsistent with such obligations," Mr. Mistry's filing says.

Mr. Mistry also alleged that there are other trustees who are receiving monetary or other personal benefits from their positions. Asked for his reaction Vijay Singh told *businessline*: "I will not respond. The Tata Trusts will respond with facts to any queries from the Charity Commissioner."

In a more serious conflict of interest allegation aimed at Venu Srinivasan, Mr. Mistry alleges in the objection filing that Mr. Srinivasan and his son engaged Gerry McGovern, the COO of Jaguar Land Rover Brand & Luxury, as a consultant for Norton Motorcycles, a subsidiary of TVS Holdings.

He alleges that this is a breach of fiduciary duties as a Trustee and nominated director on the Tata Sons board and has pleaded for the Charity Commissioner to direct disclosure by Mr. Srinivasan if any payment was made to Jaguar Land Rover for utilising the services of McGovern. Responding to the allegation, a senior official of the TVS group told *businessline* that the late Ratan Tata and Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran were aware of the engagement of McGovern by Norton. He said that McGovern mentored Norton and it was approved by the top management of JLR.

(The writer is Editor, The Hindu businessline)

West Asia crisis: India's exports plunge 7.44% in March; trade gap narrows

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Exports posted the steepest fall in five months, declining by 7.44% in March to $38.92 billion, while imports fell by over 6% due to the West Asia crisis, official data released on Wednesday showed.

The trade deficit, however, narrowed to a nine-month low of $20.67 billion in March due to lower imports. Imports dipped by 6.51% to $59.59 billion in March, driven by a significant decline in inbound shipments of crude oil and gold, the data showed.

For the full 2025-26 fiscal year, exports grew 0.93% to an all-time high of $441.78 billion, while imports rose 7.45% to $775 billion. The trade deficit ballooned to $333.2 billion due to a jump in gold and silver imports during the last fiscal. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal told reporters that the country's goods and services exports increased by an estimated 4.22% to an all-time high of $860.09 billion in 2025-26 against $825.26 billion in 2024-25.

He said that despite global challenges, Indian exporters are showing resilience and are registering positive growth.

The secretary said that India's exports to the Middle East region fell 57.95% in March.

Gems and jewellery exports fall to 5-year low

Reuters
MUMBAI

Gems and jewellery exports in the 2025/26 fiscal year dipped 3.3% from a year ago to their lowest level in five years, as shipments to top buyer the U.S. nearly halved, a leading trade body said on Wednesday, reflecting the impact of tariffs and duties.

Gem and jewellery exports in the year to the end of March fell to $27.72 billion, the lowest since 2020/21, when COVID-19 pandemic-led lockdowns disrupted trade, and down from $28.7 billion in the previous year, the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said in a statement on Wednesday.

Airfares surge more than 40% amid tensions in West Asia

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Travellers should brace for a costlier summer break as airfares have surged by more than 40% this April, rising even higher on leisure routes, as tensions in West Asia push up aviation turbine fuel costs and intensify operational challenges for airlines globally.

Data from travel booking portal Cleartrip show a Delhi-Mumbai ticket that averaged ₹6,000 in April 2025 now costs about ₹8,400 – a 40% jump. Bengaluru-Delhi and Mumbai-Chennai saw spikes of 41% and 42% with fares averaging at ₹8,200 and ₹7,800.

Leisure routes hit

The impact is more pronounced on leisure routes. Fares to Srinagar and Leh surged by 70%, climbing from ₹7,500 to ₹12,800, while hill destinations such as Shimla and Manali are up 53%. Northeast and southern holiday circuits such as Shillong, Bagdogra, Munnar and Ooty recorded a rise of about 50%.

International travel too is hit, with many travelling westwards unable to fly via Gulf hubs such as Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi and preferring non-stop flights. Flights to London and Paris now average ₹1.05 lakh, up 45% from last year and routes to Turkey and Italy have climbed 41%.

India laps up most of Venezuelan, Russian crude oil

Debayan Tewari
M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

Amid a global crude oil crisis triggered by the Iran war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, India is likely to have lapped up most of the increased crude oil shipments from Venezuela and Russia.

As per BIMCO, one of the world's largest shipping associations, global crude shipments fell 16% after the war began vis a vis first 9 weeks of the year.

The war roiled energy supplies.

"This represents a reduction of 7.6 million barrels per day (mbpd) to 38.4 mbpd," BIMCO said.

With global shipments down, Venezuela increased shipments of crude oil by 0.4 million barrels per day, as did Russia from the Black Sea by 0.8 mbpd.

"Combined, this accounts for 85% of increased shipments from countries outside of the Persian Gulf. India has been the main destination for the increased shipments," BIMCO said.

The Hindu has been tracking open-source data for the past two weeks and found at least 17 tankers originating in Russia crossed the Suez Canal and bound for ports in India carrying Russian crude. Some have reached India.

BIMCO said before the Iran war, the U.S. Energy Information Administration estimated global 2026 oil production at 79.9 mbpd. "The 7.6 mbpd reduction in seaborne shipments thereby means 9.5% of the previously expected crude oil production is currently not reaching markets. The reduction in shipments has naturally been driven by effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz."

"The United Arab Emirates managed to increase loadings from ports east of the Strait of Hormuz by 0.7 mbpd while Saudi Arabia increased shipments from Yanbu in the Red Sea by 3.0 mbpd," it said, adding, shipments from the region fell 9 mbpd compared with earlier this year.

Even if the Strait of Hormuz is fully reopened, shortages may remain. "[I]t may take a long time for crude oil and other energy shipments to return to previous volumes," BIMCO's chief shipping analyst Niels Rasmussen was quoted as saying.

Japan's Create Medic enters India, plans ₹120-crore investment

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Japanese firm Create Medic, a silicone catheter maker, has established its first office in India in Chennai. The healthcare-focused firm is also planning to set up a manufacturing facility here to cater to the Indian market, neighbouring and African countries. Create would be expanding its network to Delhi and Mumbai and is looking at opportunities to work with Indian doctors to develop innovations that can transform healthcare.

The 50- year-old firm, listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, started operations in India in 2017. The firm was distributing products through Medi Nippon to hospitals in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Chandigarh, Bengaluru.

"The large Indian medical infrastructure, globally-renowned doctors and strong purchasing power is seeing a growth rate of 8% which makes it a high potential market for our products. Our long-term plan is to start manufacturing in India to make it a supply base for the Indian subcontinent as well as for African countries," said Osamu Imazawa, president, Create Medic Co.

Katsuaki Yamane, MD, Create Medic India, said the firm will invest ₹20 crore in the next 2-3 years in India and then about ₹100 crore in another three years as they proceed to set up manufacturing facility.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
TAMIL NADU STATE HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY (TANSHA),

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING
NOTICE INVITING BID
Notice No. 05, TANSHA/ OCIC-PH-1 / 2026 / Dated.10.03.2026.
(Republication No.03)

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu Bids for the following works is invited by the, Member (Technical), Tamil Nadu State Highways Authority (TANSHA), Chennai-25. Construction of Four Lane Highway with service roads for 1. Valayakkaranai to Pazhaveri, 2. Pazhaveri to Pulivoy and 3. Pulivoy to Manampathy on the section of Proposed Industrial Corridor of Cheyyar SIPCOT on Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM)-3 works.

All details regarding the Bid will be available online in the website **www.tntenders.gov.in** from **11.00 a.m (IST) on 27.03.2026 upto 11.30 a.m (IST) on 27.05.2026**. Any changes / corrections will be intimated in the website only.

TAMIL NADU STATE HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY
Chennai - 25

DIPR/1830/TENDER/2026

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Federation of CCS NIAM
(Section 8 Company under CCS NIAM)
Kota Road, Bambala, Near Sanganer, Jaipur 302033, Rajasthan
Telephone: 0141-2795203, website: www.niam-nabi.com

WALK - IN - INTERVIEW

Applications are invited for the following post (on contractual basis) under PM-RKVY Project at IEF of CCS National Institute of Agricultural Marketing: -

Post	Remuneration (Consolidated)	Number of Position
Manager Finance & ICT	1.5 Lakh per month	1
Manager Marketing & Communication	1.5 Lakh per month	1

Interview Schedule- 27th April 2026 (Documents Verification) & 28th April 2026 (Personal Interview)
For more details, please visit www.niam-nabi.com
Chairman, Board of Directors

PUNJAB STATE WAREHOUSING CORPORATION
SCO 74-75, BANK SQUARE, SECTOR-17B CHANDIGARH
PBX: 0172-5197847, 5197846

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

PSWC invites online tenders through GeM Portal for creation of 5.50 LMT godown capacities at 11 locations in the State of Punjab for guaranteed lease of 10 years on Build, Own and Operate/Lease basis for storage requirements of FCI under two bid system 'Technical Bid' and 'Financial Bid'. NIT (alongwith GeM Bid IDs) is available on Department's website i.e. **https://pswc.in** PSWC reserves the right to scrap the tender at any stage without assigning any reason and PSWC will not be held liable for any costs and consequences incurred by the intending bidders. Note: Any corrigendum(s)/Notification(s) to this Notice Inviting E-Tender shall be published Department's website & GeM Portal.

1004/12/2026-27/10488 **Managing Director, PSWC**

भारतीय राष्ट्रीय महासागर सूचना सेवा केंद्र
Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)
(पृथ्वी विज्ञान मंत्रालय भारत सरकार के अधीन एक स्वायत्त निकाय)
(An autonomous body under Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt. of India)
"ओशियन वैली", प्रगति नगर(बी.ओ.), निज़ामपेट (एस.ओ.), हैदराबाद-500090
"Ocean Valley", Pragathi Nagar (B.O), Nizampet (S.O), Hyderabad – 500090

विज्ञापन संख्या. INCOIS/RMT/01/2026

निम्नलिखित नियमित पदों को सीधी भर्ती तथा प्रतिनियुक्ति के आधार पर भरने हेतु पात्र भारतीय नागरिकों से आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं।
Applications are invited from eligible Indian Nationals for filling up of the following Regular Positions on Direct Recruitment and on Deputation.
पदों तथा रिक्तियों का विस्तृत विवरण निम्नलिखित है। The details of positions & vacancies are :-

क्रमांक S.No.	पद कोड Post Code	पदनाम Name of the position	पदों की संख्या No. of Positions
सीधी भर्ती Direct Recruitment			
1.	01,02,03	वैज्ञानिक सहायक Scientific Assistant	03 (02 UR & 01 ST)
प्रतिनियुक्ति पर On Deputation			
4.	04, 05	वैज्ञानिक 'सी' Scientist 'C'	02

पद, पात्रता, आयु सीमा, शैक्षणिक योग्यताएँ, दायित्व, अनुभव, आवेदन की प्रक्रिया तथा अन्य सामान्य शर्तों से संबंधित विस्तृत जानकारी वेबलिंक **https://vacancies.incois.gov.in** पर उपलब्ध है।
Further details about the position, eligibility, age limit academic qualifications, responsibilities, experience, application procedure and other general conditions are available at weblink **https://vacancies.incois.gov.in**
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Closing Date: The last date of submission of online application is **May 11, 2026.**
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e-Tenders are invited on e-procurement platform for supply of AMBER Color PET Bottles 30ml, 60ml and 25mm neck Aluminum cap with TTD Emblem/logo on cap.
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Pre-bid meeting date & Venue : 21-04-2026 at 11:30 AM, Venue O/o the Principal, SV Ayurvedic College, TTD, Tirupati
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TTD-40021(31)/1/2026-PRO SEC(Adv.No.15) Date:15-04-2026 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited
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BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPP Portal)

BESCOM invites tenders through KPP Portal from eligible bidders against Enquiry No: **BESCOM/2026-27/IND0225** For Procurement of **LT Distribution Boxes** for 100 kVA and 250 kVA Distribution Transformers for BMA(North) Zone, BESCOM as per Tender Specification, GTP and Drawing. Bid Documents available: **16.04.2026**. Last date for Bid Submission: **15.05.2026, 17:00 Hrs.** Opening of Bid Document: **16.05.2026, 17:15 Hrs.**
The Tenders can be obtained through KPP portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** Aspiring Bidders need to register on KPP portal. Further Bidders can take assistance with KPP help desk contact numbers: **(+91-8046010000, +91-8068948777)** or email at **support@eprochelpdesk.com.**
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स्वामी केशवानंद राजस्थान कृषि विश्वविद्यालय, बीकानेर
OFFICE OF JET COORDINATOR
No. :- F ( )/SKRAU/JET/Pre-PG/Ph.D/2026/16 Dated :- 13/04/2026
अधिसूचना (Notification)
जेट/प्री-पीजी/पीएचडी प्रवेश परीक्षा-2026 के तहत राजस्थान राज्य के कृषि/पशु चिकित्सा विश्वविद्यालयों और निजी विश्वविद्यालयों/कॉलेजों (राजस्थान सरकार द्वारा केवल कृषि के लिए अनुमति प्राप्त) द्वारा प्रस्तावित विभिन्न कृषि और संबद्ध डिग्री पाठ्यक्रमों में शैक्षणिक सत्र 2026-27 में प्रवेश के लिए प्रवेश परीक्षा दिनांक 21 जून 2026 (रविवार) को आयोजित की जाएगी। जिसके लिए ऑनलाइन आवेदन पत्र दिनांक 18.04.2026 से 17.05.2026 तक और विलंब शुल्क के साथ 20.05.2026 तक JET की अधिकारिक वेबसाइट **https://www.jetskrau2026.com** पर भरा जा सकता है। अधिक जानकारी जैसे पात्रता, परीक्षा समय सारणी इत्यादि के लिए कृपया वेबसाइट पर उपलबध नियमावलियों (Guideline Booklets) का अवलोकन करें।
जेट समन्वयक
राज.संवाद/सी/26/814 **जेट/प्री-पीजी/प्री-पीएचडी प्रवेश परीक्षा-2026**

GAZA CITY

Gaza civil defence says toddler among 10 killed in Israeli strikes

AFP

Gaza's civil defence agency said on Tuesday that a toddler was among 10 people killed in separate Israeli strikes in the northern part of the Palestinian territory. At least 757 have been killed in Gaza since the truce came into effect, according to the territory's Health Ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the UN. AFP

HONG KONG/MANILA

'China moves to block entrance to disputed South China Sea shoal'

REUTERS

China is employing ships and a barrier to tighten control of the entrance to the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea amid roiling tension with the Philippines over the disputed feature, satellite imagery obtained by Reuters shows. Scarborough is one of Asia's most hotly disputed maritime sites. REUTERS

WASHINGTON

Vatican should 'stick to matters of morality', says U.S. Vice-President

AFP

U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance urged the Vatican on Monday to "stick to matters of morality" amid an escalating row between President Donald Trump and Pope Leo over Iran. "It would be best for the Vatican to stick to matters of morality... and let the President of U.S. stick to dictating American public policy," Mr. Vance said. AFP

BEIJING

China to 'resolutely support' Cuba against sustained threats from U.S.

AFP

China will "resolutely support" Cuba against sustained threats from the United States, the Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday, days after President Miguel Diaz-Canel called for dialogue with Washington. Mr. Diaz-Canel insisted last week that he would not resign under pressure from the United States. AFP

Xi meets Russian FM as leaders flock to China over West Asia war

Russia could help offset China's energy shortfalls if shipping through Strait of Hormuz stays disrupted, says Lavrov; experts say China has leverage over Iran and could use it to press for restraint and diplomacy, especially as Gulf states seek stability

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China's President Xi Jinping met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday, Chinese state media said, as a string of leaders of countries impacted by the West Asia war flock to Beijing.

Mr. Lavrov joins Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Vietnamese leader To Lam in meeting with Mr. Xi this week.

The Russian diplomat told a news conference after meeting Mr. Xi that Moscow could "compensate" for China's energy shortages as shipping through the Strait of Hormuz remains choked by the Iran war. Mr. Xi, meanwhile, has sought to position China as a mediator and stable partner in the face of the U.S.- and Israeli-led conflict.

Close ties: Sergey Lavrov with Xi Jinping prior to their meeting at the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, on Wednesday. AP

Mr. Xi told Abu Dhabi's crown prince on Tuesday that China would play a "constructive role" in promoting peace talks in the West Asia.

In talks with Spain's Sanchez, Mr. Xi warned that the world was facing "chaos and turmoil" and "a contest between justice and force", urging closer cooperation. The Spanish Prime Minister welcomed China's role in seeking to resolve the conflict in the West Asia.

Though the level of diplomatic activity is normal for Beijing, the West Asia war and particularly the issue of energy security have taken on new urgency in diplomatic discussions, according to Dylan Loh, associate professor at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

"China has got leverage and influence over Iran, and there are some hopes that China can use this influence in a more direct way," Mr. Loh said.

Countries, particularly in the Gulf, could be hoping China can pressure Iran to stop its attacks on Gulf countries and to persist with diplomatic negotiations, he said.

Beijing and Moscow are close economic and political partners, and the relationship has deepened further since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Trump 'asked China's Xi' not to give Iran weapons

Reuters
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump asked Chinese President Xi Jinping in a letter not to give Iran weapons, and Mr. Xi responded that China was not supplying Tehran, the U.S. president told *Fox Business Network* in an interview that aired on Wednesday. Mr. Trump, in the interview taped on Tuesday, did not say when the letters were exchanged. Last week, he threatened countries with an immediate 50% tariff if they supplied Iran with weapons.

"I wrote him a letter asking him not to do that, and he wrote me a letter saying that, essentially, he's not doing that," Mr. Trump told *FBN's* "Mornings with Maria" programme. He also said he did not expect shifts in the global oil market over the war on Iran and changes in Venezuela to impact the dynamics of his planned meeting with Mr. Xi next month. "He's somebody that needs oil. We don't," Mr. Trump said.

Donald Trump

In a subsequent Truth Social post, Mr. Trump also wrote that he was "permanently opening" the Strait of Hormuz and China was very happy about it.

"I am doing it for them, also - And the World," Mr. Trump wrote, adding: "President Xi will give me a big, fat, hug when I get there in a few weeks."

It was not immediately clear what Mr. Trump meant as shipping through the Strait of Hormuz remains constrained. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for clarification on the President's post.

Forty-five days after Iran's Revolutionary Guards declared the strait closed, effectively shutting in about 20% of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, transit through the waterway remains uncertain – even with the two-week ceasefire now in place. Traffic is at only a fraction of the 130-plus daily crossings seen before the war, sources said.

Teenager kills nine, wounds 13 in school shooting in Turkiye

Agence France-Presse
ISTANBUL

A 14-year-old armed with five guns opened fire at a Turkish school on Wednesday, killing nine people, wounding 13 and sparking scenes of mayhem as students jumped out of windows to escape.

The attack in the southern province of Kahramanmaras province was Turkiye's second such incident in as many days, shocking a country where school shootings are a rare occurrence.

Interior Minister Mustafa Ciftci confirmed nine deaths, with 13 wounded – six in intensive care, three of them in a critical condition.

Turkish police surround the school in Kahramanmaras on Wednesday. AFP

Kahramanmaras province governor Mukerrem Unluer said the attacker was the son of a former police officer. The attacker shot himself during the incident.

Israeli military strikes south of Beirut amid talks in Washington

Agence France-Presse
BEIRUT

Two Israeli strikes on Wednesday hit vehicles south of Beirut, state media reported, while Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel, hours after Lebanon and Israel agreed to hold direct negotiations.

The Israeli military also renewed its call for residents of a swathe of southern Lebanon to leave as it continues to bomb the area. Despite its ongoing attacks, Israel has not targeted the Lebanese capital since a series of attacks across the country on April 8 that killed more than 350 people.

Lebanon's state-run *National News Agency* reported two separate Israeli strikes, both on the coastal highway around 20 km south of Beirut and outside Hezbollah's traditional strongholds.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said it had detected "approximately 30 launches" by Hezbollah militants towards Israel since the early hours. Hezbollah said it launched rockets at 10 northern Israeli areas.

Meanwhile, United Nations refugee chief Barham Salih on Wednesday called on the international community to provide urgent support to Lebanon.

'Israeli support for Iran attack slumps'

Sambavi Parthasarathy

The latest Israeli Voice Index, a survey published by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI), shows a decline in Israelis' support for Operation Roaring Lion – the country's term for the joint military attack carried out by the U.S. and Israel on Iran. The survey, conducted during March 22-26, also points to domestic fatigue stemming from persisting economic and security concerns.

An analysis of surveys show that the war has subsequently shifted Israelis' perspectives on the continuation and goals of Operation Roaring Lion. The latest figures are in contrast to the findings revealed by the previous surveys conducted during March 2-3 and March 9-11, respectively.

Israelis take part in an anti-government protest calling for an end to the conflict with Lebanon, in Tel Aviv on April 11. REUTERS

Data shows that when the U.S-Israel attack on Iran began on February 28, an overwhelming 82% of Israelis supported the Operation to some extent. Almost three weeks later, this share declined by about 15 percentage points to 62%.

The share of Israelis who 'strongly supported' the operation declined further, from 64.4% in the initial week to about 42.7% in the latest survey. This was a decline of almost 22 percentage points. Meanwhile, the share of those opposed the Operation increased from 4% to about 12% in the same period.

In the previous surveys, at least 60% of Israelis believed that this operation would achieve its goals of destroying Iran's nuclear project and ballistic missile threats. However, in the latest survey, only 24.4% of Israelis think that their society will be able to bear the burden of the war against Iran as long as it takes for the Operation to attain its goals.

While support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu still remains popular, it has also declined slightly, compared to the beginning of March. Over 64% of Israelis had then said that they trusted Mr. Netanyahu to manage the Operation properly.

Data shows that only 57% now hold the view that the Operation was primarily driven by strategic security-related considerations. This view is more popular among Jewish respondents.

A majority of Arab respondents hold that his motivations were mainly personal and political.

IN THE MIX

Been a long road for me... plan is to keep playing: RCB's Hazlewood

K. MURALI KUMAR

It's been a bit of a long road for me the last few months... I got the rust out against Rajasthan Royals and felt the rhythm was good today [Wednesday]. The plan is to hopefully keep playing. Our schedule is pretty good from here on in... so fingers crossed I can keep playing — RCB pacer Josh Hazlewood.

BIG BOOST

England all-rounder Jacks set to link up with MI later this week

FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

England all-rounder Will Jacks is set to link up with Mumbai Indians later this week after missing MI's first few matches of the IPL. Jacks had taken time off following a demanding stretch of cricket, having featured in four of England's five Tests during The Ashes. He also played in the Sri Lanka white-ball tour and the T20 WC.

GREAT SIGN

'Tyagi bowling exceptionally well is a positive to take forward'

R. RAGU

I think Kartik Tyagi bowled exceptionally well, which is a positive to take forward into the next game. A young guy, he's had a number of setbacks... but to see him bowling fast and bowling well is a great sign. I was very impressed with the way he bowled against CSK — KKR bowling coach Tim Southee on Tyagi.

REPRIMANDED

Rahane fined ₹12 lakh for KKR's slow over-rate against CSK

R. RAGU

Kolkata Knight Riders captain Ajinkya Rahane has been fined ₹12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during the IPL 2026 match against Chennai Super Kings at the MAC Stadium. "As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of ConductRahane was fined 12 lakh," an IPL advisory said.

Vaishali wins Candidates, to challenge Ju for world title

Sports Bureau

R. Vaishali won the Women's Candidates chess tournament in Cyprus on Wednesday and thus qualified for the World championship match to be played later this year. The Grandmaster from Chennai scored a crushing victory over Russia's Kateryna Lagno in the final round to emerge as the clear winner.

Vaishali finished with 8.5 points, half-a-point more than Kazakhstan's Bibisara Assaubayeva, who was held to a draw by Divya Deshmukh. That draw ensured that Vaishali would go ahead of Assaubayeva in the points table.

She will meet the reigning World champion China's Ju Wenjun in the title match. Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov had won the open section of the Candidates with a round to spare, and he will meet D. Gukesh in the World championship match.

Vaishali's younger brother R. Praggnanandhaa had a disappointing Candidates, finishing seventh in a field of eight, after scoring six points.

The results (final round):
Open: Andrey Esipenko (Rus) 4.5 lost to Fabiano Caruana (USA) 7.5; R. Praggnanandhaa 6 drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 6.5; Matthias Bluebaum (Ger) 6 lost to Anish Giri (Ned) 8.5; Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb) 10 drew with Wei Yi (Chn) 7.
Women: Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 7 drew with Zhu Jiner (Chn) 7.5; Aleksandra Goryachkina (Rus) 7.5 lost to Tan Zhongyi (Chn) 5.5; R. Vaishali 8.5 bt Kateryna Lagno (Rus) 6.5; Divya Deshmukh 5.5 drew with Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz) 8.

Elated: Vaishali and her mother can't hide their joy after the Indian GM's fantastic show. FIDE

It's Vaishali's time to hog the limelight

P.K. Ajith Kumar

She started out as the lowest seed. She started slowly, drawing her first four games. And then she lost in the fifth round.

And yet, on Wednesday night at Pegeia, Cyprus, it was R. Vaishali who had the last smile. She staged a coup at the Women's Candidates chess tournament. She won the event, becoming the first Indian woman to do it.

She has qualified to play the World title match. Only one Indian has been there before: Koneru Humpy, one of the strongest players of all time in women's chess.

Vaishali will play the World title match against China's Ju Wenjun, which will be held later this year. She may start that event as the underdog, too. But Ju is unlikely to take her lightly.

Vaishali has the ability to raise her game at the right time. Like she did in Cyprus. After losing in the fifth round to Zhu Jiner, the top seed, she bounced back admirably, winning her next two rounds to get her campaign back on track.

Going into the last three rounds, she had a comfortable lead of one point, but she lost to her nemesis Zhu again, in the 12th round (the Candidates is an eight-player round-robin tournament). She drew the penultimate round to share the lead with Bibisara Assaubayeva. She showed her class in the final round encounter against Katerya Lagno to write her own name in history books.

The Candidates is only the latest in the series of some stunning victories for Vaishali. She has won the Grand Swiss twice, thus earning the qualification for the Candidates in successive editions.

She is one of the few women to get the Grandmaster title and was part of the Olympiad-winning team. Till a few years ago though, she was overshadowed by her prodigious younger brother R. Praggnanandhaa.

She once told this correspondent how bad she felt when she first lost to him when he was a little boy. She considers it lucky she has such a strong player at home.

"And Vaishali can get even better," Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay tells *The Hindu*. "I believe she could beat Ju Wenjun."

Bowlers' day out as RCB coasts to victory against a listless LSG

The pace trio of Bhuvneshwar, Hazlewood and Rasikh comes up with a superlative effort to set up its fourth win of the season; Kohli comes in as an Impact Player, makes the top score; visiting team's skipper Pant struggles in his brief stay

IPL-19

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru sauntered to its fourth victory in five matches this IPL season, beating Lucknow Super Giants by five wickets at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Wednesday.

Chasing a modest 147, RCB got home with nearly five overs to spare to go top of the table.

Virat Kohli, who came in as an Impact Player, scored the most (49, 34b, 6x4, 1x6), but it was captain Rajat Patidar's two breathtaking sixes off Mohammed Shami - over long-on and above fine-leg - that will remain long in memory.

By T20 standards, much of the contest was slow-burn. The hitting was not manic, the atmosphere not so frenzied, and the 29,000 odd fans did not have as many moments as they usually would to let out the gasps and whoops.

But even that will not help LSG from feeling tarred and feathered, as it came up with another abject batting effort.

It will also feel knackered, for Rishabh Pant, hit on his left elbow by Josh Hazlewood while batting, did not come out to keep.

After Patidar asked the visitors to bat, LSG started gingerly, scoring just 16 runs from the first 17 balls. When Mitchell Marsh hit the last delivery of the third over - from Bhuvneshwar Kumar - onto the roof over square-leg, it was expected to have an unshackling effect.

What followed was the exact opposite. Aiden Markram was out in bizarre fashion, caught at cover off a full-toss down the leg-side by Rasikh Salam. Pant retired hurt off the third ball he faced, and Nicholas Pooran's wretched run continued (1, 7b) as the excellent Hazlewood (4-0-20-1) forced him to play on.

Ayush Badoni (38, 24b, 4x4, 1x6) and Marsh (40, 32b, 3x4, 2x6) combined for 36 runs but run-rate was unsatisfactory. Badoni was involved in another mini rescue-act with Mukul Choudhury (39, 28b, 3x4, 2x6), but a sharp catch from wicket-keeper Jitesh Sharma ended the former's stint.

At 118 for five, Pant came out to bat, with his elbow strapped. But his stay was short-lived, caught as he was by a diving Phil Salt at the square-leg boundary. That was Pant's last act on the field, and he found little joy in the dressing room too.

On a roll: Rasikh's incisive spell made Kohli's job easy. K. MURALI KUMAR

Next assignment

RCB: April 18 vs. **DC**
Bengaluru, 3.30 p.m.

LSG: April 19 vs. **PBKS**
New Chandigarh, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS
Mitchell Marsh b Krunal 40 *(32b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Aiden Markram c Padikkal b Rasikh 12 *(8b, 1x6)*, Rishabh Pant c Salt b Bhuvneshwar 1 *(6b)*, Nicholas Pooran b Hazlewood 1 *(7b)*, Ayush Badoni c Jitesh b Rasikh 38 *(24b, 4x4, 1x6)*, Abdul Samad c Patidar b Krunal 0 *(2b)*, Mukul Choudhary b Rasikh 39 *(28b, 3x4, 2x6)*, George Linde **(Impact Player for Badoni)** c David b Bhuvneshwar 7 *(7b, 1x4)*, Mohammed Shami b Bhuvneshwar 0 *(1b)*, Avesh Khan b Rasikh 1 *(2b)*, Digvesh Rathi (not out) 0 *(3b)*; Extras (b-1, lb-2, w-4): 7; Total (in 20 overs): 146.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-32 (Markram, 3.6 overs), 2-35 (Pooran, 6.1), 3-71 (Marsh, 9.5), 4-83 (Samad, 11.2), 5-118 (Badoni, 15.5), 6-124 (Pant, 16.5), 7-137 (Linde, 18.3), 8-137 (Shami, 18.4), 9-145 (Mukul, 19.2).

RCB BOWLING
Bhuvneshwar 4-0-27-3, Hazlewood 4-0-20-1, Rasikh 4-0-24-4, Krunal 4-0-38-2, Suyash 4-0-34-0.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS
Phil Salt b Prince 7 *(8b, 1x4)*, Virat Kohli **(Impact Player for Suyash)** c Pooran b Avesh 49 *(34b, 6x4, 1x6)*, Devdutt Padikkal c (sub) Himmat b Avesh 10 *(11b, 1x4)*, Rajat Patidar c Digvesh b Prince 27 *(13b, 1x4, 3x6)*, Jitesh Sharma c Mukul b Prince 23 *(9b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Tim David (not out) 14 *(8b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Romario Shepherd (not out) 14 *(8b, 1x4, 1x6)*; Extras (lb-4, w-1): 5; Total (for five wkts. in 15.1 overs): 149.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-9 (Salt, 1.4), 2-66 (Padikkal, 7.2), 3-86 (Kohli, 10.1), 4-121 (Patidar, 12.2), 5-122 (Jitesh, 12.4).

SUPER GIANTS BOWLING
Shami 3-0-30-0, Prince 3-0-32-3, Digvesh 4-0-51-0, Avesh 4-0-23-2, Linde 1.1-0-9-0.

Toss: RCB. **PoM:** Hazlewood.
RCB won by five wickets with 29 balls remaining.

Rohit's injury in focus for desperate MI

Shayan Acharya
MUMBAI

It has been a forgettable outing for Mumbai Indians so far, with just two points from four games. Adding to its woes, MI sweats over Rohit Sharma's fitness for the must-win IPL match against Punjab Kings at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

Rohit had hobbled off after injuring his hamstring during the previous game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru and has since skipped practice, with the franchise maintaining that the "medical team is assessing" him. Rohit did some light, gingerly jogging on the eve of the game after skipping earlier training sessions. Later, he also spent some time in the nets, facing net bowlers.

A late call is expected, but if he eventually misses out, it will further dent a top-order that has lacked consistency. Rohit's ability to anchor and accelerate has often set the tone, and his absence would only deepen Mumbai's early-season struggles.

Big question: MI sweats over Rohit's fitness as the former champion looks to get its campaign back on track. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Batting woes

MI has found the going tough, with its star-studded batting line-up failing to click collectively. Starts have not been converted, and partnerships have been hard to build.

On the eve of the game, Naman Dhir downplayed concerns over the form of Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma. While Suryakumar has scored 106 runs, Tilak has managed just 35 so far, though the team remains confident of a turnaround in fortunes.

The bowling unit, too, has been far from impressive. Jasprit Bumrah is yet to pick up a wicket despite being economical, while Trent Boult and Hardik Pandya have lacked consistency at key moments, especially in the death overs.

Punjab Kings, led by Shreyas Iyer, appears more settled. Strong PowerPlay returns from Prabhsimran Singh and Priyansh Arya, along with middle-order stability, give the side the edge heading into the contest.

For Mumbai, another defeat could deepen a crisis in a season already threatening to drift away early, leaving little margin for recovery in a tightly contested league.

Today's match

MUMBAI INDIANS vs. PUNJAB KINGS

Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: **34**
MI 17 | PBKS 17

PREVIOUS MEETING
PBKS won by five wickets, 2025

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

Noor's technical refinement does the job

Tactical nous: The KKR batters struggled once Noor found his length and speed. R. RAGU

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Royal Challengers	5	**4**	1	0	**8**	1.503
Rajasthan Royals	5	**4**	1	0	**8**	0.889
Punjab Kings	4	**3**	0	1	**7**	0.720
Sunrisers Hyderabad	5	**2**	3	0	**4**	0.576
Delhi Capitals	4	**2**	2	0	**4**	0.322
Gujarat Titans	4	**2**	2	0	**4**	-0.029
Lucknow Super Giants	5	**2**	3	0	**4**	-0.804
Chennai Super Kings	5	**2**	3	0	**4**	-0.846
Mumbai Indians	4	**1**	3	0	**2**	-0.772
Kolkata Knight Riders	5	**0**	4	1	**1**	-1.383

Tarun Shastry
CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings turned Tuesday into another day of revival. The rhythm continued; so did the roars. A commanding 32-run victory over Kolkata Knight Riders didn't just help Super Kings join the cluster of teams with four points, but also rekindled the 'Fortress Chepauk' discussion.

At the heart of this resurgence was a reinvigorated spin attack, led by left-arm wrist-spinner Noor Ahmad, whose performance reflected both technical refinement and tactical maturity.

"There was a bit more help from the surface today [Tuesday]," explained CSK's assistant bowling coach S. Sriram. "But, more importantly, Noor adapted well. He slowed it down through the air, got more side spin, and, crucially, more drop," Sriram said at the MAC Stadium.

M.S. Dhoni has spent time with the young Afghan and helped him sharpen his leg-break, revealed Sriram. "M.S. had a long chat with him at a practice session, getting his leg breaks to flow. That worked... as the results showed," said Sriram.

An in-game intervention, too, elevated Noor's performance. And it came from the other left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein, whose impact extended beyond his own bowling.

During the strategic timeout, the West Indian shared a key insight with Noor: find that "in-between length."

"Akeal was the one who told Noor about the 'in-between length' he needed to bowl. Once he figured that out, Noor became almost unplayable. I was part of that conversation and it really became a strategic break. Noor and Akeal complement each other very well. There is camaraderie between them and a lot of exchange of information too".

INBRIEF

Shubhankar goes to the top; Baisoya breaks course record

Shubhankar Sharma, *in pic.*, carded a second consecutive six-under 66 to take a two-shot lead after the second round of the inaugural Boulders Classic in Hyderabad on Wednesday. The 29-year-old moved to the top of the leader-board with a 12-under 132 while overnight leader Vishesh Sharma (65-70) slipped to third at 135. Honey Baisoya broke the course record with an immaculate round of 64 that propelled him from overnight tied 42nd to tied fourth at 136. He broke Vishesh's record of 65 set in the first round.

Infosys ropes in Alcaraz as global brand ambassador

IT services company Infosys on Wednesday announced it has signed up seven-time Grand Slam Champion Carlos Alcaraz as its global brand ambassador. Infosys will work with Alcaraz and his coaching team to develop an AI-powered match analytics and a personalised performance application to aid match preparation and in-game strategy. Beyond the court, the partnership also extends to joint initiatives between Infosys and the Carlos Alcaraz Foundation, to leverage technology to drive social impact, focusing on tech-for-good initiatives. Carlos Alcaraz is a champion athlete, recognised not only for his seven Grand Slam titles but also for being the youngest man in history to complete a career Grand Slam.

SUDHAKARA JAIN

Karnataka Badminton Association fetes Ayush Shetty

Ayush Shetty who claimed silver at the recent Badminton Asia Championship was felicitated by the Karnataka Badminton Association in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Ayush was awarded a cheque of ₹1 lakh by KBA president Kumar Bangarappa. Also present on the occasion were KBA member N.C. Sridhar and Ayush's parents.

TDCA to hold 'Scorers Education Seminar'

The Tiruvallur District Cricket Association (TDCA) will conduct a 'Scorers Education Seminar' on April 19 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Application forms can be downloaded from https://tdcaindin. wordpress.com/ Photocopies of the following documents should be attached along with the application: digital birth certificate with QR code (or) valid Indian passport as age proof, and Aadhaar card as residential proof. Only candidates residing within Tiruvallur district limits are eligible to attend. Applicants must have completed 18 years of age. The last date for submission is April 18, 3 p.m. Applications should be sent via WhatsApp to 97101 95101 and the physical copy must be submitted on the day of the seminar.

Atletico Madrid baulks Barcelona's riposte to reach the semifinals

Yamal, Torres fire the visitor level before Lookman settles the issue for the Madrid side; a Dembele double helps PSG end Liverpool's campaign

Pivotal: Lookman bundles in Atletico's only goal of the night to send his team through. AFP

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
MADRID

Atletico Madrid sent 10-man Barcelona crashing out of the Champions League and reached the final four with a 3-2 aggregate victory despite Tuesday's 2-1 quarter-final second leg defeat.

Over at Anfield, Ousmane Dembele's double guided Paris Saint-Germain into the semifinals as a 2-0 win over Liverpool completed a 4-0 aggregate win for the holder.

Lamine Yamal and Ferran Torres fired Barca ahead inside 24 minutes but Ademola Lookman's strike gave Atletico the edge in the gripping all-Spanish tie once again after its 2-0 win in the first leg. Diego Simeone's side returned to the semifinals for the first time since 2017 by holding on against the LaLiga champion in a cosmpelling and bloody battle.

Barcelona defender Eric Garcia was sent off for bringing down Alexander Sorloth as he ran in on goal in the final stages, hampering its chances of finding a third goal to force extra-time.

Liverpool will end the campaign trophyless after being kept at arm's reach by a PSG side that did not need to be at its brilliant best to reach a third consecutive semifinal.

Defeat means there will be no glorious goodbye for Mohamed Salah after nine memorable years on Merseyside.

The results (quarterfinals, second leg): Atletico 1 (Lookman 31) lost to Barcelona 2 (Yamal 4, Torres 24) (Atletico advances 3-2 on aggregate); Liverpool 0 lost to PSG 2 (Dembele 72, 90+1) (PSG advances 4-0 on aggregate).

NorthEast snatches a draw against Kerala Blasters

ISL

P.K. Ajith Kumar
KOCHI

After that morale-boosting victory in Bengaluru, Kerala Blasters was just two minutes of normal time away from another win, which would have been the first at home this season. But, that was not to be, as NorthEast United struck in the dying minutes to make it 1-1.

It was a lively match in which the two teams that have struggled in the ISL fought bitterly and created plenty of chances.

NorthEast's Andy Rodriguez was credited with an goal which put the host ahead with just four minutes remaining in the opening half. Fallou Ndiaye played the key role in the making of that goal.

Blasters players celebrate.

Following a free-kick, Karim Benarif stormed into the box and found Ndiaye, who first came up with a header and then a bicycle kick. And the ball travelled to Parthib Gogoi and then the unfortunate Rodriguez.

The Blasters looked like claiming another three points until substitute Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia struck for the visiting side.

The Blasters' goalkeeper Arsh Shaikh had come off his post, but failed to clear the danger from Robin Yadav, another substitute.

Lalbiaknia ensured the rebound would be the equaliser.

The result: Kerala Blasters 1 (Andy Rodriguez 41-og) 1 drew with NorthEast United 1 (Lalrinzuala Lalbiaknia 88).

Back trouble ends Olympic champion Axelsen's career

BADMINTON

Agence France-Presse
COPENHAGEN

Denmark's double Olympic badminton champion Viktor Axelsen announced his retirement at 32 on Wednesday, saying back problems meant he could no longer "compete and train at the highest level".

Axelsen, who won gold at the Tokyo Games in 2021 and again in Paris in 2024, had back surgery in April last year and said he had not managed to overcome his physical issues.

The pinnacle: Axelsen sobs in disbelief after winning his first Olympic gold at the Tokyo Games 2021. REUTERS

"Accepting this situation has been incredibly difficult," he said in a statement. "But I have now reached a point where my body won't allow me to continue."

Axelsen retires as one of the most decorated players in history, having also won two world titles and a bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

He spent more than 100 consecutive weeks at the top of the men's singles world rankings, an achievement surpassed only by Malaysian great Lee Chong-wei.

Singam Puli rides on Khader's first ton of the season; Saravanan and Chandrasekar shine

FIRST DIVISION

Sports Bureau

M. Affan Khader (Singam Puli, 103).

D.T. Chandrasekar (Sea Hawks, 7/29).

M. Ganesh Moorthi (SKM, 5/22).

Mithul Raj (Young Stars, 112).

P. Saravanan (Rovers, 7/39).

M. Affan Khader's maiden century of the season (103, 195b, 12x4) steered Singam Puli to a strong position at 280 for six against Nelson on the opening day of the 11th round of the TNCA first division league at SSN College on Wednesday.

At IITM-Chemplast, left-arm spinner P. Saravanan delivered a sensational spell (18.4-3-39-7), well supported by off-spinner S. Lakshay Jain (three for 47), as Jolly Rovers bundled out Vijay CC for a mere 125 in the first innings. In reply, Rovers finished the day in a commanding position at 154 for one.

Meanwhile, at the SRMC ground, M. Mithul Raj struck a fluent 112, while Adittya Varadharajan remained unbeaten on 87, the duo forging a crucial 178-run partnership for the third wicket to take their side Young Stars to 228 for three against MRC-A at stumps.

At Tagore College, Sea Hawks' left-arm spinner D.T. Chandrasekar produced a remarkable performance, claiming seven for 29 to skittle out SKM CC for just 77 in its first innings. The effort also brought his first-division career tally to 504 wickets. However, SKM fought back through left-arm spinner M. Ganesh Moorthi, who picked up five for 22, but Sea Hawks secured a vital first-innings lead.

The scores (day one):

At SSN: Singam Puli 280/6 in 90 overs (K. Aashiq 40, U. Mukilesh 67, M. Affan Khader 103) vs. Nelson. **Toss:** Nelson.

At IITM-Chemplast: Vijay 125 in 44.4 overs (Abhinav Kannan 31, P. Saravanan 7/39, S. Lakshay Jain 3/47) vs. Jolly Rovers 154/1 in 45 overs (R. Vimal Khumar 86, B. Sachin 63 batting). **Toss:** Vijay.

At SRMC: Young Stars 228/3 in 90 overs (M. Mithul Raj 112, Adittya Varadharajan 87 batting) vs. MRC-A. **Toss:** MRC-A.

At Guru Nanak: Grand Slam 236/5 in 87.4 overs (L. Suryapprakash 82, Akshay Sarangdhar 46, Arpit Vasavada 37 batting, R.K. Jayant 42) vs. Jupiter. **Toss:** Jupiter.

At Tagore: SKM 77 in 26.4 overs (D.T. Chandrasekar 7/29, Daryl Ferrario 3/23) & 55/3 in 14 overs vs. Sea Hawks 129 in 50.5 overs (M. Vishal 30 n.o., M. Ganesh Moorthi 5/22). Toss: SKM.

At MRF-Pachaiyappa's: Alwarpet 248/3 in 90 overs (L.R. Nawin 41, A. Badrinath 91 batting, P.S. Jaswanth 39, R. Ram Arvindh 48 batting) vs. Globe Trotters. **Toss:** Trotters.

AROUND THE CITY

Champion: The victorious Chennai Mass Riders squad receiving its reward. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chennai Mass Riders triumphs

Chennai Mass Riders posted a narrow 13-run victory over Freyer International Logistics Pvt. Ltd in the final of the Blue Sky Cricket Academy Knockout Trophy recently.

The scores (final): Chennai Mass Riders 203/7 in 25 overs (Aarif 75) bt Freyer International Logistics Pvt. Ltd 190/9 in 25 overs (Praanesh 34 Vanesh Bharath 3/17, Ajith 3/28).

Special Awards: **player-of-the-final:** Aarif (Chennai Mass Riders); **best batter:** A. Karthik; **best bowler:** Praneesh (Freyer); **player-of-the-series:** A. Karthik (Chennai Mass Riders).

LIVE TELECAST

ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.

IPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.

Europa League: Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 5 & LIV, 10.15 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Friday)

TNCA LEAGUE

Singam Puli CC gets the better of AG's Office

G. Periyasamy's five for 32, followed by G. Rajalingam's unbeaten 54, guided Singam Puli CC to a four-wicket victory over AG's Office in a TNCA third division 'B' zone league match held recently.

In the sixth division 'A' zone, Krishna Sai's 105 and M. Sreejith's four for 57 proved decisive as St. Mary's edged past Jai Hind by a narrow seven-run margin.

G. Periyasamy (Singam Puli, 5/32).

A. Rohan (Kohinoor, 5/36).

M.S. Rajeev (YMCA, 100).

R. Krishna Sai (St. Mary's, 105).

R. Mithun (Garnet, 6/28).

The scores: III-B: AG's Office 191 in 41 overs (S. Ashwini Balaji 35, P. Francis Rokins 43, S. Maniraj 42 n.o., G. Periyasamy 5/32) lost to Singam Puli CC 196/6 in 42.2 overs (G. Rajalingam 54 n.o.).

Hunters XI 319 in 49.3 overs (B.K. Samrith 69, S.S. Sharath Maalan 54, S.A. Bhavik Dariyo 61, J. Jai Suriya 41) bt Aruna 231 in 47 overs (R. Krishna Moorthy 62, V. Aakash 49 n.o., Abhinav Balaji 3/23, V.S. Tamizhdhasan 3/38).

SNJ 200 in 44 overs (P. Sugendhiran 70, R. Hrishikesh Trilochan 49, S. Dinesh Kumar 3/18) bt Madras Aryan Club 171 in 42 overs (S. Somasundaram 43, R. Audhi Sachin 31, K. Barath Kumar 38, S. Rajesh 3/27, G. Rajaguhan 4/41).

Prem 171 in 43.3 overs (K. Laxman Arvind 59, C. Ashwin 32, K. Bharat Reddy 3/26, J. Joel Joseph 4/27) lost to IOB 174/7 in 40.3 overs (Abhishek Ashok 32, V. Varun 47).

Fox Trotters 152 in 44 overs (Karan Hamir Sampat 40, S.N. Darshan 44 n.o., R. Mithun 6/28) lost to Garnet 153/3 in 22.5 overs (A. Vignesh 42, T. Kapil 34, Rahul 47 n.o.).

Triplicane SC 167 in 49.2 overs (B.J. Nithish Kumar 45) lost to Sir MCTM Old Boys 169/3 in 20.2 overs (M. Sathish 63, Om Ainesh Karthikeyan 84 n.o.).

VI-A: Bank of India 127 in 24.2 overs (S. Nishanth 81, S. Ramachandran 4/39, R. Sathish Kumar 3/32, B. Venkatesh 3/26) lost to Gandhi 130/7 in 29.1 overs (A. Guru Prasad 40 n.o., V. Kirubakaran 3/39).

Pegasus 117 in 27.2 overs (R. Sowndararajan 48, Arun Buvanesh 3/28, M. Maheshwaran 3/8) lost to Grand Prix 118/7 in 23.4 overs (S. Krishna Kumar 30 n.o., V. Thirumalai 3/33).

Cosmopolitan Club 236/6 in 30 overs (A. Kapil Sharma 82, K. Rajesh 31, G. Suresh Kumar 55, G. Ravishankar 3/43) bt Presidency College 169 in 29.5 overs (K. Arun Kumar 30, J. Daniel Raj 3/37).

St. Mary's 206/4 in 30 overs (Krishna Sai 105, J. Sundaresan 40) bt Jai Hind 199 in 29.5 overs (S. Kishangandhi 35, Ajay Dueman 31, M. Sreejith 4/57, R. Sudharsan 3/58).

Chennai Corporation 175/6 in 30 overs (S. Ashwin 32, Ganesh Gurung 54, Thiru Vignesh 38 n.o.) lost to Eccentrics 180/5 in 27.4 overs (V. Aravinda Kumar 65 n.o., R. Vishaal 38).

VI-B: Amar 185/7 in 30 overs (L. Jai Hairsh 63, Bharath Sivakumar 42, K. Sathish 3/39) bt MFL 183/7 in 30 overs (K. Emasagar 69, R. Prajanth 40).

Anna University 164/9 in 30 overs (T. Surendar 34, G. Madan Kumar 35, T. Arun Kumar 3/32) lost to TFUCC 167/8 in 29.4 overs (V. Hemanthram 58, S. Navaladi Muthu Kumar 3/33)

Halifaxs 184 in 30 overs (J. Kumara Vel 62, P. Tharun 3/41) lost to YMCA (Royapettah) 185/1 in 22.2 overs (M.S. Rajeev 100 n.o., Prashaanth Balasubramaniam 41).

Ashok Leyland 67 in 21.4 overs (A. Rohan 5/36) lost to Kohinoor XI 71/2 in 15.2 overs (M. Krithik 30 n.o.).

ENGAGEMENTS

Cricket: TNCA first division league, day two, Singam Puli vs Nelson (SSN); Jolly Rovers vs Vijay (IITM-Chemplast); MRC-A vs Young Stars (SRMC, turf); Grand Slam vs Jupiter (Guru Nanak); SKM vs Sea Hawks (Tagore); Globe Trotters vs Alwarpet (MRF-Pachaiyappa's), 9.30 a.m.

K. MURALI KUMAR, AP, NAGARA GOPAL

First impressions and the lasting impact

It is up to Mukul Choudhary, Praful, Sakib and the others waiting to press their claims to build on these early gains if their ambitions are to snowball towards their logical end

R. Kaushik

GR Vishwanath, the wonderfully wristy stylist from Bengaluru, wasn't the first Indian batter to make a century on Test debut. Nor was the second. Or even the third.

But he was the first Indian debutant centurion to score a second Test ton. And then a third, and a fourth, ending up with 14 hundreds when he played the last of his 91 Tests in February 1983. Remarkably, 'Vishy' never announced his retirement from the five-day game; dropped after a forgettable tour of Pakistan, he played First Class cricket for five more seasons before riding away into the sunset.

Before him, Lala Amarnath, Deepak Shodhan, AG Kripal Singh, Abbas Ali Baig and Hanumant Singh all announced their arrival in international cricket with three-figure knocks. Not one of these five gentlemen would make a second hundred. Vishy, who celebrated his Test debut against Australia in Kanpur in November 1969 by erasing the bitter disappointment of a first-innings duck with 137 of the finest in the second innings, finally broke the jinx in February 1973.

Breaking the hoodoo

It took Vishy three and a half years and 25 innings to 'get the monkey off the back', as he recalls in his 2022 autobiography *Wrist Assured*. "I was beginning to think it was one of those things that happened for no reason," he writes of the no-second-hundred syndrome. "So, when I did touch three-figures in Bombay (as it was then), I was a relieved man. Subconsciously, I had started to believe that I would never replicate my feat in Kanpur. I wasn't desperate for a hundred, no, but I was still looking to get over 'the hoodoo', as it was called in Indian cricket circles. It was a milestone moment not just for me, but for Indian batting as a whole."

After Vishy, 11 more Indians have uncorked statement-making debut Test tons. Mohammed Azharuddin scored hundreds in his first three Tests, while fellow future captains Sourav Ganguly and Rohit Sharma slammed centuries in each of their first two matches. The last Indian to produce a ton on his maiden appearance was Yashasvi Jaiswal in July 2023; the prolific left-hander now has seven hundreds in 28 Tests.

To deliver the goods on one's maiden appearance in any sport at the highest level must be an indescribably fulfilling feeling with multiple ramifications. For one thing, it will explode the inevitable gremlins of self-doubt, of insecurity and a certain diffidence, of the inescapable if somewhat irrational consideration of whether one belongs. Especially in a team sport, it will buy the individual a little bit of time to grow into their role. It will also raise the level of expectations, especially from an Indian context and more specifically from the context of Indian cricket because expectations and Indian cricketers have been inseparable bedfellows from the time Kapil Dev's intrepid warriors turned the world order upside down with their spectacular triumph at the 1983 World Cup.

It isn't just individuals that are nervous about their debuts. It won't be fanciful to suggest that apprehension was among the primary emotions the founding fathers entertained when the Indian Premier League kicked off at Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium nearly 18 years back to the day. On 18 April 2008, Rahul Dravid's Royal Challengers Bangalore (as they were then called) locked horns with Ganguly's Kolkata Knight Riders. Less than six months previously, Dravid had stepped down as India's captain after leading the side for two years, having taken over from Ganguly who was sacked after five and a half years at the helm.

There was an understandable buzz about the IPL, conceptualised by Lalit Modi and given shape, even if belatedly, by the other visionaries in the Board of Control for Cricket in India. The IPL was projected as a mix of cricket and entertainment, with 'When opportunity meets talent' as its USP. The inaugural edition included the best players in the world in a format of which Indians had little taste. Or experience.

Of course, India's unexpected march to the title at the inaugural T20 World Cup in South Africa less than a half-year previously was just the shot in the arm the IPL needed. Until the World Cup, India had played exactly one Twenty20 International, against South Africa in Johannesburg in December 2006. With Dinesh Karthik in the forefront, India won a tense affair by six wickets, taking 19.5 overs to reel in the Proteas' modest 126 for nine. Virender Sehwag was the captain, it was Sachin Tendulkar's only T20I and there was no Dravid, Ganguly or Yuvraj Singh. Few remembered the game at the start of the World Cup, fewer still remember it now, but India's debut as a T20I side will remain memorable for the right reasons.

Just how much significance the Indian board attached to the T20 World Cup was evidenced from the grand launch of the IPL in Mumbai on 13 September 2007, even as first-time, left-field skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni was masterminding a stunning coup in the land of the Big Five. It was, however, the World Cup success story that would headline the narrative in the lead-up to the start of the Indian Premier League.

A full house at the Chinnaswamy didn't know what to expect or what was in store even as it partook of a glitzy opening ceremony marked by the promised entertainment and a fireworks display that left several in the stands with minor burns. One half of the bargain had been fulfilled. Now, it was over to the cricket.

For all its dalliances with glamour and Bollywood and afterparties in the initial few years, the IPL became a product to cherish and savour owing to the quality of the cricket. It was imperative for cricket to remain at the front and centre and no one understood it better, for want of a better phrase, than Brendon McCullum, the former New Zealand captain who is now under immense scrutiny in his role as England's all-format coach after his famed 'Bazball' approach hasn't managed to bring entertainment and success together.

But on 18 April 2008, McCullum was both entertaining and successful. Immensely so, providing the IPL with just the fillip it required in its very first match.

Magical knock

After Dravid chose to field, McCullum tore into the RCB bowling with a ferocity seldom witnessed at the Chinnaswamy. Numerous Test hundreds and double-centuries had been uncorked, but this mayhem was something else. One had to be present at the venue to grasp the full force of McCullum's pyrotechnics. The fours flowed regularly, 10 of them, but they were eclipsed by the sixes (13). In a matter of 73 balls, McCullum had taken the IPL to a stratospheric level with a subliminal unbeaten 158. Against Zaheer Khan and Praveen Kumar and Jacques Kallis and Sunil Joshi. The legend of the IPL had taken shape, entirely because of the magical luminescence of one man's ability.

In the years that followed, the IPL has grown from strength to strength. There have been seismic controversies, sure, but the tournament has been resilient enough to meet, tackle and overcome these challenges and set up shop as the unmatched No. 1 when it comes to franchise-based T20 leagues. And it continues to facilitate talent meeting opportunity.

Take Mukul Choudhary, for instance, in his debut season. And Praful Hinge and Sakib Hussain too, for that matter. Choudhary is a 21-year-old from Rajasthan, bought before this season by Lucknow Super Giants for ₹2.6 crore on the back of his exploits for his state in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. His first two IPL games were largely uneventful - 14 in a losing cause against Delhi Capitals, 2 not out off five balls and the best seat at the non-striker's end as his captain, Rishabh Pant, smashed three boundaries in five balls in the last over in a dramatic win over Sunrisers Hyderabad. Then came Eden Gardens and Choudhary's chance to make himself a household name. He came in at 104 for five, which soon became 128 for seven; his team needed a further 54 for victory against KKR, and Choudhary had only his bowlers for support. Fear not, he seemed to say, during a furious onslaught that left the audiences in shock and awe. The 54 were knocked off in 24 deliveries; Avesh Khan faced just three of those as Choudhary went on a six-hitting rampage with Vaibhav Arora, Kartik Tyagi and Cameron Green at the receiving end. 54 not out off 27, two fours and seven sixes, made Choudhary a marked man, one to be watched and followed and scrutinised, especially with head coach Justin Langer promising to make him the best No. 6 or 7 to play T20s for India. Wow.

And what about Hinge and Sakib? Sunrisers Hyderabad, the 2016 champions, had made a poor start to their 2026 campaign with three defeats in their first four matches when they decided to shake things up. Out went IPL veterans Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat for the showdown against Rajasthan Royals, boasting the precocious, precious 15-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi and a four-on-four unbeaten record. In came debutants Hinge and Sakib. Lambs to the slaughter, you say?

Yes, but not in the way it was perceived initially.

Dream debut

Skipper Ishan Kishan's enterprising 91 had lifted SRH to 216 for six in front of their loyal Orange Army, who brought the roof down in the first over of the RR chase. Within no time, Hinge packed off Suryavanshi, Dhruv Jurel and Lhuan-dre Pretorius, all for ducks, to leave RR reeling at 1 for 3. In the next over, Sakib had Jaiswal caught at third man, and Hinge returned in the third to pack off Riyan Parag, the rival skipper. 9 for 5, game over, sealed nicely in a lovely box with a ribbon on top. Hinge finished with four for 34, Sakib struck in his subsequent spells too to end up with even more impressive figures of four for 24. The former, from Vidarbha, is 24, the latter from Bihar is 21, both having honed their skills at the MRF Pace Foundation under Glenn McGrath. Like the IPL itself in 2008, they couldn't have hoped for anything more meaningful or substantial on their respective debuts. Like Choudhary, they are also surrounded by experienced, well-intentioned, well-meaning support groups who know what it takes to keep meteors grounded. It's up to them, Hinge and Sakib and Choudhary and the others waiting to press their claims, to build on these early gains if their ambitions are to snowball towards their logical end.

THE GIST

- To deliver the goods on one's maiden appearance in any sport at the highest level must be an indescribably fulfilling feeling with multiple ramifications
- For all its dalliances with glamour and Bollywood and afterparties in the initial few years, the IPL became a product to cherish and savour owing to the quality of the cricket
- In the years that followed, the IPL has grown from strength to strength. There have been seismic controversies, sure, but the tournament has been resilient enough to meet, tackle and overcome these challenges

New brain-inspired 'memristors' promise to reduce AI energy use

Scientists at Cambridge University have found that hafnium-based films can reliably behave like synapses and with a low energy demand; hafnium oxide is already widely used in advanced CMOS transistors, which means chip manufacturers know how to deposit and integrate it at scale

Shamim Haque Mondal

Researchers from the University of Cambridge have reported a new kind of brain-inspired nanodevice, a hafnium-oxide memristor, that could dramatically cut artificial intelligence's (AI) energy bill by bringing memory and computation into the same component.

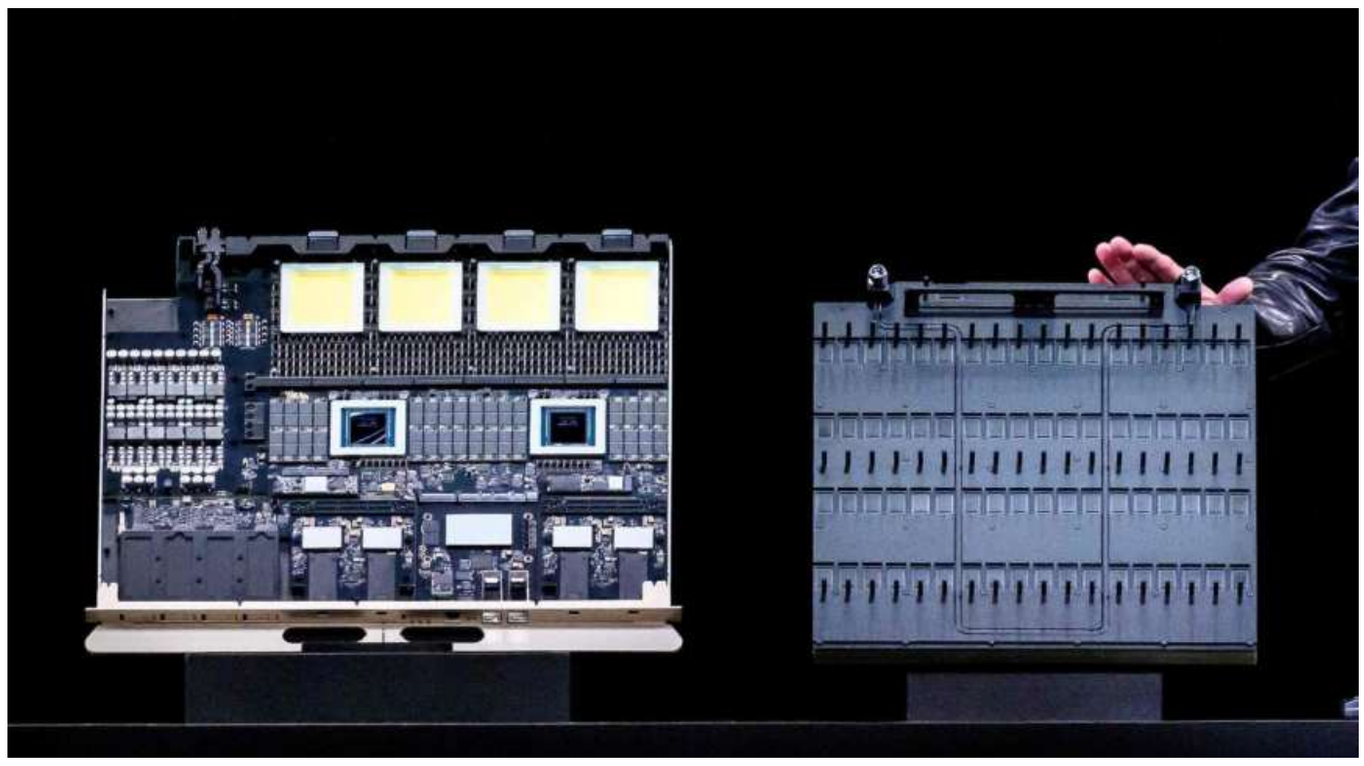
The findings were published in *Science Advances* on March 20.

Most of today's computers have the von Neumann architecture: the memory, e.g. its DRAM, is located in one place and its processors – which are usually GPUs when the workload is to run AI models – are in another location. So for every calculation, data needs to be transported between the DRAM and the GPUs.

In modern computing setups that handle large AI models, this movement of data, rather than the calculations themselves, can dominate total energy use, especially when information must travel on and off chips or across multiple servers. Loading a single byte of data from off-chip memory can cost much more energy than adding two numbers the moment they arrive, in the same location.

The human brain takes a different approach. Every synapse – the junctions where neurons communicate – both stores and processes information locally, which means memory and processing are fused inside the same biological hardware. This is one reason the human brain can run roughly 10^{14} synaptic operations per second on about 20 W of power (less than a dim household light bulb), but an AI model running in a data centre will need at least hundreds to thousands of times more power for the same number of operations.

The field of neuromorphic computing aims to recreate this architecture by building electronic devices that act more like synapses and neurons than like traditional transistors and RAM chips.



In conventional computers that run AI models, the memory is located in one place and the GPUs (shown here) are in another location. So for every calculation, data needs to be transported between them. If the AI model is large, this movement of data can dominate total energy use. AFP

Resistor with memory

The Cambridge team, which has also been working on neuromorphic computing, reported that its new memristor can also store and process data in the same place. By avoiding having to transport data, the chip cut energy use by more than 70%, the researchers estimated. The term 'memristor' is a combination of 'memory' and 'resistor'. A resistor is a small device that applies a fixed amount of resistance to a current passed through it. (If you took science in high school, you must have seen one in your lab: a small, bean-shaped piece with bands of colours and two pins at the ends.) Unlike a resistor, a memristor has variable resistance – but it's also capable of something unusual. When a current is passed through it, the memristor offers some resistance. When the current is removed, the memristor 'remembers' the resistance it offered and maintains it.

In a neuromorphic chip, each memristor can serve as an artificial synapse, with its resistance level representing the strength of the connection between two neurons.

Memristors are nanomaterials and don't take up much space. Their energy demand is also very small.

They are usually made of a thin layer of titanium dioxide (TiO_2) sandwiched between two metal electrodes. Most oxide-based memristors on the market or in prototypes rely on a small conductive filament that forms and breaks inside a thin layer of metal oxide. This filamentary mechanism lets the device switch between different resistance states but tends to be fickle: filaments grow unpredictably or need relatively high voltages to form, which can increase the energy demand.

A better memristor

The researchers, led by Babak Bakht, a professor in the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy at Cambridge, created a p-n junction at the interface between a hafnium-based oxide film and an underlying titanium oxynitride layer.

A p-n junction is an interface that works like a gate: electrons can cross from one side to the other if the energy barrier between them is low enough. If the barrier is low, more electrons will flow, and the resistance will be smaller.

The junction thus works like an adjustable electronic gate in the device. The researchers raised or lowered the barrier by gently pushing ions in the film with low-voltage electrical pulses. This changed the device's resistance smoothly instead of turning a filament on or off. The memristor's behaviour was also more predictable from one cycle and one device to the next than previous designs.

The field of neuromorphic computing aims at recreating the human brain's architecture by building electronic devices that act more like synapses and neurons than like traditional transistors and RAM chips

A memristor switches when it changes from one resistance state to another (like high to low). Conventional oxide memristors need a certain minimum current to trigger this. In laboratory tests, on the other hand, the hafnium-based memristor required a million-times less current to switch. This, the researchers estimated, could significantly reduce AI energy consumption by up to 70% if widely adopted. The various resistances can also be used to represent a range of values and be used to perform calculations directly where the data is stored, instead of moving it to a separate processor.

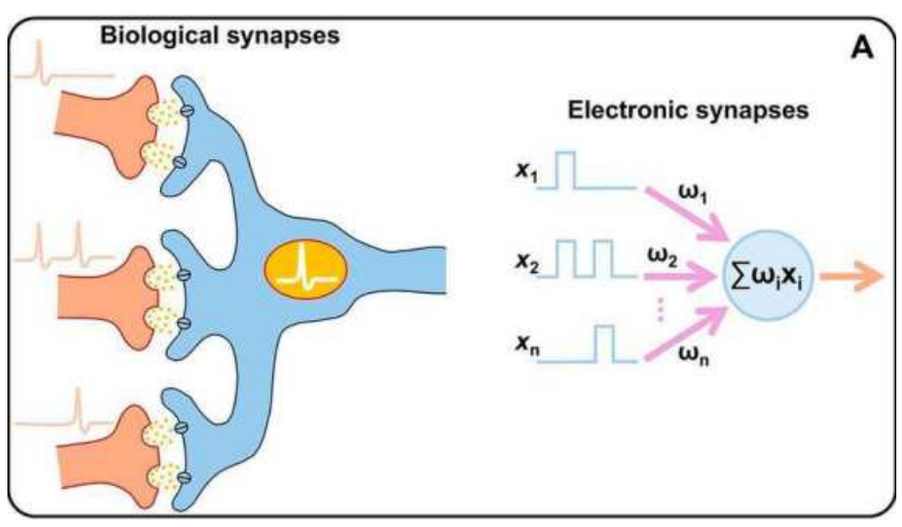
The team's experiments also revealed changes in the device's resistance that mimicked the working of synapses in the brain. Small changes in input produced small changes in output while big changes in input yielded big changes in output – a relationship called linearity. The devices also exhibited an analogue of spike-timing-dependent plasticity. Here, if one neuron fires just before another, the connection between two neurons strengthens; if the order is reversed, it weakens. The memristors could also endure tens of thousands of switching cycles and retained their programmed states for about a day, sufficing for many on-chip learning tasks.

Hafnium oxide is already widely used in advanced CMOS transistors, which means chip manufacturers know how to deposit and integrate it at scale. By showing that hafnium-based films can reliably behave like synapses and with a low energy demand, the Cambridge team has narrowed the gap between cutting-edge neuromorphic research and the use of semiconductors in industry.

However, there is a catch: the multicomponent films used in the study currently require fabrication temperatures around 700 °C, which is far higher than the temperature used to make commercial semiconductors, and the process also takes longer. The researchers wrote in their paper that they are currently working to ensure future production of this neuromorphic chip aligns with conventional technologies.

Neuromorphic engineering is the branch of engineering that seeks to create applications that emulate the brain's structure using three-dimensional arrays of neuron-like and synapse-like components that interact in complex ways. The underlying technologies promise to require less energy than regular GPUs. The Cambridge memristor could be a part of these brain-inspired devices. That said, even if today's neuromorphic circuits can replicate the behaviour of millions of neurons, they are still a long way from being as complicated as the human brain. The Cambridge team's work has improved synaptic components and has made it easier to build larger, even more energy-efficient neuromorphic systems.

(Shamim Haque Mondal is a researcher in the Physics Division, State Forensic Science Laboratory, Kolkata. shamimmondal709@gmail.com)



The human brain takes a different approach to traditional computers. Every synapse — the junctions where neurons communicate — both stores and processes information locally, which means memory and processing are fused inside the same biological hardware. DOI: 10.1126/SCIADV.AEC2324

Blowing in the wind: Research showed that a tree's leaf density had a major effect on where pollen ended up. ALEX JONES/UNSPLASH

New tool predicts how pollen travels through cities

Vasudevan Mukunth

Every spring, lakhs of people suffering from allergies brace for sneezing fits and itchy eyes as trees release pollen into the air. Now, a team of researchers from France and the U.S. has built a tool that can predict exactly how pollen travels through a city once the wind picks it up. In the study, published in *Physics of Fluids*, the team created a computer simulation method they called DF-PIBM, short for 'direct-forcing porous immersed boundary method'. Basically the researchers wrote computer code that treated a tree like a sponge, with air flowing through its leaves and branches, and then tracked pollen grains as the wind carried them off.

Trees are a major source of airborne allergens in cities. As climate change stretches the pollen season and urban municipalities plant more trees for shade, understanding where pollen goes has become a public health concern. Thus far, scientists lacked precise tools to simulate what happens to pollen at the scale of a single tree in a real urban environment.

The simulation divided the tree into cells and calculated the wind speed and pressure inside each one. When the pressure in a cell exceeded the force required to shake a grain loose from a flower, the simulation released that grain into the air and tracked its journey using the laws of physics.

As climate change stretches the pollen season, understanding where pollen goes has become a public health concern

The detachment force for a pollen grain is roughly 50 billionths of a newton, roughly the weight of a single human cell. The model accounted for this as well as the density of leaves in different parts of the tree. Before applying their tool to real trees, the team checked it against a series of known cases – including air flowing past cylinders and spheres – to confirm it produced accurate results. Then they compared its predictions against wind measurements taken around an oak tree in Denmark using laser-based instruments called LiDARs. The model matched the measurements to within about 5%, which the researchers considered good.

Then they applied the model to two real trees: an oak tree and a linden tree near a university hospital in Rouen, France. The linden tree's pollen is known to trigger hay fever and coughing.

The simulations showed that a tree's leaf density had a major effect on where pollen ended up. A tree with fewer, more spread-out leaves, like oaks, released pollen in a relatively even cloud that spread slowly. A denser tree pushed pollen through in more turbulent bursts. Within just a few seconds of wind contact, tens of thousands of pollen grains could become airborne. The researchers released around 1 lakh simulated pollen grains in the linden tree experiment and tracked them over 4 minutes of simulated wind at 5 km/hr. The results showed pollen concentrating in the tree's wake, the area directly downwind, which is also where pedestrians are most likely to be exposed. The team acknowledged that their model is still a first step. It doesn't yet account for pollen grains colliding with each other or sticking to surfaces. Future versions could be scaled up to simulate entire neighbourhoods, helping city planners decide where to plant which trees.

(mukunth.v@thehindu.co.in)

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Forest of wonders: a quiz on unusual trees

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

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

The outer bark of this tree peels away at different times of the year, revealing a green inner bark that matures into shades of blue, purple, orange, and maroon. It's the only species of its kind indigenous to the northern hemisphere. Name this tree.

QUESTION 2

The _____ is often called the "upside-down tree" because its branches look like roots sticking into the air. Its large, seemingly swollen trunk can store more than 1 lakh litres of water to endure the harsh conditions of the African savannah. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3

While most trees grow fruit on their branches, the Jabuticaba is X, meaning its flowers and fruits grow directly on the main trunk and on older limbs, giving the tree the appearance of being covered in large, dark warts. What is X?

QUESTION 4

_____ is the name of a large colony of quaking aspens in Utah in the U.S. While it looks like a forest of 47,000 individual trees, they all share a single underground root system and are genetically identical, making it one of the heaviest living organisms on the earth. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 5

This tree gets its name due to its roots, which are stilt-like and grow from the base of the trunk. While scientists debate the extent of movement, it is believed the tree can 'walk' several centimeters a year by growing new roots towards sunlight and letting the old roots die off. What is the name?

Visual: Name this grove in east California which is also the name of a (non-clonal) tree here that's 4,857 years old — the oldest of its kind on the earth. The name comes from a biblical patriarch who is said to have lived for almost a millennium. OKE (CC BY-SA)

Answers to to April 14 quiz:

1. Moment when earth's axis is perpendicular to the sun – **Ans: Spring equinox**
2. Zodiac system used in India – **Ans: Sidereal**
3. Difference in degrees between tropical and sidereal systems today – **Ans: 23°**
4. Apparent path the sun takes through the sky – **Ans: Ecliptic**
5. Why the sun doesn't return to the same point in the sky on a date – **Ans: Precession of the equinoxes**

Visual: **Pico della Mirandola**

First contact:
Tamal Biswas | K.N. Viswanathan | Prem Nath Tiwari | Anmol Agrawal

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Fall in government's wheat procurement since last rabi season

69 in per cent. Wheat, the main rabi (winter) crop, is procured through the April-March period. However, much of the grain is bought in the first few months itself. The agencies have procured 15.30 lakh tonne so far since the start of the procurement operation from April 1. PTI

Amount Saudi Arabia is set to deposit in Pakistan's central bank

3 in $ billion. The funds will provide a financial boost to Pakistan, where the economy has come under strain during regional tensions linked to the conflict between the U.S. and Iran. Authorities said earlier that the country would return $2 billion deposited by the UAE in Pakistan's central bank in 2019. PTI

People missing in boat capsize in Andaman Sea

250 At least 250 people, including Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals, were missing after a boat capsized in the Andaman Sea recently on the way to Malaysia, according to the United Nations' refugee and migration agencies. PTI

The amount the EU is set to invest in 57 defence projects

1.3 in $ billion. The European Commission said it will invest 1.07 billion euros in 57 defence projects in critical sectors such as AI, cyber security, drones and anti-drone systems. The investments are supporting the goals of the EU Commission's Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030. REUTERS

Japan's support for Southeast Asia amid the oil crunch

10 in $ billion. The initiative, dubbed "Power Asia", will see Japan contribute 1.6 trillion yen to Southeast Asian nations to strengthen their energy supply chain and help them better procure crude and petroleum products. AFP

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What changed in Hungary's election?

What makes Viktor Orban's defeat significant? What led to his fall after 16 years? Who is Peter Magyar? What changes can Hungary expect? Does Orban's defeat signal the political limits of right-wing populism?

EXPLAINER

G. Sampath

The story so far:

In Hungary's general elections held on April 12, Viktor Orban (63), the Christian nationalist Prime Minister who had been in power since 2010, slumped to a shock defeat. His party, Fidesz, won only 55 seats (37.8% vote share) in the 199-member National Assembly. The Opposition Tisza Party, led by Peter Magyar (45), a former Fidesz leader, secured a two-thirds majority with 138 seats (53.6% of the vote), while the far-right Mi Hazank (Our Homeland Movement) won six seats (5.8% vote share).

What is the significance of Orban's defeat?

Under Mr. Orban, Hungary had effectively become an electoral autocracy. In 2011, he used his two-thirds majority in the National Assembly to pass a new Constitution that centralised power and eroded democratic checks and balances. A new law forced hundreds of judges to retire, who were then replaced by Orban loyalists, weakening judicial independence. He secured near-complete control over the media by selectively channelling government advertising and ensuring that critical outlets were either shut down or taken over by his loyalists.

He also manipulated Hungary's electoral system to his advantage through various means that favoured large parties like Fidesz, including granting voting rights to non-resident ethnic Hungarians in Central Europe and gerrymandering (redrawing electoral constituency boundaries to suit his party). These changes helped him win consecutive elections. With pollsters predicting another term for Mr. Orban, his loss came as a shock to the world.

Given how he had altered Hungary's democratic landscape and foreign policy and sought to project Hungary as a model for 'illiberal democracy', his exit assumes historic significance.

Peter Magyar cheers as he arrives at the entrance of the Presidential Sandor Palace on Wednesday. AFP

What were the reasons for his defeat?

Political analysts have flagged four major reasons: a stagnant economy, high unemployment, a broken healthcare system, and a strong anti-corruption campaign led by Mr. Magyar. The rise of Gen Z voters also played a part. It was a key factor in the 76.5% voter turnout – the highest since Hungary's post-1990 democratic transition – indicating a widespread sentiment that this was a high-stakes election.

A growing public perception that Mr. Orban was running a 'kleptocracy', along with a stuttering economy, was a double blow that led to mass discontent and a yearning for change.

Who is Peter Magyar?

A former ally of Mr. Orban, Mr. Magyar broke away from the party and resigned from all government positions in 2024 following a political scandal in which the then-President had pardoned the head of a children's home who had been convicted of covering up child sexual abuse.

Mr. Magyar utilised the scandal to reposition himself from a system insider to an Opposition leader. He amplified it by releasing a politically damaging audio recording of his ex-wife, Judit Varga, who was Justice Minister at the time and had countersigned the pardon. The recording was made secretly when they were still married.

Founding a new political party would have taken time and posed administrative hurdles, so Mr. Magyar joined the little-known Tisza party to contest the European Parliament elections. He won, becoming a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) in 2024. Soon after, he conducted a series of high-decibel media interviews and public rallies in which he accused the Orban regime of rampant corruption, repeatedly claiming that "a few families own half the country".

Ahead of the 2026 elections, he campaigned extensively across Hungary, advocating urgent change with the slogan, "Now or never". His mass mobilisation efforts paid off.

Does Magyar represent a clean break with the Orban era?

Yes and no. Mr. Magyar has the two-thirds 'supermajority' needed to roll back the anti-democratic constitutional changes made by Mr. Orban, and he has promised to do so. He has also called on all of Mr. Orban's 'puppets' in the government to resign. Hungary's institutions, especially the judiciary and academic institutions, could regain some of their lost autonomy.

On the foreign policy front, there will be a clear break from Mr. Orban's pro-Russia, anti-EU stance, with Mr. Magyar going the other way – pro-EU and anti-Russia. In fact, his election rallies were marked by chants of "*Ruszkik, haza*!" ("Russians, go home!") – a reference to the Hungarian revolution of 1956, when the country was under Soviet occupation, and an expression of resentment at Mr. Orban's close ties to Moscow. However, while he is likely to reduce Russian influence in government and support the EU's $103 billion loan package to Ukraine – which Mr. Orban had blocked – he is not in favour of accelerating Ukraine's EU membership and is wary of being seen as overly pro-Kyiv. At the same time, he aims to reduce Hungary's dependence on Russian energy.

On immigration, Mr. Magyar could end up being tougher in material terms. He wants to cut back on the guest worker programme to protect Hungarian wages.

Does Orban's defeat mark the limits of populism?

Mr. Orban's populism had served as an ideological inspiration for similar political formations across the world, including the MAGA movement. Vice President J.D. Vance even visited Hungary to lend his weight to Mr. Orban's election campaign.

The combination of a skewed electoral system, an unlimited campaign war chest, and a clueless Opposition had made Mr. Orban appear invincible for 16 years. But a new political party led by an energetic leader demonstrated that even in an electoral autocracy, if the Opposition hits the streets and successfully engages younger voters, it may not be impossible to defeat a dispensation that uses populist policies as a cloak for rampant cronyism and economic mismanagement.

THE GIST

- Viktor Orban suffered a shock defeat, with a growing perception of a "kleptocracy" and a stuttering economy leading to mass discontent and a yearning for change.
- Peter Magyar led a strong campaign marked by anti-corruption messaging and mass mobilisation, securing a two-thirds majority and signalling a potential rollback of Orban-era changes.

Why is the Strait of Hormuz critical to global energy flows?

What is a maritime chokepoint? How does international law govern these waters?

Smriti Sudesh

The story so far:

Since late February, the Strait of Hormuz has emerged as the centre of a deepening energy and security crisis. The escalation followed U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, after which Tehran tightened restrictions on the narrow waterway. The situation intensified further this week when President Donald Trump ordered a U.S. naval blockade of vessels sailing to or from Iranian ports. As of April, a ceasefire has allowed a limited number of ships to pass through. However, continued threats and the U.S. blockade have kept most tankers away, reducing daily transits from around 130 vessels to just a few on several days.

What is a maritime chokepoint?

A maritime chokepoint is a narrow stretch of sea through which a large share of global trade must pass, with no easy alternative route. These are natural geographic bottlenecks created by coastlines, islands, or narrow channels that concentrate shipping into tight corridors. Because ships cannot easily reroute, these chokepoints become critical nodes in the global trading system. Today, between 70 and 80% of the world's oil moves by sea, and much of it passes through such chokepoints. Even a single incident can disrupt traffic almost immediately. The consequences can be far-reaching. Energy prices tend to rise sharply, shipping costs increase and supply chains can be disrupted. This can lead to shortages of critical commodities, contributing to inflation and slowing economic growth.

Why is the Strait of Hormuz critical?

The Strait of Hormuz is widely regarded as the world's most important maritime chokepoint. It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean and is a primary export route for oil producers in the region. At its narrowest, the strait is just 21 nautical miles (38 km) wide. Under normal circumstances, about 21 million barrels of oil – roughly one-fifth of global consumption – pass through it each day. In addition to crude oil, large volumes of liquefied natural gas from Qatar and the UAE also move through this route. Nearly 80% of these energy flows go to Asia, making countries such as India, China, Japan, and South Korea dependent on the route.

What are the other key global chokepoints?

Beyond Hormuz, the global trading system relies on a small set of equally critical maritime chokepoints. These include the Strait of Malacca, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal.

The Strait of Malacca runs between the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. It forms the shortest sea route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, making it a key route for trade between West Asia, Africa, and East Asia.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait sits between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. It acts as the southern gateway into the Red Sea, through which ships must pass before reaching the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean. This makes it a crucial link in the trade route between Asia and Europe.

The Suez Canal is an artificial waterway that cuts across Egypt, connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. It allows ships to avoid the long journey around Africa.

Further west, the Panama Canal cuts across the narrow Isthmus of Panama, linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This makes it a vital route for trade between Asia, the Americas, and Europe, eliminating the need to sail around South America.

How does international law apply to these waterways?

The movement of ships through international chokepoints is governed primarily by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Under its provisions, straits used for international navigation are subject to the principle of "transit passage", which allows ships and aircraft of all nations to pass continuously and without obstruction. However, countries along the strait can regulate shipping for safety and environmental reasons, but they cannot stop ships from passing through or impose selective restrictions. This right of passage is broadly recognised under international law, though in practice, enforcement depends on naval strength and coordination between countries.

THE GIST

- The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow stretch through which about one-fifth of global oil and large volumes of LNG pass daily, making it central to global energy flows and trade.
- Blockades or threats can sharply reduce shipping, push up energy prices, disrupt supply chains.

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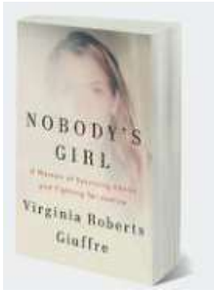
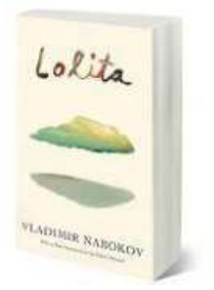
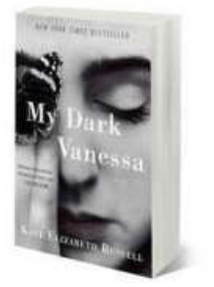






Speaking out: An activist installs an unofficial sign renaming the Buckingham Palace memorial garden in honour of Virginia Giuffre. REUTERS

Beyond consent: how power, legal ambiguities, and attitudes enable abuse

Several books underline how the line between agency and coercion blurs in age- and power-imbalanced relationships, exposing younger, less powerful individuals to enduring harm

Preeti Zachariah

A little under a year ago, Virginia Giuffre, one of the most vocal and prominent survivors of Jeffrey Epstein's and Ghislaine Maxwell's decades-long sex trafficking ring, died by suicide. According to a statement released by her family, the 41-year-old "lost her life to suicide, after being a lifelong victim of sexual abuse and sex trafficking... In the end, the toll of abuse is so heavy that it became unbearable for Virginia to handle its weight."

Giuffre's *Nobody's Girl: A Memoir of Surviving Abuse and Fighting for Justice,* which came out in October last year, six months after her death, is a chilling testimony to that statement. Co-written with Amy Wallace, the book traces Giuffre's tragic life, marked by sexual abuse, neglect, mental and physical health challenges, financial strife, and, as Wallace mentions in the foreword, even domestic abuse.

Nobody's Girl, which became a bestseller almost immediately, and has been described by reviewers as "important", "courageous", "sad", and "devastating", is a harrowing and often triggering read.

"I know many monsters. As a child, I suffered nearly every kind of abuse: incest, parental neglect, severe corporal punishment, molestation, and rape. As a teen, I had been sexually trafficked by another paedophile even before I met Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, but these two doubled down on my suffering," writes Giuffre. She constantly reminds the reader that Epstein was not an outlier, but a product of a society that enables men like him through indifference and selective blindness. "Epstein is dead, but the attitude that allowed him to do what he did? It's alive and well."

Under the microscope

The plethora of novels and memoirs depicting complex, often predatory liaisons between adolescents and older men suggests that Giuffre is onto something. Art, after all, is often inherently mimetic, whether it be cult classics such as Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and Marguerite Duras' *The Lover,* or Kate Elizabeth Russell's *My Dark Vanessa*, JM Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Jenny Erpenbeck's *Kairos,* as well as two memoirs, one by Vanessa Springora and another by Jill Ciment, both called *Consent*. All these books place age- and power-imbalanced sexual relationships under the microscope in different ways, dissecting ideas of agency, dysfunctionality, abuse, power imbalance, sexuality, the opacity of desire, and moral greyness in romantic love. One of the key themes that emerges out of a close reading of any of these texts is how the conversation around ephebophilia (a sexual preference for adolescents), while morally reprehensible, can often be legally ambiguous. Epstein "took a certain glee in what he saw as a loophole in society's moral code...the fact that different nations and states define the age of consent differently," Giuffre writes in one part of her memoir, adding that he often argued that "these laws were arbitrary and meaningless; no one could convince him that sex with minors was wrong, because no one could agree on what a minor was!"

Deviations from morality

Cultural churns in society, too, can provide cover for sexual relationships with minors. Springora, whose memoir chronicles a relationship she had at 13 with the 50-something French writer Gabriel Matzneff (whom she refers to only as G), talks about how the libertine sexual culture of the 1970s, which continued to cast its shadow on the decade after, enabled this liaison. "In 1977, an open letter in support of the decriminalisation of sexual relations between minors and adults, entitled "Regarding a Trial," was published in the newspaper *Le Monde*, signed by several eminent intellectuals, psychoanalysts, well-known philosophers, and writers at the peak of their careers," she writes, listing them: Roland Barthes, Giles Deleuze, Simone de Beauvoir, André Glucksmann and Louis Aragon. (Incidentally, Duras refused to sign this letter.) This meant, writes Springora, that "deviations from conventional morality were viewed with a certain level of tolerance, even admiration."

A loaded question that emerges from these texts, even when there is "consent", is this: how does agency play out in situations where one party, almost always the older person, clearly holds more power, yet the less powerful person has "chosen" to participate? Springora, for instance, writes about struggling to see herself as a victim under the circumstances. "How is it possible to acknowledge having been abused when it's impossible to deny having consented, having felt desire, for the very adult who was so eager to take advantage of you," she asks.

Vanessa Wye, the protagonist of *My Dark Vanessa,* who was seduced by her 42-year-old teacher, Jacob Strane, at the age of 15, also simply refuses to see herself as a victim. The novel is a braided narrative that switches between the past and the present, in which Wye, now an adult, continues to see the relationship through a rose-coloured lens.

Even when Strane is outed by another student, Wye continues to defend him and stay in touch with him, recalling their relationship as an intense, special love affair, in which she sees herself as an equal partner. "I'm not a victim because I never wanted to be, and if I didn't want to be, then I'm not. That's how it works. The difference between rape and sex is a state of mind. You can't rape the willing, right?" she writes. It is only much later that she manages to come to terms with her past and rewrites her own narrative, finally conceding, "I was an obvious target. He chose me not because I was special, but because he was hungry and I was easy..."

Long-lasting damage

Victimhood is clearly a complex, often malleable mindset, and allowing space for that complexity is important to enable a nuanced conversation about such relationships. What does seem categorical, however, is the long-term damage it causes to a young person, as all these texts suggest. "Trauma is such a cunning enemy," writes Giuffre in *Nobody's Girl,* pointing out that while one often appears to heal from the physical and mental impacts of it, "recovering victims like me know too well how trauma lurks in the shadows, always there. No matter how many years go by, or how many therapists you see, it can rise, unbidden, seemingly out of nowhere." Her own later struggles, ending in her untimely death, appear to have been a testament to this.

In a final handwritten note released by her family days after her passing, she writes, "Mothers, Fathers, Sisters, and Brothers need to show the battle lines are drawn, and stand together to fight for the future of victims. Is protesting the answer? I don't know. But we've got to start somewhere."

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

U.S. civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his open Letter from Birmingham Jail on April 16, 1963, while imprisoned in Alabama

Prathmesh Kher

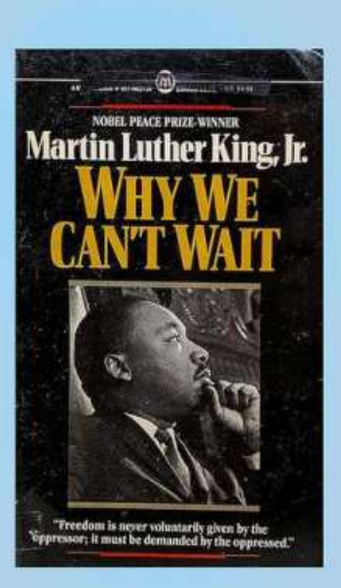
QUESTION 1
The letter famously argues that "injustice anywhere is…" what?

QUESTION 2
To what document or statement was King responding in the letter?

QUESTION 3
King compares himself and the protesters to which early Christian figure?

QUESTION 4
How was the full letter first published publicly?

QUESTION 5
Which historical examples does King use to justify civil disobedience?



Visual Question:
How is the 1964 book Why We Can't Wait connected to the letter from Birmingham jail?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Leonardo epitomised which worldview? **Ans: Renaissance humanism**
2. Which is his famous work, which is regarded as the world's most famous individual painting? **Ans: Mona Lisa**
3. This painting depicts a nude man in two overlapping standing positions, inscribed within a circle and a square. Name the painting. **Ans: Vitruvian Man**
4. Leonardo collaborated with which artist on his The Baptism of Christ? **Ans: Andrea del Verrocchio**
5. The Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci is located in which city in Italy? **Ans: Florence**
Visual: Identify this painting. What is it called, and in which year was it done? **Ans: Aerial screw, 1488**
Early Birds: C. Saravanan | K.N. Viswanathan | Rajib Ganguly | Erfanally Oosmany

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"The world must be coming to an end!"
"Why do you say that?"
"You're actually referring to the dictionary. Is something wrong?"
"Sujatha always uses big words when she talks to me. I want to tell her that whenever I talk to her, I always get confused."
"Why don't you tell her that?"
"I want to tell her that by using some big words myself."
"Why do you want to use high sounding words? Your logic discombobulates me!"
"What was that word again?"
"Discombobulate. The 'i' in the first syllable 'dis' is like the 'i' in words like 'fit', 'bit', and 'hit'. The 'o' in 'com' is like the 'a' in 'china', 'amount', and 'apply'."
"The vowel in the next syllable sounds like the 'o' in words like 'bob', 'sob', and 'mob', I suppose?"
"Very good. The 'u' in 'bu' is sometimes pronounced like the 'a' in 'china'. And the final syllable is pronounced like the word 'late'."
"And where is the main stress?"
"Why don't you tell me?"
"I would say it's on 'bob'."
"Excellent guess. The word is pronounced discomBOBulate. Any idea what the word means?"
"I've never heard...."
"...that's what happens when someone discombobulates you. They leave you completely confused."
"It always happens when I am in Sujatha's company. Can you give me an example of how the word is used?"
"Certainly. The letter from the Minister completely discombobulated the Chairman."
"I met Gopa's wife recently. She is one discombobulated woman! How does that sound?"
"I guess it's the result of being in Gopa's company all these years. He discombobulates a lot of people."
"That's true."
"My mother is so discombobulated these days. It must be the heat."
"Or your company! How about this example? I told Murthy not to let the heat of the argument discombobulate him."
"That's a great example. And speaking of Murthy, have you seen his new house?"
"I have. It's huge isn't it?"
"It's a lollapalooza."
"Another word which I can use with Sujatha. What was it again?"
"L..o..l..l..a..p..a..l..o..o..z..a. The first 'o' is like the 'o' in words like 'top', 'stop', and 'pop'. The 'a' in the second syllable 'la' rhymes with the 'a' in 'china', 'about', and 'amount'."
"The 'a' in 'pa' is pronounced the same way, I suppose?"
"My! You are sharp today. The 'a' in the final syllable is pronounced the same way too."
"I see. But what about the fourth syllable 'loo'?"
"It's pronounced like the 'oo' in words like 'fool', 'cool', and 'pool'."
"What does 'lollapalooza' mean?"
"It's a slang word which means 'something big, something wondrous'. That's one of the meanings, anyway. Lalitha fell down. You should see the bump on her head. It's a lollapalooza."
"The view from Murthy's house is truly beautiful. A real lollapalooza. How does that sound?"
"Good. Lata's singing voice is remarkable. A lollapalooza."
"Some people say the same thing about my voice too."
"Now that is a lollapalooza."
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Word of the day

Askance: with suspicion or disapproval

Synonyms: warily, skeptically, doubtfully

Usage: *The teacher looked askance at his excuse.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/askance

International Phonetic Alphabet: /əskɑːns/

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